

# Declaration on Swedish-Finnish Cooperation

September 16, 2024



Photo Henrik Montgomery / TT



Government Offices of Sweden

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### Joint meeting between the governments of the Kingdom of Sweden and the Republic of Finland in Stockholm the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 2024

#### *Preamble*

On September 16, Sweden and Finland conducted a joint meeting between the two governments in Stockholm, Sweden, for the first time since 2009.

Sweden and Finland are geographically, historically, economically and culturally intertwined. We share common values and are strong proponents of the rules-based world order. Our industries and businesses are deeply integrated, which is reflected in the vast trade flows between our countries covering a wide array of goods and services. The meeting manifests the close relationship between our countries, our citizens and our governments, a relationship which is now more important than ever before in modern times.

Since the last meeting between our governments in Hämeenlinna (Tavastehus) in Finland in 2009, we have seen fundamental changes to our societies, and the security situation in our close neighbourhood becoming increasingly unstable. Russia's aggression against Ukraine and its full-scale invasion in 2022 are in blatant violation of international law and the UN Charter. It has brought massive suffering to Ukraine's people and threatens European and global security. Supporting **Ukraine** as it defends itself against Russia's brutal and illegal war of aggression is our top priority. The aim of our support is for Ukraine to win the war and restore its territorial integrity.

The Nordic and the Baltic countries are now all members of **NATO**. With Sweden and Finland as NATO Allies, the conditions for security cooperation are stronger than ever. Our capabilities provide security and stability in our region and beyond. Finland and Sweden will continue to cooperate closely as Allies to strengthen the security of the entire Alliance.

The present geopolitical situation affects the world economy negatively. This is particularly challenging for small, open, export-dependent countries. To be an engine of growth Sweden and Finland will focus on measures to improve cross-border mobility and integration and make full use of our common labour market. It should be easy to live, study, work and run companies across our borders. Deepening the cooperation between our countries, particularly on European competitiveness is a key priority.

Finland and Sweden also share a mutual understanding on the need to modernize international development cooperation and OECD/DAC. Both governments see the need for further collaboration and involvement of the private sector to mobilise additional

financial resources to promote sustainable development and economic growth in low- and middle-income countries.

### *Nordic Cooperation*

Finland and Sweden remain committed to enhancing **Nordic Cooperation** and together we uphold the Nordic Vision 2030 to become the world's most sustainable and integrated region. Together with the other members of the Nordic Council of Ministers, we strive to develop the Nordic region as safe, green, and free with a particular focus on reducing barriers to cross-border freedom of movement between our countries. Finland and Sweden are willing to seek practical joint solutions between the Nordic countries' diplomatic missions abroad with the purpose of advancing cooperation within foreign affairs.

Finland and Sweden have today decided to set an example and take a concrete step to further the integration between our two countries and our inhabitants. To that end we have decided that our respective experts should enter into a dialogue on improved procedures for the exchange of population data. The aim of this dialogue is to present a report during 2025 on how the exchange of population information could be deepened and expanded.

Both countries see the need for further bilateral cooperation between all our Nordic countries within the areas of **transportation** and **energy**. There is a need to improve the west-east infrastructure between our countries for both civilian and military purposes aiming in the long term to create transport routes from Norway through Sweden to Finland.

Finland and Sweden will work together for the purpose of steering investments of the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) and Nordic Environment Finance Corporation to financing investments and projects of strategic nature to the benefit of competitiveness and green transition.

### *Closer bilateral cooperation between the states of Sweden and Finland in cross-border areas, the northern regions and the Arctic*

In cross-border areas, the northern regions and in the Arctic, cooperation between Sweden and Finland can be concretely deepened and concrete measures to deepen cooperation may include:

- Coordinating a Nordic strategy for long-term development of cross-border connections, aligning each country's strategic transport plans and utilizing existing cross-border transport systems, with the aim of enhancing redundancies of transports for the whole of Northern Europe.
- Finland and Sweden will co-operate closely in order to improve the east-west land connections and to ensure functional logistics in our region from the civil and from the military mobility point of views. Special attention will be paid for cross-border connection to

Narvik, and between Finland and Sweden. In addition, Finland and Sweden will work together to ensure that available EU funding is mobilized for joint strategically important objects in the future.

