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Danish assistance to Afghanistan will be increased

Denmark is highly committed to Afghanistan. Afghanistan has been supported militarily as well as with humanitarian aid and reconstruction assistance since 2002. Militarily Denmark currently supports ISAF's operation in Afghanistan with approximately 400 soldiers primarily deployed to the south.

Denmark has pledged financial development assistance until 2009. In June 2005 the Danish Parliament approved a grant of 112 million USD for reconstruction and development activities in Afghanistan for the five-year period of 2005-2009. This is an extension of the grant of 131 million USD granted in 2002. Total actual disbursement of funds during the period of 2002-2006 amounts to 220 million USD.

Denmark has so far provided more than 50% of the financial assistance as budget support. Focal areas for Denmark are education, development of rural areas, democratisation, human rights and public sector reform, as well as humanitarian relief including mine action activities and refugees.

In order to strengthen the comprehensive approach to civil-military activities, Denmark has recently seconded a civilian advisor to the ISAF headquarters. Furthermore Denmark has posted civilian advisors in the PRTs where we are substantially present with soldiers. This has proven to be a feasible way to distribute assistance to the provinces.

Denmark accelerates its support

Denmark has decided to speed up its assistance to reconstruction and humanitarian relief. The disbursements to reconstruction this year will be expanded by up to 60% - from 16 to 26 million USD. Assistance for refugees and humanitarian relief has already been raised this year and will continue at the new high level.

As an entirely new activity Denmark will contribute to reform of the judicial sector. Denmark is willing to contribute with up to 5 police officers for the possible EU ESDP-mission and contribute to the planned EC justice programme in Afghanistan.

Further, Denmark will provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to assist in its reform process.

Finally, Denmark will support the Afghan National Army with 1.7 million USD aimed at strengthening the capacity of the Afghan National Army. This is in addition to funds (100,000 Euros) for transport of equipment to the ANA.

Examples of results of the Danish assistance

Democratisation, human rights and public sector reform: The Danish assistance has contributed to the carrying through of national Presidential- and Parliament elections, as well as local elections. Support to the Afghan Human Rights Commission, and support in general to the reestablishment of the public sector through financial support to e.g. salaries and a needed modernization of the public sector.

Primary education and reform of the Ministry of Education: Development of new curricula and new schoolbooks, which has been tested on a large number of students, before being implemented on a wider scale; re-training and supplementary training of approx. 20,000 teachers; printing and distribution of 17.4 million new textbooks in 2006 alone and this will reach 30 million in 2007. Construction and renovation of 13 schools, out of which 7 were handed over to the Afghan authorities by end of 2006. The education sector in Afghanistan has seen a burst in interest from children and parents. Where only approximately 1 million children attended primary education in 2001 the number has now reached 4.8 million and is still climbing.

Rural development: Denmark is supporting the *National Solidarity Programme*. NSP that has provided block grants to some 15,000 of the approx. 24,000 villages in Afghanistan. Thereby, the NSP is very central for delivery of public services in the rural areas, and the rolling out of the policies of the Central Government, which includes a policy of finding alternatives to production of opium. Within a financial frame of 3.6 million USD, all of which has been disbursed, Denmark also supports the MISFA micro credit schemes. Till date loans under this scheme have been given to approx. 3.4 million Afghans, out of which 85 percent were women. This arrangement is quite new to Afghanistan. The credits given are of a magnitude of 100-1,000 USD. The scheme is very successful. Rate of repayment is as high as 96 percent.

Assistance to returnees: Denmark has provided financial assistance to facilitate the return of more than 4 million refugees to return to Afghanistan from neighbouring countries. This includes mine action activities.

Civil-military cooperation activities: In Northern Afghanistan these types of activities comprise e.g. a number of smaller projects with a focus on clean drinking water. In Southern Afghanistan in the province of Helmand the Danish civil-military PRT adviser has since his arrival in September 2006 already identified some 10 new projects within drinking water, primary education and capacity development.

NGO activities: Aid channelled through Danish NGOs is directed towards basic needs in rural areas. The main activities include provision of water and sanitation, primary health services, construction of access roads and promotion of small scale food production. In addition to this mobilization and capacity building of local communities have been undertaken.