Minutes from meeting in the External Panel on 18 June 2026

Members:	Director Katja Lindskov Jacobsen, University of Copenhagen (Chair) Chief Advisor Mattias Söderberg, DanChurchAid (Deputy chair) (agenda item 1, 2, 4 and 5) Senior Researcher Adam Moe Fejerskov, Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) Director Dorthe Petersen, PlanBørnefonden (agenda item 1, 2, 4 and 5) Chief for International Sustainability Irene Quist Mortensen, Arla Foods (online) Special advisor to the UN Secretary-General Jens Wandel, United Nations (UN) Professor John Rand, University of Copenhagen Entrepreneur Nicolai Sederberg Rottbøll, Our World 2050 (online) Senior Director for Policy, Programme and Partnerships Sanne Frost Helt, World Diabetes Foundation
MFA:	Head of Department Ketil Karlsen, Department for Africa, Development Policy and Financing, AFRPOL Head of Department Tove Degnbol, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LEARNING Deputy Head of Department Mette Bech Pilgaard, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LEARNING Head of Section Lotte Blom Salmonsen, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LEARNING
Agenda item 2:	Head of Department Anne Hougaard Jensen, Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA Deputy Head of Department Mads-Emil Stærk, Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA Chief Advisor Mikkel Klim, Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA Chief Advisor Charlotte Laursen, Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA Chief Advisor Ali Mushtaq Butt, Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA (online) Deputy CEO Søren Peter Andreasen, Impact Fund Denmark (IFDK)

	Head of Strategy & Business Development Morten Buur Østerby, Impact Fund Denmark (IFDK) (online)
Agenda item 3:	Head of Department Anne Hougaard Jensen, Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA Chief Advisor Frederik Tue Staun, Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA Special Advisor Annsofie Lybæk, Secretariat for Government-to-Government Cooperation, MYNSEK
Agenda item 4:	Head of Department Ketil Karlsen, Department for Africa, Development Policy and Financing, AFRPOL Team Leader Niels Bossen, Department for Africa, Development Policy and Financing, AFRPOL Special Advisor Ida Dalgaard Steffensen, Department for Africa, Development Policy and Financing, AFRPOL
Agenda item 5:	Details of this item will be shared once the proposed Finance Act for 2027 has been published.

Agenda item 1: Opening remarks

With reference to the Rules of Procedure for the External Panel, the Chair asked if members had any conflicts of interest related to the agenda item. Head of LEARNING Tove Degnbol presented the MFA's rationale for considering the members to be impartial, stating that they had not received exclusive information regarding agenda item 2, 4 and 5 due to the public consultation process. Agenda item 3 consisted of material for a future Call for Proposal in which the members had exclusive access to and influence on. Therefore, it should be considered as a potential conflict of interest for the members of the panel. Mattias Söderberg and Dorthe Petersen announced a conflict of interest in relation to agenda item 3 as their organisations wished to respond to the Call for Proposal when it was made public. Mattias Söderberg and Dorthe Petersen left the room during the deliberations of agenda item 3.

Agenda item 2: Danish Business Initiative
DKK 850 million
Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate (KLIMA)

Key recommendations from the Panel:

The Panel commended KLIMA for the initiative and the endeavour to apply a portfolio logic across the five business instruments.

- The Panel recommended to increase **the focus on market development and at the same time be more specific on how each of the projects would ensure development effects.** It was found that the draft documents did not sufficiently address impact.
- It was recommended to **strengthen the emphasis on national ownership and equal partnerships both during the programming phase and later during implementation.** Descriptions of the match between Danish and national actors tended to take the point of departure in the interests of Danish companies, whereas national needs and national partners were not well described.
- Underlining the **importance of context** – both geographically and concerning sectors – the Panel had reservations against the expected transferability of experience gained in one context to other and rather different settings.
- While the Panel commended the **one-stop-shop** as a much-needed initiative, it was recommended to **enlarge the mandate to also include coordination with other actors and activities** such as e.g. EU and Danish embassies and to communicate proactively towards especially Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).
- The Panel recommended **to better integrate existing experience, including from similar instruments applied by other countries, research, and evaluations.** KLIMA was encouraged to look into research and evaluation findings regarding tied aid and lessons from the previous Danish business-to-business support, and to consult OECD DAC blended finance principles.