- Facilitating effective flight connections between cities in Finland, Sweden and Norway, especially strengthening the East-West links.
- Promoting territorial cooperation in cross-border regions. By strengthening capacity building and by leveraging resources efficiently at all levels, European, national, regional and local, cross-border regions can act with a stronger impact to integrate the Nordic countries and Europe.
- Attracting international highly qualified labour, for example through joint campaigns abroad.
- Harmonization of Nordic norms and guidelines to promote healthy competition in the area.
- Deepening and further developing space cooperation.

The temperature in the Arctic region has increased four times faster than in the rest of the world over the past 30 years according to recent research, with dramatic consequences, such as thawing permafrost and shrinking ice sheets, within and beyond the region. Cooperation opportunities with regard to the **Arctic region** will be further explored in dialogue with partners, taking into account the strategic importance of the region and geopolitical implications of global warming, biodiversity loss and pollution and the changes in relationship with Russia. Sweden and Finland support the roll-out of subsea communications cables connecting Northern Europe with the Indo-pacific region and North America, running through the Arctic region, as a way to ensure global connectivity, necessary resilience and increased capacity in the network. In addition, Sweden and Finland have Arctic expertise to jointly explore the development of a state-of-the-art research icebreaker to ensure sustainable and independent Arctic operations, enhancing cooperation facilitating the roll-out and repair of subsea cables, and geopolitically strengthening our presence in the region.

## *EU*

Next year Finland and Sweden will celebrate **30 years as members of the European Union**. The EU membership has served us well and we look forward to working together with the new EU **Commission** and to the implementation of the **Strategic Agenda**.

Together, we will protect and promote the EU's founding values. Democracy and the rule of law are the cornerstones of our cooperation, and the need to uphold these foundations has become even more urgent to counter foreign interference and ensure the success of a future enlargement. In this context, Finland and Sweden will work together to strengthen the rule of

law conditionality attached to EU funds to safeguard our values as well as the financial soundness of the Union.

Defending a free and democratic Europe also means defending **Ukraine**. We remain committed to ensuring the EU's economic, political, humanitarian and military assistance to Ukraine, and that Ukraine receives the necessary support the country needs on its path towards EU accession.

We are convinced of the need to enhance European **competitiveness** and strengthen the Single Market to safeguard robust and agile economies, that are pre-requisites for an open, resilient and sustainable Europe of tomorrow. A particular focus should lie on improving the **EU Single market** as the main avenue for more private sector investments and development. Better regulation and implementation are at the forefront of our common endeavours in this context. Sweden and Finland share the conviction that the **Capital Markets Union** needs to be put in place to strengthen the competitiveness of the EU and enhance the flow of capital within the EU. The Capital Markets Union can fulfil its purposes only, if it is built on the principles of open, competitive, and efficient markets. Enhanced trade within the Union and more **free trade agreements** with third countries form the foundation on which we can build stronger societies. In all of the above, we stand united as committed proponents of market-based economies and free trade, and opponents of protectionism. Sweden and Finland consider it also important to take concrete measures to strengthen the single market, from the point of view of the free movement of services, goods and people, and emphasises the need to seek growth, for example through digitalisation.

Sweden and Finland will continue to work within relevant formats on the protection of the **EU's external borders** and strive together to find solutions to address the threats related to the instrumentalization of migration. Effective external border management is a key element of a managed migration policy.

Both governments will continue to work and cooperate on the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum. The Pact will help the EU to better manage the internal aspects of migration, but both governments recognise that new innovative approaches are needed to address the external aspects more efficiently. It is important to take this work forward in parallel with the preparation of the implementation of the Pact. A well-functioning and effective return of those without the right to stay is paramount in this regard. Both governments agree to continue to work together to make return work better, including sharing experiences of national procedures and the cooperation within the EU and with relevant third countries. As highlighted in a joint letter to the Commission from the Nordic Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Ministers responsible for migration, Sweden and Finland will continue to underline the importance of a well-balanced EU visa policy, considering all relevant interests including migration and security risks.

Both governments recognize **cross-border criminality** as a systemic serious threat to our societies, for example drug trafficking operated by organised crime, as this is linked with

many other security threats. Sweden and Finland are equally committed to further improve the maintenance of the safety and security in the northern border area and welcome the bilateral agreement on police cooperation in the Tornedal region. Violent extremism and terrorism, and the international connections of these movements, has also become increasingly complex and difficult to combat. Countering them effectively requires close cooperation bilaterally, among the Nordic countries, as well as within the EU.

