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## ***The Nordic Countries and their support for African Union, Regional Communities and the African Peace and Security Architecture - Is there a Nordic model of Support?***

**African ambassadors, Director of NUPI, Dear Participants,**

Thank you for inviting me to speak on “Africa Day” 2009. Let me say from the beginning that this will be a presentation of work in progress.

As a Nordic research institute we see it as our privileged role to closely follow the Nordic governments’ policies on Africa. During the last couple of years we have seen a series of new initiatives – and more are to come. The Africa Commission set up by the Danish Government has recently launched its final report. The Swedish government is working on a new regional strategy for Africa. In addition, a major global financial crisis has hit the world. This will impact on government policies everywhere. By the end of this year we hope to be able to present a more stringent analysis of recent Nordic policy development vis a vis Africa. Right now we are at the beginning of a challenging task.

Let me start with a personal reflection. When I went to work for Sida in Africa in the beginning of the seventies, the regional perspective was not at the focus of our political thinking – in spite of the stronghold of the Pan-Africanist movements and statements by African political leaders such as Nkrumah and Nyerere.

In the sixties and seventies, the Nordic countries became actively involved in the Anti-Apartheid struggle in Southern Africa. It was the liberation agenda more than the pan-Africanist agenda that dominated the political dialogue and relations between the Nordic region and Africa.

But the support for the national liberation was just a beginning. This was repeatedly reflected in statements by both Nordic and African political leaders. Let me quote Walter Sisulu in a comment on Nordic involvement with Southern Africa after the installment of a democratic government in South Africa. He said “We still need each other. We have a great job to do, and this time not for a particular country, but on a global basis. The first stage without the second is not worth it.”

The end of the Cold War raised the political interest in the OAU - not only among the Nordic countries. But also other events led to or forced a renewed interest. The development in Somalia was one (resulting in an American disaster), the genocide in Rwanda was a second (with a humiliated and weakened UN as a tragic result), the first free elections in South Africa was a third element – and the ANC government’s decision to use OAU as a platform

for cooperation and influence in Africa. The war in the DRC where African states took an active part on different sides definitely changed the role and expectations on the OAU.

Let me now turn to some aspects of the relationships between the Nordic countries and the African Union today.

All Nordic countries are today deeply involved in support of the regional institutions in Africa, for a variety of reasons including the peace and security dimensions. Why is that so? Well, one explanation is these historical links dating back to the support for the liberation movements. Another reason is the wave of democratisation which came in the nineties in the wake of the end of the cold war. The fact that South Africa, the democratic role model for the Nordic countries, took an active interest in promoting its political influence on a Pan-African scale played in. A third reason, I would argue, was and is the general understanding of a specific Nordic partnership with Africa.

The main features of this specific Nordic partnership or model is a) an involvement without strategic foreign policy interest (in contrast to other major players), b) a commitment to long term engagement, c) a pragmatic and flexible use of human and financial resources and d) a basis of mutual interest. Not the least this last dimension has gained prominence if we look at the recent policy documents with their manifold references to the role of Africa in the global development.

In the Norwegian Platform for an integrated Africa policy from 2007 it says "Norway's desire to strengthen cooperation with African countries is based on the recognition that Africa's international influence is growing. Globalisation is bringing African countries and Norway closer together". In the Swedish Africa Policy from 2008 it is expressed in the following words: "The aim of Sweden's Africa Policy is to support African countries and citizens in their pursuit of peace, democracy and sustainable development. This policy is designed to help Africa take a full and active part in global political and economic cooperation on common challenges".

The Danish Africa Strategy from 2007 "The main priorities are that Denmark is to work for the inclusion of Africa in globalisation and its development into an equal global partner"

Peace and security are seen as the most important regional capacities in need of support. In the Norwegian policy platform it says "Taking part in conflict resolution and reconstruction efforts has become an important part of Norwegian involvement in Africa". In the Danish strategy similar wordings are heard "Since 2004, Denmark has given support to the construction of an African Security Architecture under the Africa Programme for Peace, which helps to strengthen the African Union and the regional organisations' capacity to deal with crises and contribute to peace-keeping operations". The Swedish government says "Africa's political integration and the African peace and security architecture is laying the groundwork for more advanced Swedish initiatives"

The Finnish government echoes the same sentiment “An important part of the regional cooperation in Africa is the participation in preventing conflicts, in peacekeeping and in civilian crisis management”.

In the implementation of the joint AU-EU strategy these Nordic priorities are also prominent. In 2008 member states were asked to indicate their preferred choice of partnership. Out of the eight working groups created within the institutional framework of the strategy Nordic countries are active in all but two: Millennium development goals and energy. Sweden and Finland are in Peace and Security, Sweden in Democratic governance and human rights and in Trade, regional integration and infrastructure, Finland, Sweden and Denmark are in Climate change, Denmark and Sweden in Migration and finally, Finland and Sweden in Science, information society and space.

So what has come out of these Nordic priorities and policies?

As a source for this brief summary I am relying among other things on two recent evaluations: one by NORAD “Evaluation of the Norwegian Research and Development Activities in Conflict Prevention and Peace-Building” and one by DANIDA “Evaluation of Danish Regional Support to Peace and Security, Regional Integration and Democratisation in Southern Africa”. An additional source is the Norwegian document “Africa: Political Partner and global actor – opportunities and challenges” published by the Norwegian MFA last year.

The evaluations are generally positive to the outcome of support. But there are also some interesting observations.

The Norwegian emphasis on peace and security has included a substantial support for research, one could even in this respect talk of a specific Norwegian model rather than a Nordic model. Since 2005 the support has increased with the launching of a programme for fundamental research on Peace and Poverty and an annually increasing allocation for applied research from the Peace and Reconciliation Unit of the MFA.

One example of this approach in Sudan, a high priority country for Norway, is the use of researchers/experts as active members of the team directly in support of the negotiation process. This has been made possible by the willingness of the MFA to grant the researcher temporary diplomatic status specifically for this purpose.

The various research initiatives have however not always led to changes in the Norwegian response to situations, according to the evaluation. I quote from the evaluation report “The paradox is that while MFA and Norad-funded research develops an account of the complex nature of the Sudanese situation, Norwegian development assistance and aid policy still tends to focus on building up the South, with no real effort to foster linkages between the North and the South, thereby under-cutting the unity agenda of the CPA”.

The evaluation also points to some general problems, which more and more have come to surface in the discussions around the African Union and the African Peace and Security Architecture namely that of a) over- and underfunded parts of the system and b) the balance between support for development initiative and the support for peace and security initiatives .

The Danish evaluation adds a third problem to the fore, that of the lack of donor coordination. The recommendations are that Denmark – and other donors – should adhere to the Windhoek declaration (in principle a regional version of the Paris declaration) and that it is also necessary to clarify responsibilities between embassy level and Headquarters level.

I believe that all these observations are relevant and that we need to look more closely at them.

As has been noted by Gunnar Sörbö, in his contribution to the Norwegian paper I mentioned above, foreign donor agencies play a major role in funding the AU, the RECs and their activities. In his view there is at present insufficient focus on both alignment with AU priorities and poor harmonisation of support provided by various agencies.

So finally, what can the Nordic countries do to improve the situation? Taken one by one the Nordic countries are small -in relation to the AU and in relation to other donors. By maintaining and developing their cooperation the Nordic countries with their similarities in approach and their common historical alignment with Africa could constitute an increasingly interesting and creative platform for dialogue. And we expect that the Nordic Africa Institute and other Nordic research institutes – in close collaboration with African scholars - will be able to provide a critical voice in support of such a dialogue.

Thank You