

Joint Statement

by the Prime Ministers of the Nordic countries and Canada

Vestmannaeyjar, Iceland, 26 June 2023

On 26 June 2023, the Prime Ministers and the Heads of Government of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, the Åland Islands, Faroe Islands, Greenland and Canada met in Vestmannaeyjar, Iceland. As like-minded transatlantic partners, the Nordic countries and Canada share interests in and beyond the North-Atlantic and the Arctic region. They embraced their enduring and close partnership and appreciated its future potential which will be further enhanced by the NATO membership of Finland and Sweden. The leaders are committed to strengthening the deterrence and defence of the Nordic region and the Euro-Atlantic Area. They emphasized the importance of continuing their exchanges and cooperation.

The fundamental principles of the rules-based international order are under serious pressure as the rule of law as enshrined in international law including the UN Charter continues to be tested in the most brutal ways. Effective and inclusive multilateralism is needed to address global challenges such as the climate crisis, the biodiversity crisis, global inequalities, and to ensure peace and stability. The leaders expressed their firm commitment to the enduring value of the Arctic Council and remain focused on continuing the important work for the benefit of the Arctic region and the people living there, including Indigenous Peoples.

Building on the inherent strengths of open, democratic societies, the leaders agreed to work collectively to advance democracy and human rights both online and offline, and to support and reform international institutions so that they work for all countries and all global citizens. They are determined to cooperate more closely to advance and protect gender equality and LGBTI+ rights in the face of worrying push-back. Canada and the Nordic Countries are committed to address illegal online content, including terrorist and violent extremist content, that is being spread to disrupt social cohesion by inciting hatred and violence, including gender-based violence.

The Nordic countries and Canada reiterate their unequivocal support for Ukraine for as long as it takes and their unwavering commitment to Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. Russia must immediately stop its illegal war of aggression and withdraw its forces from the entire territory of Ukraine. The increased threat of nuclear weapons is of grave concern and requires reinforced international efforts on arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation. We support the Ukrainian Peace Formula as an important basis for just and sustainable peace, anchored in international law, and we are committed to support Ukraine's recovery and reconstruction. Engaging all relevant partners, including private companies and international and Nordic financial institutions is essential. Continued support for vulnerable countries impacted by Russia's war of aggression, particularly related to food and energy security, remains top of mind.

The leaders welcome international efforts to hold to account the political and military leadership of the Russian Federation for its war of aggression against Ukraine and the establishment of the international register of damage established at the Reykjavik Summit of the Council of Europe. We welcome the agreement on the new International Centre for Prosecution of the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine (ICPA) in the Hague and express support for investigations by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, as well as the ongoing work of the Core Group for the establishing of a tribunal for the crime of aggression.

The global risk picture is rapidly evolving and threats against our societies are increasingly interconnected and complex. Hybrid and cyber threats, including foreign information manipulation and interference aimed at disrupting and destabilizing our societies, pose increasing risks. Given the growing use of digital technology to conduct information operations, there is an urgent need to protect and promote information integrity online. Artificial Intelligence is developing at an exponential pace and international collaboration and regulation are needed to ensure that it does not undermine human rights and democracy. The leaders agreed to strengthen their cooperative efforts on AI, including at the UNGA in September.

The effects of the COVID-19 crisis on society are still evident and it is important to learn from the experiences of the pandemic. Leaders pledged cooperation in and beyond their region to maintain and strengthen resilience and crisis preparedness to prevent, counter and mitigate future crises, and agreed that sustaining strong welfare and wellbeing is fundamental to societal resilience. The Nordic leaders agreed to continue the discussions at the Nordic Council session meeting in the autumn. Leaders expressed shared interest in working together in the area of critical raw materials and their supply chain, as well as technologies that support environmentally sound and sustainable mining practices.

The Nordic countries and Canada will explore further opportunities to enhance collaboration regarding healthy ocean, which is central to our climate agenda. We must conserve the ocean's carbon sequestration abilities as the ocean is one of the most important carbon sinks on earth and the concept of Blue Carbon holds great potential for mitigation, adaptation and building resilience to climate change. The ocean is one of the main sources of the world's biodiversity and oceans provide quality nutrition and employment. Inland waters and the ocean can play a crucial role in transforming food systems with blue food and the consumption of fish having generally a lower environmental impact as stated in the latest Nordic Nutrition Recommendations.

Important steps have been taken to increase international cooperation such as the agreement in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the BBNJ Agreement. The oceans remain under multiple pressures such as plastic pollution, illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing, eutrophication and the risks associated with increased acidification of the oceans, as well as other effects of climate change. The Nordic countries and Canada recognize the importance of further action on healthy oceans at the upcoming Sustainable Development Goals Summit in September, at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP28) in November-December and at the CBD Conference (COP16) in October 2024, and highlight the

importance of the Arctic Ocean, that as one of the world's largest and last remaining intact ecosystems is vital to maintaining a safe and stable global climate. Across the range of climate action, we underline the urgency of global action to limit global warming to 1.5C and emphasize that carbon pollution pricing is a flexible and efficient policy tool to align economic incentives with climate action.

The Prime Ministers of the Nordic countries and Canada agreed to task their Ministers to follow up today's meeting via a Canada-Nordic Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue, the first of which will be hosted by Canada.

Furthermore, the Nordic Prime Ministers discussed Nordic defense cooperation, which is being adjusted to the new security situation, aiming to fully realize its potential. This includes strengthening defense capabilities and the enablement of allied operations in the Nordic region.

They welcomed the report on the implementation of Vision 2030 and complimented the effective work since its adoption in 2019. They encouraged the Nordic Council of Ministers to reinforce its efforts to realize Vision 2030 of a green, competitive and socially sustainable Nordic region.

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