Minutes from meeting in the External Panel on 22 October 2026

Members:	Director Katja Lindskov Jacobsen, University of Copenhagen (Chair) (Agenda item 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8) Chief Advisor Mattias Söderberg, DanChurchAid (Deputy chair) Senior Researcher Adam Moe Fejerskov, Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) Director Dorthe Petersen, PlanBørnefonden (Agenda item: 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8) Special advisor to the UN Secretary-General Jens Wandel, United Nations (UN) (online) (Agenda item 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) Professor John Rand, University of Copenhagen Entrepreneur Nicolai Sederberg Rottbøll, Our World 2050 Senior Director for Policy, Programme and Partnerships Sanne Frost Helt, World Diabetes Foundation *Chief for International Sustainability Irene Quist Mortensen, Arla Foods, had shared written comments and recommendations to all agenda items but did not take part in the meeting.*
MFA:	Under-Secretary for Development Policy Ole Thonke Head of Department Tove Degnbol, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LÆRING Deputy Head of Department Mette Bech Pilgaard, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LÆRING Head of Section Lotte Blom Salmonsen, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LÆRING
Agenda item 2:	Head of Department Anette Aarestrup, Secretariat for Government-to-Government Cooperation, MYNSEK Head of Section Nikoline Ladefoged Birk, Secretariat for Government-to-Government Cooperation, MYNSEK Head of International Cooperation and Sustainable Development Jane Pedersen, The Danish Environmental Protection Agency Functional manager in International Cooperation and Sustainable Development Trine Bergholtz Friis, The Danish Environmental Protection Agency Chief Advisor Anne Marie Zinck, EU and International Affairs in The Danish Ministry of Environment

Agenda item 3:	Head of Department Anette Aarestrup, Secretariat for Government-to-Government Cooperation, MYNSEK Chief Advisor Kamilla Heden Henningsen, Secretariat for Government-to-Government Cooperation, MYNSEK Acting Head of Centre for International Cooperation Anders Ankær Sparre, The Danish Veterinary and Food Authority Chief Advisor Peter Hallenberg, EU and International Department at The Danish Ministry for Business and Competitiveness
Agenda item 4:	Head of Department Asser Rasmussen Berling, The Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA Chief Advisor Jesper Hilsted Andersen, The Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA Senior Advisor Rasmus Berner, The Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA
Agenda item 5:	Head of Department Asser Rasmussen Berling, The Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA Deputy Head of Department Gertrud Nørbjerg Kümmel Birk, The Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA Chief Advisor Charlotte Laursen, The Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA Special Advisor Synne Espensen, The Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA Ambassador Karin Poulsen, The Danish Embassy in Pretoria (online) Counsellor Merete Villum Pedersen, The Danish Embassy in Pretoria (online) Sector Expert Jacobus Dreyer Senekal, The Danish Embassy in Pretoria (online)
Agenda item 6:	Deputy Head of Department Signe Fischer Smidt, The Department for Africa, Development Policy and Financing, AFRPOL Team Leader Marianne Vestergaard, The Department for Africa, Development Policy and Financing, AFRPOL Special Advisor Sofie Astrup Malm, The Department for Africa, Development Policy and Financing, AFRPOL
Agenda item 7:	Head of Department Tove Degnbol, The Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LÆRING

Chief Advisor Eva Brandt Broegaard, The Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LÆRING
Evaluation Specialist Ninja Ritter Klejnstrup, The Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LÆRING

Agenda Item No. 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 items. No member announced potential conflict of interest.

Agenda Item No. 2: Strategic Sector Cooperation (SSC) Framework Programme for Environment (2027-2030)
For discussion and recommendation
DKK 173 million
Secretariat for Government-to-Government Cooperation (MYNSEK), The Danish Environmental Protection Agency & The Danish Ministry of Environment

Key recommendations from the Panel:

- Ensure that sustainability considerations are integrated in the due diligence and implementation.
- Improve theory of change and outcome monitoring at both programme and project level.
- Ensure localisation and partner inclusion in all elements of the programme.
- Ensure that the private sector interventions benefit local market development.
- Improve the criteria for country selection, consider framework conditions, flexibility in allocation, and possibility of success.
- Improve synergies with Danish business instruments to ensure access for Danish Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).

Other issues mentioned by the Panel included the role of civil society, national authorities, and other stakeholders; the importance of adaptation; role of partners in decision-making bodies; results monitoring, incl. data-supported results and need for outcome indicators before programme start; use of lessons learned from previous phases; use of 'How-to-Notes' including on rights to water; communication strategies; alignment with the Danish Ministry of Environment's new strategy (2026-2030); qualifications of Danish advisors and consultants; role of water-tech companies; and exit strategies.

