

OPENING SPEECH

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**ON THE OCCASION OF THE
EARLY RECOVERY POLICY FORUM
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Good morning, dear colleagues and friends,

I am delighted to see so many of you here today. Thank you for being here. I know that most of you have spent the last few days here in Copenhagen, and I hope your time together has been productive and that you are ready to further advance the agenda today.

A special thanks to our co-host – UNDP – for your work on early recovery and your support for the Forum.

I've been looking forward to open this Early Recovery Policy Forum and to share with you the Danish Government's commitment to improving Early Recovery response. Improving our collective approach to assisting countries who are recovering from war and disaster is an important priority for the Danish Government.

Hard learned experience has taught us, that both in post-conflict and post-disaster situations early results on the ground – and not simply pledges of support in faraway conference rooms - is what is needed to generate self-sustaining, nationally owned resilient processes for recovery.

For this, we know that we cannot and should not rely on humanitarian assistance alone. And yet, while we all know this, we have been painfully slow at adapting our development assistance to suit the fast and flexible responses required.

Important progress has been made. In Myanmar early recovery planning was part of the immediate post-disaster response and I'm pleased to say that Denmark, as



a donor, took particular care to fund these early recovery activities in addition to our humanitarian support. Disaster risk reduction and accelerated return to sustainable food production was the focus of this support.

In Afghanistan we have right from the beginning of the international assistance effort in 2002 – even under the most difficult circumstances supported state building, counterinsurgency, stabilization and early recovery activities as well as long-term development activities across the country - all at the same time. We have learnt that recovering from war is not about following a linear continuum, but about making all your instruments work together at the same time, where possible, for maximum effect.

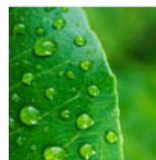
And we need to get it right! As we look ahead, growing challenges such as climate change and food insecurity will affect both the severity of disasters and most likely also conflicts. Therefore we must take action now!

Before turning to hear the outcome of your consultations so far, I'd like to touch on four areas of forward looking action, which my government is eager to move forward on:

First – National and local ownership and involvement. Unfortunately, we in the international community have sometimes overlooked the power and energy that lies in a nation's fight for recovery. When we see a country ravished by war or devastated by natural disaster, we tend to forget that the first help and recovery efforts are always locally driven. Our post-conflict and post-disaster response needs to move in behind this national and local drive, work with it and support it. An important operative word here is local. Capital centric aid is predominant, but local and community level action opens possibilities for tangible results, that can help support the peace and recovery processes.

Second - Integrated approaches. The Danish Government is firmly committed to integrated approaches to post-conflict recovery. Early recovery is more than a development effort. Securing stability through close alignment of humanitarian, development, political and security efforts is the key to full recovery. I have therefore been particularly pleased to see that this Forum has brought together representatives from all sectors. In Denmark we adopted a 'whole of government approach' five years ago. I regularly meet with my defence and foreign minister colleagues and our staff plan and implement actions together. We have learnt each others language and culture and most recently we launched our new integrated Strategy for Afghanistan, which for the first time sets joint goals and priorities for action. But we need to do more: joint operational planning and strengthening civilian capacities is a key focus for the future.

Third – Adapting development assistance for better and more flexible response. We know that early recovery planning and programming must take risks; with an eye on longer-term development objectives. We have to learn to NOT make our development assistance hostage to perfect planning and execution. Providing development assistance to post-conflict situations requires political will to capitalize on short-term gains and quick wins to build and maintain the confidence of communities and local leaders – while not forgetting long term stabilization needs. This does not mean that we are willing to throw all responsible caution to the wind or to forget the Paris Principles of aid effectiveness, but we must be adaptable and nimble to ensure that we put our aid to the best use.



Fourth – Supporting better partnerships. I was delighted to learn, that only last week the UN, WB and the EU signed an agreement to harmonize their collective assistance for better recovery response. As a donor there is little that can irritate more than to watch inter-agency battles, when urgent recovery efforts are needed. Please make sure, that you now follow through on the ground! For this we need strong leadership and coordination on the ground, and we support the strengthening of the UN Resident Coordinator to achieve this end and I urge the entire UN system to come together to support this. Also other partnerships are important. South-south partnerships need support in areas such as disaster management, response, and recovery. We should in the future make much more use of south-south initiatives and regional organizations. We hope this Forum has helped build new partnerships for joint action towards improving our collective performance.

I fully recognize that this week's meetings are only building blocks among many others towards our common goals. We do hope that we can leave here with a common purpose to take our commitments on to more formal setting, be that the UN Security Council, Regional meetings, OECD or other relevant fora.

Thanks again for coming to Copenhagen to advance our common concern for creating real results on the ground for those many millions of men, women and children, whose hopes and dreams of peace and recovery we cannot afford to disappoint.

Thank you.

