The last decade has seen Africa make tremendous strides in democratic consolidation and strengthen regional cooperation, while enjoying a surge in economic growth. This gives a renewed sense of purpose and identity.

At the same time, there is a sense of urgency. Africa's population is expected to double by 2050. Africa is the youngest continent in the world: About 70 percent of its population is 30 years of age or younger. One of the greatest challenges facing governments and policymakers in Africa today is how to provide opportunities for the continent's more than 200 million young for them to live decent lives and contribute to the development of their countries and continent. This demographic pressure is a challenge as well as an opportunity.

I am pleased that we have UNDP Regional Director Abdoulaye Mar Dieye with us here today and look forward to hearing his assessment of the challenges to development in Africa.

The opportunities for Africa are however marred by the fact that violent extremism is still a serious threat to national and international peace and security. Every attack helps to further undermine stability, increase uncertainty and hamper investment and development.

We must constantly be alert to radicalization and the influence it has on our young people. And we must take the entire toolbox in use both internationally and at home. With that, I think we need to use the tougher actions

hand in hand with the preventive ones. And we must do so in respect of human rights.

Action means we need to work across borders and cooperate with our international partners in combating extremism. Today's event is a valuable example of this.

Although the prevention of violent extremism has been on the agenda for a long time, it is still a somewhat unknown terrain. We must acknowledge that there is still much work to be done on analyzing violent extremism and how to best prevent or counter it. We need more evidence to better understand the drivers and respond accordingly.

Earlier this year, the UN General Assembly adopted an action plan for the prevention of violent extremism. The action plan highlights respect for human rights, good governance and anti-corruption as important anti-terrorism efforts. This is the international foundation on which our endeavours rest.

Preventing and combatting violent extremism is a strong priority of Danish national security and international development activities. Support in this area to Africa has prominence in "Denmark's strategy for development cooperation and humanitarian action".

Denmark has thus engaged concretely to counter and prevent radicalization and violent extremism. Let me briefly give a few examples.

One can view our engagements at three levels:

1. We work with the African Union under the African Programme for Peace, supporting areas such as norm setting, common African positions and capacity development and by establishing the frameworks for mediation, preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention, peace support operations etc.

2. Under the Sahel Peace and Stabilization Programme, we have engaged through analysis, dialogue and training to improve security in hard-to-reach conflictual border areas.

3. And, finally, we support the Horn of Africa Peace and Stabilization Programme as well as specific country programming.

This includes our support to a rehabilitation center in Mogadishu, where the purpose is to give former al-Shabaab members an alternative to violent extremism by offering them different forms of education. And - in Kenya - in cooperation with the National Anti-Terrorism Center, we have helped introduce an approach with greater focus on softer action in the prevention of violent extremism.

It has become clear from these and other engagements that we must continuously pay attention to learning from our experiences - and from other people's experiences.

Let me highlight a few of our own experiences so far:

Firstly, the task cannot be solved by state authorities alone. Civil society actors have some special skills when it comes to creating dialogue, promoting tolerance and countering discrimination. It is therefore important that we work together across ministries, areas of interest and with NGOs and local leaders.

Secondly, tools must be adapted to the local context to be effective. While important lessons can be drawn from other regions, they cannot be simply transferred; they need to be translated and adapted to the specific local context and its particular incentives and drivers.

Thirdly, we must remember that prevention of extremism and human rights protection go hand in hand. Violations of human rights is fundamentally unacceptable and often counterproductive. Extremists will use them to justify their violence. When people do not legitimately and peacefully have the opportunity to express their frustrations, the risk increases of them resorting to violent means.

And finally, the actions and risk we take must be grounded in evidence and understanding of the dynamics. Solid results frameworks and critical scrutiny of the theories of change involved are of the essence. Defining a theory of change is a challenge when it comes to violent extremism. There is an inherent risk of lack of clarity on what causes the problem and hence how to solve it. We need to identify more clearly where opportunities exist to effectively mitigate drivers of violent extremism and reinforce resilience to recruitment.

The report by UNDP "Journey to Extremism in Africa" is, thus, an important and timely contribution to getting more evidence and granularity on the incentives, drivers and tipping points for recruitment into violent extremist groups.

I hope you will have a productive discussion today and look forward to working with your ideas and conclusions. Thank you.