Sweden and Finland will work together to bring about a fundamental change of perspectives in the EU efforts to fight organised crime. We will work together so that the new forms of organized crime such as expanding networks and exploitation of the cyber environment will be taken into account even better, underlining the perspective of victims and the society's legitimate interest in the protection against crime. We will also take a joint approach to the digital channels where criminals recruit young people and work towards improving law enforcement's access to data and encrypted communications. Furthermore, we will highlight the importance of the operational support from EU-agencies and the judicial cooperation toolbox, including tools that facilitate the confiscation regime and improve access to data. We call for an ambitious new European Internal Security Strategy.

Acknowledging the importance of working together to enhance our leverage within the EU, Sweden and Finland today have decided to conduct strategic **high level EU consultations** every six months, ahead of each incoming EU Presidency.

### *Green transition*

To continue to contribute and commit to solving the major global environmental challenges of climate change, loss of biodiversity and the spreading of pollutants, a comprehensive green transition is needed in our countries as well as internationally. We continue to work together with the private sector and other stakeholders in order to mainstream environmental considerations in all sectors and the whole of our societies. Sweden and Finland both approach the green transition as a driver for new jobs and growth and will together with EU partners engage partners globally to explore the solutions our business actors can provide to accelerate the transition in countries globally. The solutions available can support partners in raising ambition in their new Nationally Determined Contributions to be presented ahead of UNFCCC COP30 in 2025.

Finland and Sweden remain committed to the 1.5 degree target of the Paris Agreement in order to avoid the most catastrophic effects of climate change, reiterating that EU plays a pivotal role in the global fight against climate change. The **green and digital transition** needs to be significantly accelerated to combat climate change, achieve the sustainable development goals globally, and to secure our future prosperity as democracies and economies as well as sustainable development globally. Sweden and Finland remain committed to implementing the **Fit for 55** legislative package in order to set the EU on course to become **climate neutral by 2050** at the latest. In this regard, Sweden and Finland will cooperate closely on issues of mutual interest, such as the upcoming proposal for an

intermediate EU **2040 climate target** and its subsequent legislative package. Sweden and Finland underline that EU 2040 climate target needs to be based on the best available science and stress the importance of cost-efficiency in its implementation.

Sweden and Finland share a special interest in securing the role of our sustainably managed forests, the forest-based sector and agriculture in the green transition. The role of sustainable and circular **bioeconomy** has to be further strengthened in building a sustainable and competitive EU. Cooperation on EU policies regarding solutions based on capturing biogenic **carbon, its utilisation and storage** will continue and be further developed.

Both governments recognize the importance of safe and secure **nuclear energy** in securing long-term and sufficient capacity that can meet increasing fossil-free electricity, heating, industrial energy and hydrogen demands. Sweden and Finland highlight the need to cooperate bilaterally and within the EU to create favourable policy conditions for new investments and **Small Modular Reactors** development. Sweden and Finland will deepen the cooperation between the national regulators and continue to work for a technology neutral approach to EU legislation on fossil free sources of energy.

Promoting circular economy and securing access to **critical raw materials**, produced in an environmentally sustainable manner, is of strategic importance as we work to meet the needs of modern societies. We need to correct harmful dependencies through further cooperation between our countries and make our production more effective through simplified permitting processes. Together, we position ourselves as preferred partners in the global green and digital transitions including in building sustainable value chains in areas such as battery production.

#### *Security, Defence and Civil Preparedness*

Swedish-Finnish defence cooperation is the most far-reaching bilateral cooperation for both our countries, and it is further deepening with our membership in **NATO**. Sweden and Finland will continue to work together to strengthen the deterrence and defence of the Alliance including resilience and crisis preparedness of our societies. We will invest in our forces and capabilities to be prepared for multi-domain collective defence of the Alliance to ensure security in our region and beyond, and are committed to NATO's defence expenditure goal of at least 2%. The joint objective is that NATO's planning and structure will provide support to security in Northern Europe from the Baltic Sea to the Arctic region. Planning will take into account the importance of the Baltic Sea in securing access to vital transport, telecommunications and electricity. Transport links between Norway, Sweden to and Finland must be guaranteed, as this benefits security, trade and security of supply. Together Finland and Sweden promote military mobility in the EU.

The Finnish and Swedish NATO membership's has strengthened our transatlantic ties. The fact that both Finland and Sweden have concluded Defence Cooperation Agreements with

the United States has significantly strengthened the security of our region. Finland and Sweden are together committed to deepening transatlantic ties.

