

Remarks by State Secretary Jan-Olof Lind, Sweden, at the Field Hearing of the United States Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Baltic Sea Regional Security, in Gdansk, 2 July 2019.

Check against delivery

The military-strategic situation in our region has deteriorated. The region has become less secure. Let me start by highlighting the main reason for this.

Russia's actions in Georgia and Ukraine, have shown that Russia is prepared to use military force to change established borders in Europe. The illegal annexation of Crimea and aggression in eastern Ukraine is the greatest challenge to the European security order since it was established 25 years ago.

Russia is using a broad variety and combinations of methods and actions to achieve its objectives. This is often referred to as hybrid threats. The Russian aggression in Ukraine is one example of Russia's intention to coordinate relevant instruments of state power with the use of proxy fighters to achieve political goals.

In parallel, Russia has showed a more challenging behaviour in the Baltic Sea Region, including disrespect of its neighbours' territorial integrity as well as provocative and unprofessional behaviour in the air and on the sea. Because of Russian interests in the region, and as it is one of the busiest shipping-areas in the world, the significance of the Baltic Sea Region to European security has increased. Freedom of navigation and secure Sea Lines of Communications are essential, not only for the countries in the region but also for other nations.

Let me be clear, Russian activities are not only a challenge to the countries in its close vicinity, they are a challenge to the right of every country to make their own policy choices. This is a cornerstone in the rules-based world order and the European security order. Therefore, Russian actions are a concern to us all and make our response all the more important.

The complexity and scale of the challenges at hand means that no state can face them alone. Together we need to use the entire range of security policy instruments; enhanced national defence capability, international cooperation and dialogue and confidence-building measures.

Challenges to European security must be met together, but on the national level, every country must take their share of the responsibility.

This is why Sweden is pursuing a defence policy with two reinforcing pillars. We are strengthening our national military capability. The Swedish total defence concept is developed in order to meet an armed attack against Sweden, including acts of war on Swedish territory. This is part of our work to counter hybrid threats and includes improving our psychological defence.

We are also deepening our security and defence cooperation. Sweden gives priority to the cooperation with our Nordic neighbours, with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, with Poland and

Germany as well as the United Kingdom and the USA. We are also focusing our efforts with and within multilateral organisations, the EU and NATO. Regional cooperation like the Nordic defence cooperation and the UK-led Joint Expeditionary are important to complement the security network in Northern Europe.

A strong transatlantic link is important for both European and American security. US and NATO presence is necessary for the stability in the Baltic Sea Region.

Therefore, we welcome NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence and the increased US presence in Europe through the European Deterrence Initiative. The EDI has been instrumental for exercises and other joint activities. Exercises in the Baltic Sea region signals shared responsibility for the security. Maritime exercises like BALTOPS and BALTIC PROTECTOR enhances our interoperability and strengthen our common maritime capability.

Sweden will continue to be an active partner to NATO and our status as Enhanced Opportunities Partner is key in this regard. This relationship is crucial to develop our interoperability and capabilities.

Political dialogue on common security challenges and how to counter them, in particular in the Baltic Sea region, is essential in our cooperation with NATO. We see northern Europe as one strategic area. A crisis in this region would affect all of us and we must be prepared to respond to it together. This calls for close dialogue and cooperation.

Arms control as well as confidence and security building measures are essential parts of the European security order. Sweden strongly supports continued and complete implementation of the Vienna Document and Open Skies instruments.

The challenges we are facing point to long term destabilization. Europe has a key role in meeting the global challenges and threats. Our response must be guided by democratic principles and values. It needs to be firm, clear and long-term. And it needs to build upon European and transatlantic unity. Together we must show that we stand up for international law and the European security order.