

Letter of 28 August 2023 from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation to the House of Representatives on the policy response to the IOB evaluation of Dutch policy on stability, security and the rule of law in some of the most fragile contexts

The Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has completed an evaluation of Dutch policy in some of the most fragile contexts over the period from 2015 to 2022, which is attached to this letter as an appendix. In this letter, drawn up in conjunction with the Minister of Defence, we present to the House the government's policy response to the evaluation.

The main question in the IOB evaluation, entitled 'Inconvenient Realities', reads as follows: 'To what extent has the Netherlands contributed to stability, security and rule of law in fragile contexts and what lessons can be learned for future policy formulation and implementation?' IOB conducted an in-depth analysis of Dutch engagement in Afghanistan, Mali and South Sudan, emphasising that the evaluation focused on the *most fragile contexts* and that the findings cannot automatically be generalised to apply to other, *less* fragile contexts. The evaluation focused on the Netherlands' engagement as a whole, including its diplomatic efforts, development cooperation and military and civil contributions to missions.

The government is grateful to IOB for the report, which recognises the complexity of fragile contexts and clearly indicates what has worked well and what has not. IOB states that investing in fragile contexts is, and remains, important. The evaluation contains important recommendations for improving the Netherlands' engagement in the most fragile contexts, and in several areas supports a course that has already been set regarding efforts in other fragile contexts.

The policy response below first outlines the general background and then addresses the evaluation's conclusions and recommendations.

Background

The OECD 'States of Fragility' report issued in 2022¹ found that 1.9 billion people were living in fragile contexts. In 2030, it is estimated that 86% of people in extreme poverty will be living in fragile countries. Increasing fragility is thus a negative global trend that we need to reckon with. This starts close to home. Instability has been growing for some years now in countries and regions around Europe and the Kingdom of the Netherlands.² The war in Ukraine has also impacted on European security³ and constitutes a threat to global security and the international legal order. There is a direct relationship between the Kingdom's interests in prosperity, health and security on the one hand and addressing global challenges such as war, climate change, migration, poverty and inequality on the other.⁴ The main objectives of Dutch foreign policy are also linked to these trends. Addressing the root causes of poverty, terrorism, irregular migration and climate change, as well as pursuing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), are therefore key issues in the foreign trade and development cooperation (BHOS) policy document 'Do What We Do Best' (2022).⁵ Furthermore, allies and international partners frequently request the Netherlands to contribute to broader international efforts in fragile states. By contributing to these international efforts, the Netherlands is investing in international partnerships and alliances, and in the international legal order.

Government response to the IOB conclusions

IOB's first conclusion in this evaluation is that the Netherlands has contributed to some positive results at local level and in technical sectors, but that these results have had no impact in breaking the vicious cycles of violence and instability in Afghanistan, Mali and South Sudan. IOB believes that this also applies to the broader efforts by the international community, and notes that in the three cases studied, a lack of political will and frequent escalation of conflict had a detrimental effect on the sustainability of results.

The government recognises that although the Netherlands has contributed to positive results at local level, this did not succeed in breaking the cycles of violence and instability in Afghanistan, Mali or Sudan. It is important for the long-term objectives at impact level,⁶ such as addressing the root causes of poverty, conflict and terrorism, to be translated more effectively into country-specific, concrete and realistic goals at outcome level in the medium term. At the same time, it is also realistic to note, as the government has frequently discussed with the House, that in many fragile contexts, 'not losing further ground' can already be a significant result. Unfortunately, it is a major empirical challenge to properly measure the effects of our efforts. In response to this conclusion, the government will work with IOB to explore with implementing partners how to better shape the process of translating long-term objectives into realistic goals. IOB also identifies positive results at local level that are due to Dutch engagement, for example in relation to social cohesion and resilience. The government would like to stress that such results are only possible thanks to the ongoing commitment of implementing partners (local, national, international and multilateral), which often work under very difficult circumstances.

Secondly, IOB concludes that there are limits to the malleability of society in fragile and conflict-affected settings, and that there is a gap between the policy ambitions and the scope of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' influence. IOB notes a discrepancy between the ambitious policy objectives that fit the Dutch political context and the limited influence of Dutch policy in practice.

