

Birgitte Qvist-Sørensen looks back as 3-year Moderator term ends

ACT Alliance

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Birgitte Qvist-Sørensen reflects on her 3 years as ACT Alliance Moderator as her term comes to an end. She is General Secretary of DanChurchAid.

Please share a few highlights from your 3-year term as Moderator.

A regular feature of governance meetings included reflecting on the external context, and how the Alliance can adapt and respond in a rapidly changing world to remain relevant, cohesive, effective and accountable.

ACT Alliance is in a very exciting time, where important changes are taking place in many areas and on many fronts. These changes range from new partnerships to a more proactive engagement in humanitarian response. At the same time, the Alliance faces financial challenges that need to be addressed. These challenges require ongoing revision of approaches, structures and procedures, all designed to promote cohesiveness, relevance and effectiveness. This will benefit not only the Alliance, but also its individual members.

The revised model for membership, also called the “engagement model,” came into effect January 1, 2020. In 2019 the Governing Board, with the support of the Membership and Nominations Committee and the Secretariat, began to further develop an implementation plan for the revised membership model. Although the new model improved members’ active engagement in the Alliance, it also presented some challenges.

In May 2021, the revised ACT Humanitarian Policy was approved by the Governing Board. Planned improvements in enabling mechanisms, such as ACT Appeals, the Global Rapid Response Fund and the Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans, are scheduled to roll out beginning in 2022.

We also implemented a system of “reporting back” to respective regional members on important decisions made by the Governing Board. In this way, ACT members were given the opportunity to share views and insights on important matters affecting the life of the Alliance.

One major decision was adding two Youth seats on the Governing Board, which I am personally very happy about. These were filled in the first half of 2021.

What were some of the challenges the Board overcame during your tenure, and how?

In June 2019 the ACT Secretariat started a discussion with key funding members of the Alliance to address its unstable and unpredictable financial situation.

A revised funding model for the Secretariat was produced and presented to the CEOs of the member organizations. It provided concrete and constructive feedback and requested reconsideration of the ambitious timeline to put the new model in place despite the urgency of its critical financial instability and the inherent risk of the current funding model.

The ACT Governing Board endorsed the direction of the proposal and encouraged continued discussions with funding members in order to have a sustainable and predictable model in place considering the financial challenges that the main funding members are currently facing.

What advice do you have for the next Moderator?

Recognise the competencies and skills in the Board – this is a joint effort, and everyone wants to contribute. And recognise the amazing work of the Secretariat – they work hard, find solutions to challenges, and demonstrate a high degree of responsibility.