As Allies, as EU members and as individual nations, Sweden and Finland share a strong commitment to supporting **Ukraine**. We will be resolute in our efforts to provide immediate and long-term support to Ukraine, to ensure that Ukraine prevails. This is reflected in our respective bilateral agreements for security cooperation. Ukraine's success in defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity is crucial for European, Euro-Atlantic and global security. Finland and Sweden are also committed to supporting Ukraine in its reconstruction. Furthermore, both countries welcome exchange of best practices and experiences related to Ukraine's insights.

Given the current security situation in our neighbourhood and the various defence industry related efforts undertaken under the auspices of the EU, NATO and NORDEFECO, we both see the need to complement but also to reap the benefits of these efforts through bilateral cooperation to promote an innovative, robust and resilient defence industrial capacity and a **competitive defence industry** able to provide the capabilities needed in the rapidly changing, multi-domain space in which we operate. Sweden and Finland see the need to increase access to private funding for this sector and for any hurdles to be removed. It should be explored whether financial institutions such as the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) and European Investment Bank (EIB) can invest in defence related activities beyond dual use products while taking into account the impact on the institutions risk profile and safeguard their financial base. It is important to enable the sector to grow in accordance to the needs of our respective national and international defence structures, and not least the needs of **Ukraine** to defend itself against Russia's war of aggression.

Both countries see the imperative need for enhanced civil defence, civil preparedness and cooperation for crisis management in the context of the evolving challenges our two countries face, based on an all-hazards and **whole-of-society approach** and welcome seamless and increasingly close cooperation between civilian and military authorities including in the context of preparing for cross-border mass evacuations. This can include organizing joint exercises to strengthen operational readiness and coordination in mass evacuation scenarios. Preparedness also requires ordinary citizens' awareness and commitment. Together we will work to uphold the strong willingness of our populations to defend our countries.

Sweden and Finland acknowledge the importance of a resilient food system – including a competitive and resilient agricultural, fishing and aquaculture sectors – throughout the EU to ensure regional and local food security, robustness in the food chain and environmental safeguards.

We welcome the report by former president Niinistö on EU's civil preparedness and defence readiness. Sweden and Finland will continue to enhance our cooperation in initiatives that increase the resilience and preparedness in our own societies as well as among our allies and partners.



Finland and Sweden intend to carry out joint planning within civil protection with the aim of improving the conditions for protecting the civilian population in the event of serious crisis and ultimately war. Correspondingly, cooperation within security of supply will also be strengthened. Finland and Sweden intend to initiate preparations for a joint planning within the area of security of supply. Within the framework of the preparations, the agreement between Sweden and Finland on economic cooperation in international crisis situations, the so-called security of supply agreement, signed in Aarhus on 10 November 1992 will be the subject of a review. In the area of military security of supply, the cooperation rests on the Security of Supply Annex of the Nordic Cooperation Agreement in the Defence Materiel Area signed on 9 April 2019.

In this regard, we welcome the signing of the **Swedish-Finnish Letter** of Intent on strengthened cooperation regarding civil protection and security of supply.

### *Baltic Sea region*

Sweden and Finland are equally committed to the safety and the sustainability of the **Baltic Sea and the Baltic Sea region**. While deploring the deterioration of the security situation in our neighbourhood, we welcome the enhanced regional and other cooperation with democratic Baltic Sea states. We underline the importance of strengthening resilience, preparedness and crisis response in our region.

We will work together to counter **Hybrid threats**, whether in the form of instrumentalised migration, or in the realms of cyber, disinformation and interference in critical infrastructure. Sweden and Finland will cooperate to counter Russian attempts to influence and destabilise our societies and institutions. Our governments will be in close contact to detect and analyse such threats. We will enhance cooperation among our relevant authorities to ensure the effectiveness of our responses to such threats.

Finland and Sweden will continue to develop their law enforcement authorities' bilateral cooperation in the field of maritime safety and security. Joint exercises, common training and coordinated maritime surveillance actions combined with extensive information sharing contribute to creating a safer and more secure Baltic Sea region in a very concrete way.

The security and resilience of critical infrastructure is a topical issue for our societies as recent incidents have shown. Cooperation between Sweden and Finland is key for the protection of underwater infrastructure, including preparedness, resilience, recovery and prevention.

Sweden and Finland recognize the need for continued close cooperation on the Baltic Sea and beyond when it comes to renewal of **icebreaker fleets** and operational coordination in the light of their increased strategic importance.

Finnish and Swedish competent authorities will establish a joint working group in order to explore and recognize mutual benefits.

