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Joint Declaration on closer French/Danish collaboration on development cooperation, with a particular focus on Sahel

Pre-ambble

Denmark and France share the view that multilateral cooperation within the framework of a strong, rule-based international system remains indispensable if the international community is to succeed in addressing the many cross-border challenges we face today. Among the obvious challenges that call for further international cooperation are refugee and irregular migration flows, climate change, traffics and organized crime, radicalization and instability. International development cooperation plays a key role in tackling the root causes of such challenges.

Increasingly, however, multilateral cooperation and the rule-based international system are under pressure. Denmark and France therefore remain determined to strengthening our development cooperation in areas of strategic importance. The Sahel region is key in this respect. Following the collapse of the Libyan state, the Sahel has effectively become one of Europe's neighboring regions. Consequently, stability, development, and prosperity in this region are of strategic interest to Denmark, France and Europe.

Against this background, Denmark and France commit to strengthening the collaboration on development policy and cooperation with a particular focus on the Sahel region. Specifically, Denmark and France will seek further possibilities of collaboration, exchange of experiences and joint initiatives in four areas: Gender equality and Women's and girls' rights, including SRHR; Youth with special focus on peace and stability as well as skills and employment; Education and skills development; and Resilience and fragility and the HDP (Humanitarian-Development-Peace) nexus. In addition, Denmark is pleased to announce its membership of the Sahel Alliance.

Track 1: Gender equality and women's and girls' rights, including SRHR

The challenges in the Sahel region concerning gender equality and SRHR are immense. The region has the highest birth rate (on average more than five children per woman) and the highest maternal and newborn mortality rate in the world. It is estimated for instance that in Mali, only 15 % of all women have access to and utilize modern contraception, and the risk of dying due to pregnancy and birth-related complications is high. Many girls and women in the region do not have access to family planning, healthcare and comprehensive sexuality education. Harmful practices such as female genital mutilation, child marriages and early pregnancies are widespread. To be able to address these challenges, the Governments of France and Denmark commit to



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strengthening the efforts regarding SRHR and maternal-newborn, child and adolescent health in the region.

Specifically;

- The Government of France will appoint a high-level SheDecides champion and fully enter into the work of this political movement that Denmark was part of initiating. France will be invited to announce its champions at the Danish-hosted SheDecides event during UNGA73.
- The Government of Denmark will join the Government of France in supporting the French Muskoka Fund, which supports SRHR, family planning and maternal-child health in partnership with UNICEF, UNFPA, UNWOMEN and WHO in a number of countries in the Sahel region, by providing financial contribution. Danish financial support to the fund and a strengthened French effort with a focus on SRHR will be the basis of a cooperation within the fund.
- The government of Denmark and France will explore the possible synergies to be developed around AFD's gender Initiative which may focus in a multi-sectorial way on the link between Girls & Women empowerment, and Social & Demographic transition in Sahel G5 Countries.

Track 2: Youth with special focus on peace and stability, skills and employment

65 % of the population in the Sahel is below 30 years of age, and the Sahel region has the poorest, fastest growing and youngest population. Unemployment among youth in the Sahel is high, and older generations tend to dominate local, national and regional decision-making processes. Denmark and France will commit to strengthening their collaboration on addressing the specific challenges faced by young people in the Sahel.

Specifically;

- The government of Denmark and France will work to improve the consideration of youth issues and challenges within the Sahel Alliance, within the sectorial group on youth employability led by France and transversally.
- The governments of Denmark and France will jointly support the elaboration, in close coordination with e.g. the G5 Secretariat, of a Youth Strategy for the G5 Sahel under the Sahel Alliance, if required by the G5 Secretariat.
- The government of France will consider joining the government of Denmark in supporting the youth fund FAMOC (Fonds d'Appui au Moteurs de Changement). The objective of the fund is to support



innovative projects and activities, mainly organized by and for young people, which contribute to increase their knowledge of their rights and to involve them in local-level activities and decision-making processes and thereby enabling them to become active citizens, therefore contributing to peace and stability.

