

Minutes from meeting in the External Panel on 19 February 2026

- Members: Director Katja Lindskov Jacobsen, University of Copenhagen (Chair)
Chief Advisor Mattias Söderberg, DanChurchAid (Deputy chair)
Senior Researcher Adam Moe Fejerskov, Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS)
Director Dorthe Petersen, PlanBørnefonden
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: Under-Secretary for Development Policy Ole Thonke
Head of Department Tove Degnbøl, 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 Salmonsens, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LEARNING
- Agenda item 2: Head of Department Birgit la Cour Madsen, Department for Financial Management, Oversight, and Support in relation to Grants, TILSKUD
- Agenda item 3: Special Representative of Denmark to Afghanistan Mette Knudsen, Department for Asia, Latin America, Oceania, and the Caribbean, ASILAC
Chief Advisor Bjørn Blau, Department for Asia, Latin America, Oceania, and the Caribbean, ASILAC
Student Assistant Laura Thyssen Thorøe, Department for Asia, Latin America, Oceania, and the Caribbean, ASILAC
- Agenda item 4: Head of Department Mette Nørgaard Dissing-Spandet, Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA

Team Leader Merete Willum Pedersen, Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA

Chief Advisor Morten Blomqvist, Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate, KLIMA

Deputy Head of the International Office Henrik Silkjær Nielsen, Department for International Climate Affairs, Ministry of Climate, Energy and Utilities (KEFM)

Head of Center for Global Energy Cooperation Rasmus Tengvad, Danish Energy Agency (DEA)

Evaluation Specialist Ninja Ritter Klejnstrup, Department for Evaluation, Learning and Quality, LEARNING

Agenda item 1: Introduction

With reference to the Rules of Procedure for the External Panel, the Chair of the Panel asked if members had any conflicts of interest related to the agenda items. John Rand asked whether his involvement in the ongoing evaluation of the Danish Energy Partnership Programme was a conflict of interest. The Panel agreed that this was not considered a conflict of interest. No other issues were raised.

Agenda item 2: How to work with ODA eligibility

The Head of Department for Financial Management, Oversight, and Support in relation to Grants (TILSKUD) gave an introduction to ODA eligibility and explained how the Ministry is working with the matter.

Agenda item 3: Afghanistan Programme 2026-2027

DKK 200 million

Department for Asia, Latin America, Oceania, and the Caribbean (ASILAC)

Key recommendations from the Panel:

Panel members stressed the importance of continuing the Danish development cooperation in Afghanistan, and shared their appreciation for the Danish efforts.

- It was recommended that the programme document should elaborate, and motivate the choice of partners and institutional set-up in light of the context analysis, development partner division of labour, risk assessment and costs.
- The Panel recommended to put more emphasis on effects and results of the support provided by describing expected outcomes instead of mainly outputs.

- The Panel recommended to prioritise climate change more in the programme document as well as including climate change as an important consideration in the ongoing dialogue with the partners.
- The Panel recommended to use the Danish influence in the World Bank's Afghanistan Resilience Trust Fund (ARTF) to advocate for a more long-term development perspective, instead of only focus on short-term engagement.
- While acknowledging that job creation and private investments were difficult in the current Afghan setting and stressing the need to avoid overambitious endeavours, the Panel appreciated these elements in the programme, and recommended to continue pushing for these agendas.

Other issues mentioned by the Panel included the importance of China's influence in Afghanistan, the justification of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute support to the UN Special Rapporteur and expected impact of scholarships for women, the added value of support to UNWOMEN both directly and through the ARTF, possibilities of reaching Afghan women as beneficiaries and staff in implementing organisations, considerations about off-grid solutions inspired by experience in Pakistan, and activities to support youth engagements.

Agenda item 4: Danish Energy Partnership Programme (DEPP)

DKK 372 million

Department for Green Diplomacy and Climate (KLIMA)

Key recommendations from the Panel:

- The Panel recommended that *equal partnerships* should be emphasised more explicitly in the programme document. This included local engagement and partner ownership during programme preparation and implementation, transparency concerning partners' access to key information about activities and budgets, use of national consultants and experts, and considerations about possible partner financial contribution in cases of higher-middle income countries such as China and Mexico. The latter could pave the way for continued cooperation with the Danish Energy Agency after the phasing out of development-funded activities in those countries.
- The Panel underlined the crucial importance of incorporating conclusions from the ongoing evaluation of the Danish Energy Partnership Programme into the programme, as soon as these are presented. The formulation should consider how best this could be done and preferably as early on in the programme as possible.
- The Panel recommended to include key performance indicators (KPI) for poverty, capacity development, broader development effects, and gender equality. It was suggested

to use the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the SDGs are internationally recognised as UN measures and not considered sensitive for cultural and other reasons.

- The Panel stressed the importance of exit-strategies for country-level activities, including the possibility for continued collaboration without ODA. This was considered particularly pertinent for China and Mexico, expected to become higher-income countries during this phase, but it would be relevant in all countries to approach competence development of partners throughout the programme also in light of future phase-out of activities.
- Danish perspectives could be better presented in the programme document, including potential Danish business interests and engagement, and communication about the programme to the general public.

Other issues mentioned by the Panel included the importance of continued use of political-economy analyses (not just during preparation), the limited absorption capacity of the programme, the need to invest in inclusion competences and not just in technical competences, the level of innovative thinking in the programme, considerations about a possible role for public-private partnerships and Small and Medium-Size Enterprises (SMEs), possibilities for scaling activities, and possibilities for making the cooperation more mutual by focusing also on how Denmark could learn from its partners when co-creating integration between data-centres and district heating (China) and integrated energy planning for small scale Islands (Indonesia).