The **environment** of the Baltic Sea calls for further bilateral and regional cooperation between our countries, to ensure the protection of wildlife, biodiversity and to counter environmental threats such as eutrophication and other forms of environmental pollution including plastic pollution. The shadow fleet transporting Russian oil also poses a significant danger to the Baltic Sea's marine environment and call for decisive joint action. The Baltic Sea is the shared home of Sweden and Finland. Ensuring sustainable exploitation of resources, such as fisheries, is a shared objective and a key element in ensuring that our countries continue to thrive.

### *Research and innovation*

Sweden and Finland have a long history of cooperation and exchange in higher education and research. Every year several hundred students take the opportunity to move from one country to the other for studies, for example through Erasmus+ and the Nordplus Higher Education Programme. Both countries participate in bilateral, EU RDI Framework programme as well as Nordic research cooperation, for example through Nordforsk. It is of great importance for both countries that science must be free and open in order to ensure excellence and provide new knowledge in strategically important areas for the Nordic region. Cooperation between Sweden and Finland can enhance research and development, through researcher mobility and the efficient use of research infrastructure.

High-quality education and training strengthens societal resilience and lays the foundation for sustainable economic growth. The availability of skilled labor will require investments in education and training as well as in promoting student mobility, especially in the Nordics.

Swedish-Finnish cooperation on **research and development** with the aim of enhanced competitiveness, accelerating the green and digital transition and conditions for **innovation** is ongoing and will be further developed. In the context of the next EU program focusing on research and innovation, our aim is to take forward our common interests in areas like **AI and required high performance computing infrastructure, semiconductors, 5G/6G and biotechnology**.

Sweden and Finland have some of the world's leading companies when it comes to providing digital infrastructure. As critical functions of our societies gradually become digitalised, we recognise the fundamental interest of governments to choose secure and trusted solutions. Similarly, both countries are leaders in biotechnology. We will continue to promote research in next generation wireless technology 5G/6G and biotechnology, within the European Union and globally.

Sweden and Finland both invest more than the EU target of committing 3% of GDP to research and development. We do this because our respective, and EUs common, competitiveness depends on it. The governments will continue to stimulate cooperation between our higher education and research institutions, with the goal to increase Swedish-

Finnish joint research and support excellent research in both countries. The governments will strive to strengthen the dialogue on common issues in EU policy context, where applicable.

### *Children and young people's wellbeing*

Both our governments have concerns when it comes to the rapid increase of screen time and its effect on children and young people's health. Uncritical usage of digital devices in schools and during leisure time needs to be addressed. This also includes the kind of potentially harmful contents that young individuals consume online not least when it comes to various social media platforms. We need to be aware of the negative consequences increased digital dependencies have but also consider how to strengthen the digital awareness and competencies of our young people. We commit to addressing these challenges together, including by exchange of experiences and best practices, bilaterally, in the Nordic context as well as within the EU.

### *Culture and tourism*

Sweden and Finland are closely connected by our history, languages, our geography, and the bonds between our **peoples**. Our shared cultural heritage includes buildings, works of art, music and literature as well as intangible cultural heritage. We recognise the potential and importance of cultural cooperation between us as well as the vital role of a free and vibrant cultural life for maintaining resilient and democratic societies. We confirm the importance of preserving and developing the cultural bonds between our countries.

In order to promote the digitization of culture and cultural services, the digital infrastructure of cultural institutions and the adequate competence of the personnel in the digital transition must be improved. In addition to that, the digitalization of the cultural sector must be developed taking into account, among other things, sustainable development and the wider development taking place in the society. Both countries would benefit if these broader questions would be prepared under Nordic co-operation.

We also recognize both countries' strong cultural and creative industries and their role in cultural life, economic growth, and innovation.

The Swedish-Finnish Cultural Foundation aims to further enhance cultural relations between Sweden and Finland by providing support for increased knowledge of, and contact between, the culture, economy and people of the two countries. Together with Hanaholmen the foundation has set up a bilateral crisis initiative focusing on increasing the ability to avoid and respond to the occurrence of future crises in terms of societal security. The Finland Institute in Stockholm and Hanaholmen in Helsinki fulfil an important role in developing community between our countries. It is important to continue and develop our co-operation.

We recognise the importance of tourism industry as a service export sector and especially regionally significant industry in both countries. In the Nordic collaboration, as well as within

the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea region, we see potential in collaborating to promote tourism, by attracting visitors from all over the world to visit our beautiful countries that have so much to offer. It is important for us to strengthen socially, culturally, environmentally and economically sustainable tourism.