- The government of France will study the possibility of supporting the youth window under the coming Danish private sector programme in Mali, which aims to develop youth entrepreneurship and new technologies. Focus will be on young people between 18 and 30 with relevant basic competencies and with an ambition to start or develop their own business in the Bamako area and in the Sikasso region. France is keen on receiving more information about the program and Denmark's level of commitment in order to determine how French support could be provided.

Track 3. Education and skills development

In a fragile region like the Sahel, struggling with high birth rates, high rates of youth unemployment, quality education and skills development for youth is a prerequisite for improvements in gender equality, health and economic development. Furthermore, quality education and skills development is a means to mitigate the potential risk of instability, youth radicalization and irregular migration due to a generation void of learning and future employment opportunities. However, instability especially in areas of conflict hinders access to quality education. In Mali for instance, the conflict resulted in a decrease of children in school (from 92 % in 2011 to 83,5 % in 2013).

France and Denmark therefore commit to a closer and stronger cooperation on education efforts in the Sahel. Specifically:

- The Governments of France and Denmark will join forces in the Global Partnership for Education and work for a stronger partnership focus on the Sahel, on the humanitarian-development nexus and on reaching the most marginalised groups, especially girls, with quality education.
- In order to showcase the stronger cooperation on education, France and Denmark will participate with GPE to an event at UNGA 73, hosted by France, Canada and the United-Kingdom, with a specific focus on providing quality education for girls, with a specific attention to the humanitarian-development nexus for the most marginalised, and in which France and Denmark will feature by high-level attendance
- To specifically address the need for further development of youth skills and entrepreneurship, the Government of France and the Government



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of Denmark will explore in the coming months opportunities to jointly support initiatives focusing on competence development and youth entrepreneurship in the Sahel, with a view to help young people develop their skills, join the labor force and realize their full economic and entrepreneurial potential.

Track 4: Resilience and fragility / Hum-Dev-Peace Nexus

With the proliferation of protracted and complex crises, Denmark and France share the sense of urgency to bolster the humanitarian-development-peace-nexus (HDP) and build local stakeholders' capacities with a view to strengthen resilience, reduce vulnerabilities and provide conditions conducive to sustainable development. Both governments have a declared policy of directing more of its official development assistance towards prevention of crisis and fragility responses.

In light of this potential common platform for action, the governments of Denmark and France will seek to

- Share experiences and lessons learned on challenges and opportunities related to fragility and HDP-nexus interventions, e.g. through consultations among relevant units from the Danish MFA, French MFA and the AFD.
- Share analysis of context, risk, factors of fragility, needs and local capacities, developed jointly by humanitarian and development actors. Particularly relevant in the Sahel region and Syria's neighboring countries; protracted crises areas where both governments are actively engaged and where the HDP nexus is pivotal for promoting sustainable development.
- Deepen in-the-field cooperation and synergies through sharing respective project portfolios across all sectors (governance, youth, rural development etc.).
- Explore the possibility of co-financing specific programmes in the HDP nexus. The Danish-led Regional Development and Protection Programme in the Middle East could be an option. Denmark is similarly open to consider co-financing of relevant AFD-initiatives, particularly the sawa regional initiative in the Middle East.
- Explore the possibility to join efforts to promote 'A New Way of Working' and Grand Bargain commitments within relevant international agencies, including the EU.
- Explore the possibilities of a French contribution to projects supported through the Danish Regional Sahel Peace and Stabilisation Programme, in the areas of prevention and management of conflicts among border communities and border security management and trust building between security providers and communities.



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- Denmark will explore the possibility of joining France in contributing in 2019 to the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF) and its important work to strengthen community resilience to violent extremism in Mali in collaboration with local partners.

Signed in Copenhagen on .../.../..... in two (2) original copies in French and Danish.