Agenda Item No. 3: Strategic Sector Cooperation (SSC) Framework Programme for Food and Agriculture (2027-2030)
For discussion and recommendation

DKK 244.25 million
Secretariat for Government-to-Government Cooperation (MYNSEK), The Danish Veterinary and Food Authority & The Danish Ministry for Business and Competitiveness

Key recommendations from the Panel:

- Ensure that lessons from previous phases and similar initiatives will structure future implementation.
- Improve theory of change and outcome monitoring, including a limited set of strategic indicators at both programme and project level.
- Strengthen inclusion of local partners, including civil society and local private sector.
- Ensure, wherever possible, that climate and biodiversity considerations are included.
- Ensure that private actor interventions benefit local market development.

Other issues mentioned by the Panel included business and human rights; poverty analysis and Leave No One Behind; localisation; communication; criteria for country selection incl. demand from national partners; scaling and mitigation of associated risks; need for increased budget for mitigation of environmental risks; use of 'How-to-Notes'; qualifications of Danish advisors and consultants; measuring capacity development effects; inclusion of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs); and exit strategies

Agenda Item No. 4: Development Guarantee Facility
For discussion and recommendation
DKK 429 million
The Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate (KLIMA)

Key recommendations from the Panel:

- Improve, in dialogue with MFA-LÆRING, the result framework, including both targets and indicators on development impacts, including job creation, gender and youth.
- Non-disclosure agreements should not limit the access by Ministry of Foreign Affairs and independent evaluators to documentation on all transaction related to the guarantee.
- Ensure that private sector interventions are not leading to crowding out but benefit the local market development.
- Coordinate with other guarantee providers in the markets, as well as other Danish and international actors, including civil society.
- Ensure technical assistance (TA) to strengthen both local companies and financial institutions in collaboration with local actors.
- Establish independent validation of the price modelling and ensure mandatory stress test.

Other issues mentioned by the Panel included outreach to Danish and local Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs); importance of equal partnerships; business and human rights; adaptation as a proposed focus area; importance of reaching fragile countries beyond Ukraine; sharing of risks between MFA and IFDK; size of the guarantees; balance between bank guarantees and guarantees to multinational development banks; exchange rate fluctuations; procedures for conflicts of interest; and synergies to Danish Business Instruments and the Strategic Partnership Agreements (SPA).

Agenda Item No. 5: Skills and Jobs for youth in South Africa

For discussion and recommendation

DKK 50 million

The Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate (KLIMA) & The Danish Embassy in Pretoria

Key recommendations from the Panel:

- The education should be South African-accredited and certified.
- There should be a documented transition of education efforts into South Africa over the course of the project, with clear milestones.
- Mid-term review to be used for a 'go/no go'-decision on continued support.
- To evaluate the effect, ensure that there is ex-ante gathering of data on the students, which can be compared to ex-post data.
- Ensure clear long-term objectives and end goal, ensuring that the purpose of the pilot project becomes clear.
- There should be a South African lead partner.

Other issues mentioned by the Panel included concerns about South African demand for the programme; need to address equal partnership question; assessment of job creation; price per student and long-term sustainability of the model; governance and ownership, including need for national partners in decision-making bodies; additionality of the intervention; criteria for award of scholarships; reporting guidance; commitment by Danish companies; experience of the Danish partner; areas of overlap and synergy with likeminded donors; DAC eligibility; and adherence to EU procurement rules and regulation on state subsidies.

Agenda Item No. 6: Orientation about the government's proposal for the Finance Act 2027

For information and discussion

The Department for Africa, Development Policy and Financing (AFRPOL)

AFRPOL informed the Panel about key figures concerning the budget for development cooperation on the Finance Bill for 2027. The presentation included an overview of the overall

development cooperation framework and a brief overview of selected new initiatives as part of the main priorities: i) Strong partnerships and alliances based on mutual interests, ii) Denmark as an influential actor in a more autonomous EU, iii) Economic diplomacy, business opportunities, and green transition, and iv) Denmark taking responsibility in an uncertain world, with a particular focus on Ukraine. The Panel subsequently raised questions and discussed the priorities and new initiatives.

Agenda Item No. 7: Annual orientation about the Evaluation Programme
For information and discussion
The Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality (LÆRING)

The Panel welcomed the topics for planned evaluations and studies. Questions were asked on timing of evaluations; evaluation methodology, use of evaluation results in preparation of new activities, and communication of results to the public audience.

Suggestions for themes of future evaluations included development engagement in Ukraine; development cooperation with the EU; transformation of development cooperation, including effects of budget-cuts from donor countries; the Danish Arab Partnership Programme (DAPP); the equal partnerships approach; economic diplomacy as a strategic lever in development cooperation; development cooperation in the new geopolitical context; job creation; capacity development; the Peace and Stability Fund; synergy between Investment Fund Denmark and civil society support; and the Danish business initiative.

Agenda Item No. 8: Any Other Business
No issues were raised under this agenda item.