The government recognises that the Netherlands has limited influence, and that its influence is not always well aligned with its stated policy ambitions and objectives. The Netherlands uses various

¹ [OECD States of Fragility](#), 2022. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) characterises fragility as the combination of exposure to risks and insufficient coping capacity of the state, systems and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks. It identifies six dimensions of fragility: economic, environmental, political, security, societal and human capital.

² [Integrated International Security Strategy \(GBVS\) 2018-2022](#), 2018 (in Dutch).

³ [Security Strategy for the Kingdom of the Netherlands \(Publication\) | Publication | Government.nl](#), 2023.

⁴ [Policy framework Global Multilateralism 2022-2026 | Publication | Government.nl](#), June 2022.

⁵ [Policy Document for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation: Do what we do best | Policy note | Government.nl](#), June 2022.

⁶ The OECD's definition of impact level: positive and negative, primary and secondary, long-term effects produced by development interventions. The OECD's definition of outcome level: the likely or achieved short-term and medium-term change and effects of intervention outputs. [OECD: What are results?](#)

instruments to contribute to thematic policy objectives in fragile countries. Overarching objectives remain necessary in order to define the larger framework to which the Netherlands – together with others – seeks to contribute. IOB rightly notes that these objectives should be as realistic as possible. The government also wants to be more transparent about the gap between its stated policy ambitions and objectives and the results to be achieved at outcome level. This involves more often and more openly discussing the dilemmas of engaging in contexts of conflict and fragility, an approach that has already been applied, as described in various parliamentary papers.⁷ Realism and modesty are the watchwords here. The government will thus endeavour to maintain a sense of realism in its objectives in fragile states, and to discuss them with the House in a way that reflects this.⁸ We are acutely aware that the world cannot be moulded to our desires, especially when it comes to fragile states. At the same time, we, like our international partners, seek to take responsibility for promoting stability in those countries.

Thirdly, IOB concludes that internal political and institutional barriers have hindered the ministry from working in an integrated manner and adapting its programmes and policies effectively to evolving contexts. IOB notes that Dutch programming was largely driven by policies set in The Hague, rather than by local context and needs. Local ownership was also limited. Fourthly and lastly, IOB concluded that there was insufficient focus on conflict sensitivity and the risk of adverse effects caused by interventions. The government partly endorses conclusions 3 and 4 and will address them further in its response to the recommendations.

Several of the four conclusions discussed above correspond to conclusions and lessons learned from previous IOB and other evaluations relating to the Netherlands' work in fragile regions.⁹ The government would also note that the current IOB evaluation covers the period up to 2022 and that since taking office in 2022 it has made various policy changes that already address some of the recommendations. These policy changes, described previously, amount to greater realism, transparent and frequent discussion of dilemmas and risks, and modesty about the level of influence the Netherlands can exert on what are often endogenous processes in fragile countries. We need to be honest about how much influence Dutch interventions can have. We also need to look carefully at how we can use our instruments as effectively as possible to help improve the situation in fragile states. It is in this vein that the government is talking to the House about Dutch engagement in fragile states and communicating on this subject in various parliamentary papers.¹⁰ Thanks in part to these recommendations, however, the government does recognise that further steps can be taken to implement newly formulated policy more effectively.

Response to policy recommendations

On the basis of its four conclusions, IOB reaches one overarching recommendation that is developed into six specific recommendations, which are discussed below.

⁷ Examples of this are [The Africa Strategy of the Netherlands 2023-2032 | Publication | Government.nl](#), the [Letter to parliament on the long-term vision for Dutch engagement in Afghanistan \(July 2022\)](#) (in Dutch), the [Letter to parliament on the state of affairs surrounding the ban on women working for NGOs in Afghanistan \(January 2023\)](#) (in Dutch), the [Policy response to the final evaluation of the Dutch contribution to Resolute Support in Afghanistan \(2023\)](#) (in Dutch), the [Letter to parliament on the presentation of the report by the Committee investigating the Non-Lethal Assistance \(NLA\) programme in Syria \(2022\)](#) (in Dutch), and the annual 'Article 100 letters' informing parliament of the deployment of the Dutch armed forces as part of EUFOR Althea and Iraq.

