

**Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Quality Assurance Department**

GUIDELINES

FOR

HIGH- LEVEL CONSULATIONS

AND

REPORTING ON MULTILATERAL ORGANIZATIONS

TO THE DANIDA BOARD

April 2008

Table of Contents

1. PURPOSE OF HIGH LEVEL CONSULTATIONS..... 3

2. PLANNING/ORGANIZATION OF THE HLC..... 4

3. THE MANDATE NOTE..... 4

4. AGREED MINUTES..... 5

5. REPORTING ON HLC OR OTHERWISE..... 5

6. OTHER ISSUES..... 5

1. PURPOSE OF HIGH LEVEL CONSULTATIONS¹

The purpose of high level consultations (HLC) with the multilateral organisations is to create a forum for an open, frank and focused policy dialogue between the organizations and senior management of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) on issues of high political interest. On the Danish side the high level dialogue is an important part of the decentralization of the responsibility to representations for the on-going interaction with the organizations.

HLC should focus on:

- Danish policy priorities;
- Strengthening of the thematic coherence and synergy between multilateral and bilateral development assistance;
- Possible concerns of MFA in relation to performance of the organisations;
- Key issues emanating from the organisation strategies and/or implementation of the annual action plan;
- Employment of Danish citizens in the organisations;

Obligations with regard to the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness and international practises in development cooperation have led to increased focus on donor coordination, alignment and joint approaches. Within multilateral development co-operation, an implication is that joint consultations with the multilateral organisations increasingly are undertaken by a group of like-minded countries. Consequently, the frequency and scope of Danish bilateral consultations have fallen. Still, the need remains for having bilateral high level consultations.

As a general rule HLC must to be conducted for the multilateral organisations that receive more than DKK 20 million annually or are of strategic importance to Danish multilateral cooperation.

The HLC must take place every second year, but may obviously be held at any time if needed. The specific decision on timing and frequency will depend on the importance of the organization in relation to Danish development cooperation, the existence of satisfactory, alternative mechanisms for dialogue, the need to promote (new) policies - and progress on the Organisation Strategies/Annual Plan. Not least when multi-donor strategies exist, the added value of bilateral HLC should be considered.

¹ To be noted that the organization strategies and annual action plans for multilateral organization constitute key tools for MFAs cooperation with the organizations. Thus, the present guidelines should be read along with the OS/AP, dated October 2006.

2. PLANNING/ORGANIZATION OF THE HLC

The overall responsibility for initiating, planning and organizing the HLC rests with the unit responsible for the organization, being an embassy, a permanent mission or a department at the MFA.

Where the responsibility for the organization has been decentralized to a representation, the HLC can be preceded by technical consultations or other meetings i.e. focusing on the outcome of the annual action plan. In those cases where a MFA department is responsible, the unit decides, whether technical consultations are needed. Most important is that the consultations are well prepared and that mutual expectations are adjusted in advance.

As a general rule the Head of Multilateral Affairs will head the Danish delegation. In case of delegated responsibility to a representation, and where relevant for policy coherence, an officer from the MFA could be considered to be part of the delegation. Input from the Ministry should take a thematic approach, ex. gender, education, migration.

The responsible unit must establish the HLC agenda in cooperation with the organization. It follows from the purpose of HLC that the agenda shall focus on a few policy issues of key concern. Consequently, the duration shall normally not exceed a half to one full day, depending on whether preceding technical consultations have taken place, the scope of the cooperation with the organization etc.

As a general rule the final agenda should be agreed on at least three weeks in advance to allow both sides to prepare properly.

3. THE MANDATE NOTE

The HLC is conducted on the basis of a mandate note (mandatnotits), which clearly sets out the purpose of the consultations and explains the Danish positions on each of the issues to be discussed. The unit responsible for organizing the HLC shall draft the mandate note, which is considered a strictly internal document.

The note should provide explanations for each issue followed immediately by the corresponding speaking points. All essential speaking points should also be repeated in a separate paper. The note is drafted in English.

The draft note must be circulated for comments to all units concerned, allowing five working days for comments. These units will normally include UDV, MIL, HUM, FNG, BFT, EVAL, ERH and KVA as well as the multilateral missions/embassies. Also embassies in programme countries should be contacted as they can provide valuable inputs regarding the multilateral organisation's performance on the ground. An outline of the note is annexed.

The final mandate note and agenda must be given to the Head of Multilateral Affairs for approval no less than five working days before date of departure for the HLC.

4. AGREED MINUTES

The responsible unit should consider whether agreed minutes would be useful. If it is decided to have agreed minutes the responsible unit should within five days after the HLC provide the organisation with a draft for agreement. Agreed minutes must ensure a common understanding of the agreements obtained especially with regard to operational conclusions and follow up, and also facilitate a broader awareness of the agreements within the organization. The minutes should include a short summary that can be used for a wider distribution to units in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

5. REPORTING ON HLC OR OTHERWISE

Soon after the HLC have been conducted, the responsible unit should provide other relevant units in the MFA with short minutes focusing on key issues raised, operational conclusions and follow up.

Also the Danida Board must be informed of the content and outcome. It is recommended to use the short summary made by the Danish side for this purpose supplemented with a summary of the technical consultations, if they have been held. Also the report on the annual action plan can be included if the timing is appropriate.

In those years where no HLC take place, the responsible unit may recommend to UDV that the situation still calls for a report to the Board. If agreed to, it should be the annual report on the action plan with necessary explanations in a cover note.

6. OTHER ISSUES

The responsible unit should upload the mandate note and the minutes with the attachments to PDB.

The Standard Format of the Mandate Note

1. Background.
Purpose of the HLC, the key policy issues and essential info on MO.
2. Expected outcome of HLC – MOU, press release
3. Key issues
For each – explanation and speaking points

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All main speaking points must be copied in a separate document for ease of use.

The Process Plan

1. Decision to undertake HLC
2. The conduct of technical consultations by permanent mission, or possibly MFA-unit
3. Elaboration of agenda with MO
- and agreement by Head of Multilateral Affairs, three weeks before HLC
4. Drafting of the mandate note,
- circulate for written hearing (5 week day's dead line)
- ready for HMA one week before departure
5. Undertaking of HLC
6. Reporting to Board