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Cooperation in a changing world

Mr President, Generals, Admirals, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I am honored to have been invited to speak here tonight at the Finnish National Defence Course Association. For me as the Supreme Commander of the Swedish Armed Forces, it gives me the possibility to manifest the very deep and active cooperation between our two countries' and especially between our armed forces.

But this intense cooperation had not been possible without the long historical and cultural bonds between our two countries. And Finland and Sweden take part in the Nordic Cooperation. And the Nordic defence cooperation NORDEFCO gives spin off effect in to other organizations for example the United Nations, the European Union or NATO and its Partnership.

The Nordic countries have much in common as culture, values and to a certain extent linguistic. During decades we have built up a mutual confidence and respect between ourselves. But we are also aware that our countries are different. Therefore a humble and percipient stance is a necessary ingredient in our Nordic cooperation as well as cooperation on a bilateral basis.

Our common ground is also a strength in the ever changing world since today's and tomorrow's challenges don't know any boundaries. In our globalized world, nations and regions are becoming more and more interlinked and dependent on each other.

This changing world also affects the Swedish Armed Forces. During the 20th century a massive anti-invasion force based on conscription matched the threats at that time. But today we need versatile, usable forces with increased operational effectiveness, high readiness and flexibility that can solve tasks at home, in our vicinity and further away. This is the reason why the Swedish parliament and government came to the conclusion that it was time to no longer apply compulsory national conscription in peacetime. Instead we are now creating a rapid reaction task force which is based on voluntary recruitment, an all-volunteer force.

We are now almost three and a half years in to the reform. Even though the implementation of the reform is a huge effort for everyone in the Swedish Armed Forces, I am proud to say that we are doing very well. Together we have laid the foundation for the further reform and my personnel is delivering high quality performance every hour, every day all year around!

When conducting the reform, we have to be humble and flexible. This is because we are implementing the reform in a changing world. We might need to consider adjustment in this environment – this is one of the messages in the long term study that the Swedish Armed Forces recently handed in to the government. We are regularly tasked by the government to write this kind of long term study reports. The long term study is also the Swedish Armed Forces' input to the ongoing work in the Swedish Defence Commission. The Defence Commission will report to the government not later than 31 March 2014.

Even though we need flexibility while continuing the defence reform, I would like to underline that the fundamental principles for the reform will be unchanged. Hence, readiness, usability and an all-volunteer force remain the cornerstones in the reform!

But if the economy will remain unchanged at this and next years level, we have to face certain choices in the long term, given the fact that the estimated costs for military equipment will raise. Hence, our long term study recommends that high quality and high technology capabilities will be prioritized in favour of a larger volume. Our geographical vicinity and the ability to manage intense conflicts will be the factors that will define the future Swedish Armed Forces.

Even if the Nordic countries have chosen different forms of security policy arrangements, we have an impressive track record concerning our efforts to continuously build a safer and more peaceful world under the UN-umbrella or in other international organizations. This has been done, and is ongoing and will be done also in the future! In this tireless work for a better world, our governments can use their armed forces as one of their tools in the security policy box. This is manifested by our common engagement in different international military missions. Let me give just a few examples.

The Nordic countries have been cooperating in the international missions on the Western Balkans. I myself have a personal experience from the Nordic Battalion in Bosnia, where I served both under UN 1995 and under NATO 1996. We should not underestimate the symbol of the Nordic countries operating together in a conflict area as in the former Yugoslavia, since the Nordic countries have been enemies in a historic context.

Ten days ago, I visited Kosovo. The aim was to formally close down the Swedish troop contribution to KFOR. A very symbolic moment, since the closing ceremony marked an end of the efforts and work that over 9 000 Swedish soldiers have done in Kosovo since 1999. But their efforts had not been possible if they had acted on their own. They have worked together shoulder by shoulder with other nationalities during their mission. And in Kosovo, our cooperation with Finland has been crucial for our success.