⁸ Examples of this are the parliamentary committee debate on 27 January 2022 on the Netherlands' future engagement in and aid to Afghanistan, the committee debate on 3 November 2022 on the progress of evaluations of missions, the committee debate on extending the Dutch contribution to the anti-ISIS coalition and the broader security effort in Iraq in 2023, and the committee debate on 21 June 2023 on the 'Article 100' contribution to EUFOR Althea.

⁹ [IOB evaluation 'Less Pretension, More Realism'](#), July 2019; [IOB evaluation of the Dutch contribution to MINUSMA \(2014-2019\)](#), September 2022; [IOB evaluation of Dutch policy on the international legal order \(2015-2021\)](#) (in Dutch), September 2022; [Report by the Committee investigating the NLA programme in Syria \(2015-2018\)](#), December 2022; [IOB Evaluation of Dutch contribution to Resolute Support \(2015-2021\)](#) (in Dutch), May 2023.

¹⁰ These changes are, for example, expressed in the aforementioned BHOS policy document (2022, including four methods for working in fragile contexts) and the Africa Strategy (2023-2032), in the Letter to parliament on the long-term vision of Dutch engagement in Afghanistan (2022), the [Coherence letter on Missions and Operations \(2022\)](#) (in Dutch), the Policy Framework on Global Multilateralism (2022-2026) and the policy document on human rights, democracy and the international legal order (2023).

Overarching recommendation 1: 'Reassess the objectives and strategies of Dutch interventions in diplomacy, development and defence in highly fragile contexts.'

The government welcomes this main recommendation and considers regular reassessment of objectives essential in this rapidly changing world, certainly when engaging in countries with a high degree of fragility. Engagement in fragile contexts is unavoidable, given the objectives and interests described earlier, but it involves inherent risks and complex dilemmas, as described in the IOB evaluation. Achieving results in fragile states is often a long and arduous process characterised by alternating successes and setbacks. The government will continue to take responsibility when it comes to engaging in these situations, despite the challenging context. Given the new geopolitical challenges and changing realities, it is both vital and urgent that the Netherlands step up its engagement. The increasing role of major powers such as Russia and China is also forcing us to reassess the way we engage with other countries.¹¹ All in all, a broad range of instruments is needed to ensure the continued promotion of Dutch and European security interests and to enable a contribution to the resilience and development of populations and institutions in fragile contexts. Dutch engagement, while ambitious, is also realistic and transparent about the dilemmas and the scope for achieving results.

The government also agrees on the need for strategic debate on realistic objectives and engagement, and sees the processes surrounding the drafting of Multiannual Country Strategies and annual plans as the appropriate forums for this. The regular scenario sessions on fragile countries organised in association with partners also offer opportunities in this respect. The government does not intend to draft a new fragile states 'policy' because it believes that the methods and instruments for working effectively in fragile states can be implemented through existing processes. Furthermore, the Netherlands remains in close consultation with like-minded donors and partner organisations to exchange lessons learned and best practices, precisely when it comes to determining strategic objectives to be achieved in fragile states and how best to do this jointly and coherently. This approach strengthens joint action in coalitions and with partner organisations, and involves discussions on the risks of working in fragile states and how to mitigate them.

Like-minded donors are facing the same challenges. Cooperation with countries such as Germany and the US is therefore a conscious political and strategic choice for the Netherlands. In December 2022, Germany published a new integrated vision on working in fragile states, entitled 'Shaping Stabilisation'.¹² Germany recognises that working in fragile states poses significant risks, but that inaction is also risky. The German vision therefore states that 'the goal of reducing violent conflicts is worth taking well-considered risks for if there is a chance of success'. The United States is working on conflict prevention and stabilisation in a number of selected countries and regions¹³ via the 'U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability'. The US government has a long time horizon for these efforts and recently published 10-year plans for the focus countries and regions concerned. Integrated working, adaptive programming and a willingness to take considered risks are key concepts in the US approach. Lastly, the EU is working to operationalise its Stabilisation Concept, which will incorporate recent lessons learned regarding stabilisation interventions. In its own activities the Netherlands is also making use of approaches used by other countries, as well as lessons learned from other donors.