Other issues mentioned by the Panel included the concern that *E5: Impact Investor Partnerships* would mainly serve to de-risk Danish investors and Impact Fund Denmark's (IFDK) own investments without ensuring additionality; the concern that systemic changes are not considered when there are no sector focus; possibilities for further involving civil society partners; possibilities for extending the project period for more than five years and simplifying application procedures to accommodate Danish businesses; the importance of mainstreaming use of the concept 'responsible business conduct' beyond one-off activities such as training; suggestion to use an AI-tool to strengthen national partners' involvement in preparing project proposals; elaborating on targeted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) e.g. jobs and gender; the importance of establishing monitoring systems, more consideration to climate change and its implications for investments; and the importance of education, skills development, and capacity-building.

Agenda item 3: Africa Water Finance and Innovation Facility (AWFIF)
DKK 165 million
Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate (KLIMA)

Key recommendations from the Panel:

- Pointing out that successful demonstration projects do not equal successful scaling, the Panel recommended to clarify **how the projects were supposed to go from demonstration projects to successful scaling,** including the expected role of the 'scaling' actor, the expected financing and how it will be identified.
- The Panel recommended to **better explain the relationship, interface, and synergies, between the facility and other activities** supported by Denmark, the EU, and other international actors, in particular the upcoming Business Instrument *E4: Innovation Bridge* with which an overlap was noted.
- Considering the relatively small budget and large number of countries suggested to be included, the panel recommended to **limit the geographical focus to ensure better conditions for success.** This could be done e.g. through a regional or thematic focus.
- The panel recommended to **revisit evaluation criteria for the Call for Proposal (CfP)** to **allow a larger number of actors** (both private and civil society) to respond. The scalability aspect of a demonstration project called for a broader CfP to identify one or several actors that would be able to not only demonstrate but also scale. It was suggested that consultancy companies could play a constructive role in consortia presenting proposals.
- The Panel recommended to **strengthen the lessons learned aspects in the documents** both regarding Danish engagements such as the Strategic Sector Cooperation and likeminded international engagements as well as from academia. Assuming that the projects would find the key to successful scaling, it would be important to share the experience broadly across demonstration projects, thereby avoiding missed opportunities.

Other issues mentioned by the Panel included questions about the support to national capacity development, equal partnerships and possibilities for involving national actors including authorities in the preparation of country analyses; request for elaborating the role of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the project; questions about financing as the main challenge and suggestion that this might instead be lack of bankable projects as well as poor framework conditions; possibilities for engaging national actors in companies' boards; the risk that the project is overly focused on Danish actors instead of the best qualified actors; and involvement of universities' innovation hubs for further knowledge on scalability.

Agenda item 4: Sahel Future Generations Programme
DKK 600 million
Department for Africa, Development Policy and Financing (AFRPOL)

Key recommendations from the Panel:

Members of the Panel stressed the importance of continuing the Danish development cooperation in the Sahel region and expressed appreciation of the Danish efforts. The programme document and especially the well-written context analysis was commended.

- The Panel recommended to **strengthen the programme document regarding safeguards both concerning people and data.** In fragile contexts, MFA has a particular responsibility not to leave vulnerable population groups without the necessary protection.
- In the volatile context in the Sahel, the Panel underlined **the importance of a competent and flexible management setup.** It should be clearly anchored (expectedly in Dakar) and also have the necessary flexibility to adjust to changing circumstances.
- It was recommended to **include reflections about other actors' engagements in the region.** This should include both like-minded development partners' support, activities funded e.g. by the Golf countries, and also activities and agendas of actors, which could have a negative impact on Danish-funded activities.
- Given the strong innovative element of the programme design, the panel recommended to **consider if the innovative element could be strengthened even further** in relation to young artists, entrepreneurs, job creation, and the way monitoring will be undertaken.
- The Panel recommended to **highlight the climate dimension as a major risk.** Countries in the region are exposed to high climate-related risk, and this is expected to be aggravated by the upcoming El Niño phenomenon.

Other issues mentioned by the Panel included the description of Danish actors as preferred when calls for proposals are open to all; coordination in the absence of embassies; youth not only as a target group but as actors defining activities; possibilities for further involvement of civil society organisations; appreciation of the way adaptive management is described; and appreciation of the use of delegated cooperation.

Agenda item 5: Minutes of this item will be shared once the proposed Finance Act for 2027 has been published.