

Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Nordic Countries

Reykjavík, 8-9 June 2009

Declaration

The Foreign Ministers of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden met in Reykjavik on 8-9 June 2009 to discuss ways to strengthen Nordic cooperation in the areas of foreign affairs and security policy. The Ministers emphasize the strong community of values between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. There is a common interest to contribute to stability in the Nordic region and its vicinity. On the basis of common interests and geographical proximity it is natural for the Nordic countries to cooperate in meeting the challenges in the area of foreign and security policy in the spirit of solidarity. Increased Nordic co-operation is in line with every Nordic country's security and defense policy and complements existing European and Euro-Atlantic cooperation. Efforts to promote democracy, international law including human rights, gender equality and sustainable development are integral parts of the foreign policy of the Nordic countries.

Against this background the Ministers warmly welcome the proposals set forth in the report of Thorvald Stoltenberg, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defence of Norway. The Ministers initiated this report at their meeting in Luxembourg on June 16th last year where Thorvald Stoltenberg was asked to prepare a report on how the Nordic countries may strengthen their cooperation to face future foreign- and security policy challenges. The Ministers warmly appreciate his efforts and thank the associated contributors who have provided their insights.

The proposals of the Stoltenberg Report are an important inspiration to a deepening Nordic cooperation in the field of foreign affairs, security and defence policy. An enhanced Nordic cooperation will better enable the Nordic countries to meet common challenges in the Nordic Region and globally, including concerns emerging from climate change.

The Ministers note that some of the proposals lend themselves to more immediate consideration while others will need to be reviewed in a longer term perspective and that some of the proposals are already under consideration by the Nordic countries, sometimes in cooperation with other nations. The Ministers welcome these efforts and encourage further work along these lines. They underline the importance of involving other nations in Nordic cooperation in this field, not least the Baltic countries.

The Ministers further agree that enhanced Nordic cooperation should be complementary to existing NATO, EU and OSCE commitments and cooperation. There is also a general understanding that it is only through well-functioning multilateralism, not least the work in the United Nations framework, that transnational challenges can be solved.

Nordic cooperation will be enhanced in a flexible manner taking into account each country's interests and resources.

At the Ministers request high-level officials have examined the feasibility of implementing these proposals. On the basis of their preliminary findings the Foreign Ministers have come to the conclusion that the proposals should be further examined with a view to identify areas for deepened cooperation while taking into account the work already in progress.

Certain proposals contain elements for immediate attention. These areas include crisis management, air surveillance and communications, satellite services, cyber security, foreign services, and military cooperation on transport, medical services, education, material and exercise ranges.

The Nordic countries will promote a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict stabilization. As a first step, a closer cooperation on training within the framework of crisis management will be developed. Further efforts on how to support UN operations will be considered.

The Ministers note that enhancing Nordic cooperation relating to air surveillance is an important element in the development of practical Nordic cooperation. The Ministers note that Denmark and Norway have already provided operational assistance to Iceland and participated in air surveillance. The Ministers agree to look further into the feasibility of the proposal on surveillance of Icelandic airspace, under Icelandic authority, with regard to phase one and two of the proposal.

Referring to the proposal on a possible system for civilian maritime surveillance of environmental issues the Ministers note that Norway has invited to share information with the other Nordic countries on preliminary study of such a system ("Barents Watch"). The Ministers also note the extensive international cooperation in the Baltic sea. The surveillance system could benefit from available satellite resources and interested Nordic countries have established a dialogue on how to enhance common efforts in this field.

An expert working group will be established to explore the benefit of intensifying Nordic cooperation with regard to international satellite services. The group shall define potential common interests and make proposals on how work could be taken forward. The group shall deliver its report before the next meeting of the Foreign Ministers.

The Ministers also agree that increased commercial activity in the Arctic and the High North will call for enhanced presence of Coast Guard vessels as they represent important search and rescue assets. The Ministers note that these efforts should be followed up in cooperation with other nations. They recall their decision at the Arctic

Council Ministerial in Tromsø on 29 April to approve the establishment of a task force to develop and complete negotiation, by the next Ministerial meeting in 2011, of an international instrument on cooperation on search and rescue operations in the Arctic.

The Ministers note that the Stoltenberg report contains several proposals relating to the Arctic and the High North, where there are a wide range of areas of common Nordic challenges in relation to continued Nordic Arctic cooperation. This is also reflected in the close cooperation between Norway, Denmark and Sweden in their consecutive Presidencies of the Arctic Council. Climate change in the Arctic will be receiving particular attention in the preparations for the Copenhagen Climate Summit in December and the follow-up work to this conference.

Individually the Nordic countries have limited capacity to solve the increasing number and practical issues regarding the environment, climate, safety and rescue in the Arctic. The Ministers therefore decide to cooperate closely to promote the follow-up of specific issues addressed in the Arctic Council Tromsø declaration in relevant international bodies such as the International Maritime Organization.

The Nordic countries will work towards enhancing cooperation to maintain and promote their exceptionally high level of society-wide cyber security. This will be done at the level of National Computer Emergency Response Teams and other authorized information security incident response practitioners. Enhancing cooperation might include technical and legal facilitation of exchange of classified information between authorities of the Nordic countries in order to respond more effectively to cyber security problems.

Appropriate authorities are already cooperating in the field of crisis preparedness within the NORDRED cooperation. The Ministers note that they will continue to further enhance this cooperation within existing structures.

The Ministers welcome the Nordic Ministerial Meeting on Civil Protection and Crisis Preparedness that took place in Stockholm on the 27th of April and the follow-up action agreed at that Meeting. This new forum is an important means to concretize the will to further deepen the Nordic Cooperation.

Strong regional cooperation is crucial for bringing war criminals to justice, and the way that the Nordic countries organize investigations and prosecutions is essential. The Stoltenberg report points to the present and future common challenges facing the Nordic countries. The Ministers agree to explore ways of improving Nordic cooperation in this area.

The Ministers express their commitment to closer cooperation at Nordic diplomatic missions as a way to strengthen the efficiency and influence of the Nordic countries in international affairs. They identify scope for further cooperation in areas such as political and economic affairs, consular affairs, cultural affairs trade and business

promotion as well as administrative affairs. They agree to pursue further work on a pilot project on cooperation between the Nordic embassies in Kabul.

The Ministers acknowledge the already substantive and developing cooperation of the Nordic countries in the fields of foreign affairs and defence in a broad spectrum of military and civilian issues. There is active Nordic defence cooperation ongoing within the Nordic Coordinated Arrangement for Military Peace Support (NORDCAPS), Nordic Supportive Defence Structures (NORDSUP), and Nordic Armaments Co-operation (NORDAC). In this context the Foreign Ministers welcome the Nordic Defence Ministers decision to include all activities in one enhanced structure in order to strengthen the coordination and effectiveness of their cooperation. This will enhance the capacity of the Nordic countries to meet strategic challenges in the Nordic region and globally.

The continuous work and follow up to strengthen Nordic Cooperation will take place within already existing structures and be the responsibility of the Ministers in charge of each specific area. The Ministers task the Political Directors to follow the further development of Nordic foreign and security policy cooperation.