The Netherlands maintains close contact with international organisations that work to foster peace and stability in fragile contexts. The Secretary-General of the United Nations is proposing a stronger commitment to conflict prevention and peacebuilding¹⁴ and is consulting member states such as the Netherlands in drafting the UN's New Agenda for Peace. We note that some institutions, such as the World Bank Group, have substantially increased their investment in fragile

¹¹ See also the Africa Strategy of the Netherlands (2023-2032).

¹² [Shaping Stabilisation](#), 2022.

¹³ West African coastal states, Libya, Mozambique, Haiti and Papua New Guinea.

¹⁴ [Our Common Agenda](#), 2021.

contexts in recent years, arguing that efforts in such countries are becoming increasingly important in reducing extreme poverty and promoting global prosperity.¹⁵

With regard to defence, one finding of the final evaluation of the Dutch contribution to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) in Afghanistan was that the Netherlands' level of ambition for this contribution was too high. The government was mindful of this when making the case for the Netherlands' contribution to the anti-ISIS coalition and the broader security effort in Iraq, showing greater realism and transparency about the modest ambition level of Dutch engagement there, partly because of the challenging context and the many constraints.¹⁶ This lesson was also followed up in the Article 100 letter (a letter informing parliament of the deployment of the Dutch armed forces to maintain or promote the international legal order) that was sent to the House on 6 April this year concerning the Dutch contribution to EUFOR Althea.¹⁷ This included a clear definition of the mission mandate and achievable objectives specific to the Dutch contribution.

Recommendation 2: 'Address the disconnect between the limited sphere of influence of Dutch policy and the formulation of highly ambitious policy objectives.'

The government recognises the importance of addressing the disconnect between ambitious policy objectives and the limited influence of Dutch policy in fragile countries. Recommendation 2 is largely covered in the text concerning Conclusions 1 and 2. In brief: realism and modesty are the watchwords in this respect. The government will thus explicitly endeavour to maintain a sense of realism in defining its objectives in fragile states, and to discuss them with the House in a way that reflects this. At the same time, we want to take responsibility for contributing to stability in those countries.

In addition, the recommendations relating to development cooperation – such as longer programme duration, exit strategies and sustainability – are included in the ongoing development of policy on adaptive programming, the reform programme on doing less but doing it better and more flexibly (*Minder, Beter, Flexibeler*), which is aimed at reducing fragmentation and increasing focus, improvements to policy implementation (including capacity building), and efforts to respond more flexibly to context-specific circumstances.

Recommendation 3: 'Prioritise context specificity and local ownership.'

The government agrees with IOB that, both in making results sustainable and for other reasons, it is vital that actions be context-specific at country level, demand-driven, and based on local ownership and inclusion of local actors. IOB rightly notes that the concept of localisation has long been a focal point in Dutch policy. The Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation has already undertaken to share a localisation strategy with the House. As IOB points out, embassies are in the best position to grasp the local context. The government does not consider it necessary to rethink the thematic funding structure, as IOB suggests, but intends to make Dutch engagement more country- and context-specific in the manner described in the other recommendations. To this end, a certain degree of flexibility in thematic budgets could facilitate more coherent and context-specific engagement. The Dutch policy of delegating resources and activities to missions, within the parameters of jointly drafted internal Multiannual Country Strategies and thematic frameworks, provides scope for this. The OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) announced in its meeting last June that it was advising the Netherlands to focus more in its thematic funding structure on context-specificity and inclusion of local actors, as well as increasing capacity and resources at embassies.¹⁸

Recommendation 4: 'Adopt a pragmatic approach to engaging in fragile contexts.'

¹⁵ See [Scaling-up Support to Address Fragility, Conflict and Violence | financingun.report](#) about increasing the World Bank Group budget for fragile contexts, and the [World Bank Group Strategy for Fragility, Conflict and Violence \(2020-2025\)](#), 2020.

¹⁶ Parliamentary Paper 27925, no. 919.

¹⁷ Parliamentary Paper 29521, no. 459.

¹⁸ The publication of the OECD DAC Peer Review Report on Dutch development cooperation policy is scheduled for October 2023.

