

Press Release

Important issues discussed at the Nordic Foreign Ministers' meeting in Stavanger on 4 May 2012

Nordic cooperation is developing rapidly. When the Nordic Foreign Ministers came together in Stavanger on 4 May, they discussed ways of strengthening Nordic cooperation and a number of important international issues. One of the platforms for deepening cooperation on foreign and security policy is the 2009 Stoltenberg Report, which outlines specific proposals for closer cooperation in 13 different areas. The Nordic countries have issued a Nordic declaration of solidarity under which they have undertaken to cooperate in a spirit of solidarity to meet challenges in the foreign and security policy area. In the declaration, mention is made among other things of cyber attacks, which already pose a major security challenge.

Cooperation on cyber security

There will be a focus on Nordic cooperation on cyber security in the time ahead, and it has already been decided that a classified communication network between the Nordic capitals will be established. The network will make it possible in the event of a cyber incident targeting one or more Nordic countries to notify the others, analyse the situation and make preparations for any necessary measures securely and effectively.

This technical network is an important step towards translating the Nordic declaration of solidarity into concrete measures and will strengthen the cooperation between the Nordic countries on cyber security. The Foreign Ministers agree that such a network should be established as quickly as possible.

Cooperation between Nordic embassies

The Nordic Foreign Ministers welcome new concrete proposals for places where Nordic diplomatic and consular missions can share premises with a view to strengthening cooperation between them. This would be valuable for promoting common Nordic foreign policy priorities, heightening the Nordic profile and ensuring better use of resources.

On the basis of a closer examination of individual projects, for example to determine whether they would save resources in the long term, we are considering the possibility of several Nordic embassies sharing premises in Asia, Africa, America and Europe. Concrete decisions in this matter will be taken at the next Nordic Foreign Ministers' meeting in November.

Nordic NATO cooperation

The Foreign Ministers underlined the need to further develop the cooperation between NATO and its partner countries. In connection with the NATO Summit in Chicago, the Nordic countries will highlight Nordic cooperation on defence and security policy as an important contribution to the security of the Alliance and the Nordic region, and an example of the great benefits to be gained from joint solutions. The strong partnerships the Alliance has built through joint efforts in, for example, Afghanistan and Libya must be further developed and strengthened.

The Nordic countries will continue their broad engagement in Afghanistan. As a follow-up to the 3C initiative to support adequate funding for the Afghan security forces, the Nordic countries are working to ensure that agreement is reached at the Chicago Summit on a model for the long-term international financing of Afghan security forces in cooperation with the Afghan authorities and the whole international community.

The Nordic countries will seek actively to move women, peace and security higher up on the NATO agenda. The Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations in Stockholm, which was inaugurated in January, is an important contribution to NATO's continued efforts in this area.

Syria

The Nordic countries fully support Special Envoy Kofi Annan's efforts to bring about a political solution to the conflict in Syria. The Syrian authorities must first of all end the violence and withdraw all troops. They must also allow free and unimpeded humanitarian access to all parts of the country. A political dialogue must then be initiated to prepare the ground for a democratic Syria where the rights of minorities are also safeguarded. The Nordic countries will continue their close, constructive cooperation on Syria, among other things within the international Group of Friends of Syria.

The Nordic countries have placed observers at the disposal of the UN observer force in Syria. The force must have sufficient guarantees for its safety and freedom of movement in order to carry out its mission. It is important to gain broad-based international support for the call on the Syrian authorities to fully implement Special Envoy Kofi Annan's six-point plan.

Ukraine

The Nordic Foreign Ministers are deeply concerned about politically motivated legal proceedings in Ukraine. The selective justice we are witnessing in Ukraine is worrying, and the situation must therefore be followed closely. It is particularly important that Ukraine respects international legal norms and fulfils its human rights obligations. As a member of the Council of Europe and the OSCE, Ukraine must comply with its international obligations.

The Nordic Foreign Ministers are deeply concerned about the situation of former Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko. The Ukrainian authorities have a particular responsibility for immediately carrying out independent investigations of allegations of torture and other forms of inhuman or degrading treatment. Ms Tymoshenko must be given adequate medical treatment. She must also be given unrestricted access to her lawyers. The Ukrainian authorities should also allow her to be visited by family members and international representatives in Ukraine.

Myanmar/Burma

The promising political changes in Myanmar/Burma are taking place at the same time as the Nordic countries are intensifying their political, development and commercial efforts to support the democratic process that is being led by the Burmese people. In order to support the political processes, the Nordic countries have offered to help with competence-building and provide other assistance, for example by supporting implementation of the ceasefires in the ethnic minority areas, including the establishment of a fund to finance these efforts, and providing technical assistance in connection with Myanmar's/Burma's development strategy. We can provide expertise in important areas such as good governance, the principles of the rule of law, corporate social responsibility and sound management of natural resources.

Gender equality

The Nordic countries will continue their broad-based efforts in the UN and other international forums to promote women's rights and gender equality. The implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security is of key importance in these efforts. The Nordic Foreign Ministers are particularly concerned about violence against women and the campaign that is currently being waged against women's rights and gender equality.