



Norwegian Ministry
of Foreign Affairs



Government Offices of Sweden
Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Joint Letter from the Foreign Ministers of the Nordic countries
(Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden)
to the United Nations Secretary-General-designate António Guterres

14 December 2016

Your Excellency,

Let us jointly congratulate you and express how pleased we are for your appointment as the next Secretary-General of the United Nations. The Nordic countries remain staunch supporters of the UN committed to working together to ensure that the UN delivers against its mandate. In this spirit, the Nordic countries would like to highlight a few issues which we find of crucial importance for the future of the organization.

You are starting your term at a very challenging time with more ongoing crises in the world than ever before. The devastating situation in Syria and the disregard for international law and humanitarian need, threaten the very core values and principles of the United Nations. This makes the relationship between the Security Council and the Secretary-General even more important. With a Nordic country, Sweden, as a member of the Council, we wish to stress that we stand ready to support you in strengthening your partnership with the Security Council in every way we can.

We are encouraged by the commitment you have expressed to peace and security, placing particular emphasis on the importance of prevention and diplomacy. We encourage you to seize the opportunity created by the three review processes on peace operations, peacebuilding and women, peace and security to truly transform the UN peace and security sector. Promoting solid funding for both "Primacy of Politics" and the Sustaining Peace Agenda, including mediation, peacebuilding and Special Political Missions, is of key importance for the future of the UN peace and security activities. We are convinced that you can have a decisive role as Secretary-General in ensuring full implementation of these needed reforms. While acting as a catalyst for strengthening a comprehensive political will, there is also a lot the secretariat can do. We encourage you to be innovative and increase the coherence and shared understanding of all relevant UN actors.

The Nordic countries wholeheartedly support your view that human rights should be mainstreamed across the UN system. Moreover, we encourage you to strengthen the capacities of the Human Rights Up Front initiative to sustain UN action in the prevention of violations and abuses of international human rights or violations of humanitarian law. With strong leadership by the Secretary-General, this initiative could also better serve the Human Rights Council and the Security Council in taking early preventive action and ensuring accountability.

The adoption of the 2030 agenda for sustainable development is a major milestone. Another one is the Paris Agreement to combat climate change. The true test, however, will be their implementation where solutions are within reach, if ambitious and forward-looking decisions are made. The sustainable management of our natural resources is an integral part of our universal agenda. We further hope you will redirect the necessary financial and human resources to fully leverage the potential of private-public cooperation. Likewise, we hope that you will continue your predecessor's active climate diplomacy among the world leaders.

A major task as you assume your post will be to take a strong lead in ensuring that the UN system takes harmonized and effective collective action to support implementation, follow up and review of the 2030 Agenda. The Secretary-General is in the position to achieve this by strengthening the Chief Executives Board (CEB) and the Senior Management Group, by holding heads of agencies accountable for what they achieve as well as for their collaborative abilities. We encourage you to clarify agency functions and strengthen the authority, staff capacity and common resources of Resident Coordinators. In order to implement the sustainable development goals successfully the UN family must deliver as one across the pillars, and the

inter-linkages between long-term development, peacebuilding, human rights and humanitarian assistance must be strengthened.

The negotiations on the Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR) are about to come to an end. The Nordic countries wish to see a strong QCPR which gives common and global strategic guidance to all UN actors in the short-term and giving you an intergovernmental mandate to suggest further reform and measures in the longer term. We wish to see a United Nations development system that enhances its efficiency, focuses its operational activities more on fragility and vulnerability and breaks down barriers to ensure stronger coherence between its interventions.

UN action is viable only if it is gender-responsive and inclusive in order to strengthen women's empowerment. This should serve as a policy objective across the UN system. The Nordic countries have a long-term commitment to enhance women's status and rights. We hope you will prioritize these rights in your work.

Equally important is to listen to grass roots' voices and ensure the inclusion of the current largest generation of young people in history. It is also vital that the Secretary-General continues to speak up for marginalized and vulnerable groups whose voices are not always heard when decisions affecting them are taken. You have our full support to ensure UN-wide efforts put an end to reprisals against those who cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms.

In terms of administration, we all agree that there is need to make the UN work better as an organization. As Secretary-General you will also have a leading role in making the UN system more modern, transparent and effective. We wholeheartedly support the full implementation of the Standards Operating Procedures as a means of ensuring that the UN delivers as one at country level. It is also important for the Secretary-General to ensure that the work is aligned with the mandates rather than the funding that is made available, to reduce overlapping and to use joint administrative services.

Regarding recruitments, competency, experience and high integrity should be the guiding principles of all recruitments. At the senior level in particular, we find it important that the collaborative abilities of the candidates are assessed. It furthers the view of the Nordic countries that there is scope to enhance the mobility of the workforce, including by providing incentives. We are encouraged by your aim to increase the number of women in leadership positions substantially.

Let us finish by assuring you of the full support of the Nordic countries and wishing you every success as the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Sincerely,



Anders Samuelsen
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Denmark



Timo Soini
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland



Lilja Alfreðsdóttir
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Iceland



Børge Brende
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Norway



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