The government agrees with IOB's recommendation to adopt a pragmatic approach in fragile contexts. Moreover, it is important to be transparent in advance about the risks, dilemmas and considerations involved in engaging in fragile contexts. Recent letters to parliament about Afghanistan¹⁹ and Iraq,²⁰ for example, looked explicitly at current dilemmas. The government recognises the importance of keeping a constructively critical diplomatic dialogue open with the various parties to a conflict, even when this is not easy to do. IOB recommends accepting the inherent risks of working in fragile contexts. The government recognises that accepting and managing risks in fragile regions is unavoidable if results are to be achieved, as stated in the BHOS policy document.²¹ At the same time, the government does not wish to take unnecessary risks. The decision to continue to engage requires a long-term perspective and political courage, as IOB observes. In line with the recommendation, the government recognises the importance of adjusting strategic policy objectives in the wake of any political decision to reduce or cease engagement with certain actors.

Recommendation 5: 'Improve the MFA's capacity for organisational learning and adaptive programming.'

The government supports IOB's recommendation to promote a culture of transparency and learning. Thanks in part to the appointment of monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) specialists at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2020,²² some progress has already been made, for example by placing greater focus on theories of change, evidence-gathering and learning. According to the OECD DAC, this also shifts the focus towards more transformative change and lasting impact. Increasingly, policy and programme documents also include assumptions²³ and learning agendas, as recommended by IOB. Lessons learned are also incorporated in the design of Dutch contributions to missions and operations. For example, for the Dutch deployment in EUFOR Althea, a framework was developed for monitoring and evaluating the Netherlands' contribution, as explained in the Article 100 letter.²⁴ The information gathered from monitoring and evaluation will be used by the government for any necessary adjustment of this contribution and for applying lessons learned to future contributions. Accountability is also important, and in that connection it remains important to facilitate the necessary openness within the ministry and in cooperation with our partners to learn from mistakes and actually change a course of action that is not working.

The government is also working on adaptive programming, at portfolio and activity level, for the simple reason that working in increasingly unstable contexts requires it. At the same time, more learning and adaptive programming also require greater capacity and a different type of partnership with implementing parties, in which strict agreements on quantitative results may be at odds with the need to be able to implement changes quickly in a changing context. Here, the government is seeking the right balance and applying customised measures as required by the specific context.

The government recognises the importance of scenario exercises, as specified by IOB, to determine alternative strategies in case the context changes significantly. It also embraces the suggestion to invite external parties more often to reflect critically on plans, policies and assumptions, and would add that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regularly organises strategic sessions with partners such as the International Crisis Group and the Conflict Research Unit from the Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael' to determine the best courses of action for the government in fragile contexts.

¹⁹ Letter to parliament on the long-term vision for Dutch engagement in Afghanistan, July 2022; [Foreign Affairs Council \(Development\), 28 November 2022](#); Letter to parliament on the state of affairs surrounding the ban on women working for NGOs in Afghanistan (January 2023); [Foreign Affairs Council \(Development\), 4 May 2023](#).

²⁰ [Article 100 Letter concerning the Dutch contribution to the anti-ISIS coalition and the broader security effort in Iraq in 2023](#), October 2022; [Article 100 letter regarding the broader security effort in Iraq](#), July 2023.

²¹ [Policy Document for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation: Do what we do best | Policy note | Government.nl](#), June 2022.

²² Parliamentary Paper 2021Z08842.

²³ For example, the Stabilisation and Humanitarian Aid Department's Theory of Change on Security and the Rule of Law.

²⁴ Parliamentary Paper 29 521, no. 459.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has two career paths for expertise in development cooperation – one with a more general and one with a more specialised profile. The government has decided to boost staff levels in the mission network for a number of themes in the coming years. This thematic enhancement will also affect the missions operating in fragile states such as Yemen, South Sudan, Niger, Burkina Faso, Somalia and Sudan, and will enable the ministry to better shape programmes on climate change, the root causes of migration, security and the rule of law, and humanitarian aid. The challenge of retaining knowledge when staff are transferred is recognised and is receiving more attention. The new Information Management Platform for the Activity Cycle (IMPACT), which provides more digital support, is currently being rolled out in phases and could help facilitate this.

Recommendation 6: ‘Improve the coherence of Dutch foreign policy.’

