JOINT STATEMENT REGARDING DEEPENED DEFENCE COOPERATION BETWEEN FINLAND AND SWEDEN

Background

On 6th May 2014 the Defence Ministers of Finland and Sweden signed an action plan for deepened defence cooperation between Sweden and Finland. The action plan tasked the Finnish Defence Force and the Swedish Armed Forces to deliver a joint report on feasible cooperation areas.

The aim was to achieve increased operational effect through combined use of resources, increased interoperability and a closer dialogue on common challenges. The task was limited to activities in peacetime and implementation would start in the spring of 2015.

The final report on deepened defence cooperation between Finland and Sweden was delivered on January 30th 2015.

The Final Report

The final report presents several possibilities for deepened defence cooperation. The overall assessment is that bilateral cooperation as a whole gives added value for the Finnish Defence Forces and the Swedish Armed Forces and that, if implemented, the recommendations will have a positive effect on long term development for both nations within the area of defence.

Furthermore, the report states that political decisions on widening the cooperation to include crises and conflicts would significantly increase operational effect and avoid unnecessary investments in national redundancy arrangements.

The report includes both a short and a long term perspective. Benefits stemming from deepened cooperation are operational effect and improved quality.

Way ahead

The Ministries of Defence in Finland and Sweden have studied the final report, which forms an excellent basis for deepened bilateral cooperation. We support the recommendations and proposals from the military level.

This joint declaration underlines the will and intent to move forward with the proposals to deepen our bilateral cooperation. However, it does not substitute national guidance from the respective Ministries and Governments. Further directives and guidelines needed for the implementation will gradually be given in accordance with national procedures and practice. A continued close dialogue on military level, as well as with the ministerial level, is needed in order to achieve an efficient implementation process.

The joint will for the work ahead is as follows:

The Defence Forces of Finland and the Armed Forces of Sweden shall start implementing recommendations and proposals in the report which can be taken forward under existing national legislation in our respective countries.

Immediate priority shall be given to establishment of secure communications. This is the key enabler of effective cooperation at all levels and was also highlighted in the report.

Other areas with a short term perspective on implementation are alternate landing bases, air surveillance cooperation, further development of combined units such as the Swedish-Finnish Naval Task Group (SFNTG), continued cooperation on exercises and mutual use of naval base infrastructure.

In addition, high importance is given to the process of developing operational planning to create options for joint action in a variety of scenarios.The question of widening the bilateral defence cooperation to include crises and conflicts will be addressed later this year.

The Ministries of Defence in Sweden and Finland will initiate processes in order to address legal obstacles for the implementation of the cooperation proposals. This work will be closely coordinated between our countries.

All areas of cooperation mentioned in the report will be addressed in due course and in this regard we look forward to a continued close dialogue between our ministries and the military level, including the progress of the implementation.

The Ministries of Defence of Finland and Sweden will start implementing the proposals in the joint report on cooperation areas on Defence Ministry level.

Helsinki, 22 May 2015

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