But the Swedish Armed Forces' engagement in Kosovo will continue. We will contribute to the SSR work, and we will also keep staff officers in the KFOR chain of command. This engagement is a part of the overall Swedish long term engagement in Kosovo, which consists of a broad civ-mil approach.

As you are all well aware of, our Nordic countries cooperate in Afghanistan. And in Afghanistan we also work together with the Baltic countries. This shows how the Nordic-Baltic cooperation is developing. But inside this wider Nordic-Baltic cooperation, the Swedish-Finnish contribution to the Nordic-Baltic TSU, has been the

nucleus. Now, when we are successively winding down our Nordic-Baltic TSU, I would like to extend my gratitude to Finland for an excellent cooperation!

The Nordic-Baltic cooperation will also continue in the Nordic Battle Group 15 (NBG 15). Here, Sweden and Finland, and to a certain extent Norway, have experiences from the two previous NBG's (NBG 08 and NBG 11). As you know, Sweden regards the BG-concept as a crucial instrument in the CSDP. We are also convinced that the BG-concept is a pertinent and useful vehicle in a transformation process. Therefore, Sweden will engage as the framework nation for the third time.

Now, the big question is whether the Battle Group will be used or not. This is an important issue which is linked to several crucial issues on how the CSDP will evolve in the future. This will be discussed by the EU Heads of States and Governments at the European Council in December. From Sweden's part we want to maintain the robust character of the BG concept. Also the ideas concerning more flexible use and modularity are of interest.

I believe that our two countries can and will play an active role in how the Battle Groups could be used and also how the CSDP could be further developed so the European Union can continue its important work as a central player in this field. We in Sweden and Finland should be proud of our track record in the CSDP-area! And we should not forget that our two countries took the initiative to the Petersberg tasks in 1997. This was one of the important foundations for what later became the CSDP.

The Nordic cooperation in international missions has been and is a success. This kind of cooperation will also be needed in the future. But what will the future international missions look like? Given the fact that the European Union and the African Union for some years have been working on capacity building, I believe we might see the EU member states focusing more attention to this area. In East Africa, the Nordic countries should be well positioned, given our long term engagement in Easbrig (the Eastern African Standby Brigade Coordination Mechanism).

We also need to build capabilities and exercise in the high end spectrum of the conflict scale. In this fast changing world, an armed force like the Swedish, need to be able to act in different ranges in the conflict scale. Therefore, I am very pleased that Sweden now is a part of the Reserve Forces Pool (RFP) inside the framework of NRF (NATO Response Force). Since Finland has been participating in RFP for some years, I am looking forward to listen and learn from your experiences! The fact that both Sweden and Finland now participate in RFP will give impetus to the Nordic effort to enhance our common capabilities, given that Denmark and Norway already are NRF participants as NATO-countries.

Sweden will continuously contribute to the development of the partnership to NATO. Therefore we will work on developing the CFI (Connected Forces Initiative). This work will, as usual, be done in close partnership with Finland.

Training and exercising together with other nations is beneficial in several dimensions. This is more efficient, both from a capability perspective as well as the economic one. And bigger and more advanced exercises will also make our soldiers' and sailors' jobs and tasks more interesting and challenging.

You are all well aware of that Sweden during the end of the nineties and beginning of this millennium considered our immediate vicinity to be very benign. That was one of the principal reasons for the Swedish Armed Forces to mainly focus on participating in crisis management abroad. In retrospective I think we all agree that we looked a bit too far away from our own country and our vicinity.

Times change, hence we need to refocus on our own country and our vicinity. The geographical refocus is underlined in the long term study that the Swedish Armed Forces recently handed over to the government.

Both you and I know that very much has occurred in our common vicinity since the end of the Cold War. Before 1989 the Baltic Sea region served as an armed frontline between the eastern and western blocks. Today, the situation is quite different. The area is considered an area of increased cooperation and shared political as well as military partnerships. It is also an area of stability and security. In order to maintain and further develop this positive momentum, we must constantly work on continued integration in all fields, cooperation and frequent dialogue between all partners involved, outside as well as in the region.