The government endorses IOB’s affirmation of the importance of greater coherence, both internal coherence within government and external coherence in partnerships with other actors in the countries where we work.²⁵ Some of IOB’s suggestions for engaging more coherently in fragile states, such as better coordination of the various elements of foreign policy, have already been incorporated in the 2023-2026 country strategies. In terms of programming, the government intends to make long-term commitments in more cases. Again, it is important to note that a dose of realism is appropriate: the Netherlands alone has limited influence. Moreover, endogenous processes in fragile states are almost always stronger than anything Dutch interventions can achieve. It is therefore important to capitalise as much as possible on those endogenous processes, in cooperation with other actors in the international community. To promote external coherence, the government is working to strengthen the EU’s effectiveness, investing in the multilateral system and coordinating regularly with countries in the region concerned, as well as with international and regional organisations. Furthermore, the Netherlands consciously supports mechanisms that promote cooperation between relevant international actors at country level, such as the UN Peacebuilding Fund and UN Peace and Development Advisors.

Recommendation 6 also refers to the importance of making the policy objectives and operationalisation of the integrated approach more explicit. The government defines the integrated approach as ‘the way in which the Dutch government can make the most effective use of the available instruments to promote security, stability and lasting peace in fragile states and conflict regions, in cooperation with local authorities, international organisations and civil society and other partners’.²⁶ The evaluation’s recommendations regarding the integrated approach, as well as those concerning the UN mission MINUSMA in Mali and the Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan, will be taken into account by the government when developing interministerial policy on the integrated approach. The Netherlands is also pursuing efforts to further apply the integrated approach in the EU, the UN system and interventions by international financial institutions, for example by conducting joint contextual and conflict analyses, which in turn could benefit conflict sensitivity. This will involve committing to a coherent political strategy and using different instruments simultaneously, such as linking EU political strategies, EU missions and operations and EU development cooperation in specific contexts more effectively. The Netherlands is also committed to strengthening the coordinating role of, for example, the UN Resident Coordinator in fragile states.

Recommendation 7: ‘Take conflict sensitivity much more seriously.’

The government endorses the IOB recommendation to be constantly mindful of conflict sensitivity. Conflict sensitivity helps to minimise any inadvertent adverse impact resulting from our engagement, to gain a better picture of the risks involved in our interventions and, wherever possible, to increase the positive contribution of interventions for lasting peace. This applies equally to interventions promoting development cooperation and foreign trade, as well as to diplomatic interventions and to missions and operations. At the same time, a dose of realism is needed here too: the Netherlands has limited influence on endogenous processes in fragile states.

²⁵ OESO DAC defines coherence as: the compatibility of the intervention with other interventions in a country, sector or institution. [Evaluation Criteria - OECD](#).

²⁶ Parliamentary Paper 31787, no. 11.

Even if we make every effort to ensure that our actions are conflict-sensitive, we need to be aware that interventions could fail due to rapidly evolving contexts or internal dynamics.

The government has developed guidelines for applying a conflict-sensitive approach to interventions, and a conflict-sensitivity assessment will now be mandatory in the assessment process for all future development cooperation activities. It is also important to be able to respond to the evolving context of a country during the course of a project.

Over the past several years, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has invested in conflict sensitivity by providing customised training for both staff and implementing partners, drafting guidelines and making conflict-sensitivity assessments mandatory in future development cooperation activities. In line with IOB's recommendation, the government intends to further expand support for conflict-sensitive practices by providing a mandatory course for staff and enhanced assistance for conflict-sensitive deployment and programming. The Netherlands is also working at European level and in multilateral institutions to further integrate conflict sensitivity in their practices, and is contributing to non-governmental organisations that promote this worldwide.

In conclusion

The IOB evaluation contains valuable findings and recommendations which the government welcomes and will take into consideration in future efforts in the most fragile states. Conditions in such countries are often complex and results do not always come easily. Working in fragile contexts also involves dilemmas and risks, and the government seeks to communicate as transparently as possible about the complex considerations that sometimes need to be taken into account as a result. Long-term engagement is required. In the recommendations, the government sees support for its recently initiated course of action on such topics as promoting a learning organisation, adaptive programming and local ownership. The government is therefore expecting enhanced results in these areas. On the subject of conflict sensitivity too, the government has gained insights that can be used to improve performance. The government considers it crucial to continue contributing to international stability, security and the rule of law, despite often difficult conditions, in order to reduce poverty and fragility, and because the Netherlands will benefit from a safe and just world.