But we also note an increased strategic interest in the Baltic Sea region. As a consequence of the increased interest in our common geographical vicinity, we note an increased military activity. This autumn proofs this with several exercises in the Baltic Sea, where the biggest one was Zapad. And in a few days, NATO will conduct the exercise Steadfast Jazz.

The Swedish Armed Forces have two distinct and important contributions in further stabilizing the Baltic Sea region. We are engaged in military cooperation with the countries in the region in a multitude of different areas ranging from high level visits to common exercises and training. As an example, last week I was on an official visit in Russia.

And earlier this autumn, Sweden hosted the Exercise Northern Coasts, where also Finnish units participated among other nations.

But we also maintain a military capability to be able to refrain from using military means for conflict resolution, if the security situation should worsen.

In a compact environment as the Baltic Sea, trust and predictability between the partners involved both outside and in the region are fundamental in building security. Increasing energy transports along with the Nord Stream pipeline are examples of the ever developing trade flows in the Baltic Sea, which is – as we all know – one of the busiest waterways in the world. In a broader perspective, these flows can integrate the region. But we should also be aware of the potential environmental risks with increased trade in the Baltic Sea, risks that concern us all. The need of a common sea picture is now implemented by the SUCBAS cooperation.

Closer integration and cooperation in the Baltic Sea region will become even more important in the future, since challenges in a globalized world very often are transnational. An increased cooperation and engagement between all partners in the region, Russia included, is therefore imperative.

Russia is currently improving, transforming, and modernizing its military capabilities. Such major transformation is difficult to achieve and the Russian Armed Forces share many similar challenges as others countries that modernize and transform. However, the modernization reform program is very ambitious and will, if successful, alter the current military posture in our region. An increased Russian military capacity and interest in the

Baltic Sea region will require creativity and mutual understanding within the security partnerships between all nations in the Baltic Sea region, Russia included. Therefore, various arms controls regimes and confidence building measures are still vital in the region.

So, we need to cooperate in order to tackle today's and tomorrow's challenges. Here I believe that our long cooperation, both bilateral and in a Nordic setting, will serve us well. But, as I said earlier, the Nordic cooperation could not be seen isolated from other circles of cooperation.

We also need to think outside the box in a world of limited or even shrinking resources for us military people. Cooperation, rationalization and pooling and sharing are all important, but they need to be complemented by new investments as well.

Experiences from NORDEFCO will matter in future projects to come. Our cooperation today stands as one model for the development of pooling and sharing inside the EU as well as for NATO and Smart Defence. Our current partnership among the Nordic countries cannot be seen separately from the cooperation within the EU or NATO. It is complementary and specifically designed for our region. Hence, I believe that some experiences from our Nordic cooperation could serve as a good conceptual input to the future work inside the EU – especially in the follow up after the European Council in December this year.

There are also potentially interesting areas of bilateral cooperation in flexible formats within the Baltic Sea region. For example the current Swedish-Finnish amphibious cooperation has the potential to include a maritime command with sea surveillance (SUCBAS), sea traffic control as well as pooling and sharing. The role model for this thinking is the Belgian-Dutch common naval command. Hence, an example on how we can pool and share ideas among Europeans.

In the air, the Air Forces from Finland, Norway and Sweden since some years conduct Cross Border Training (CBT) in the northern part of our countries. In February next year, our three countries will deploy to Iceland and conduct CBT there. And one year ago, an agreement was signed between Sweden and Denmark concerning CBT in the south. This is two examples on how we build security together and in the same time will get more output and efficiency from our common exercises.

Now, when we cooperate in this close way, we also need to coordinate ourselves in an even better way. As I have already said, transparency and predictability are pivotal if we are to cooperate more closely. We have to reconsider traditional national identity markers while looking at new forms of cooperation. This goes especially for procurement of equipment, but also for other issues as national legislation. I can only talk for my own country, but we have to do our own homework – charity begins at home!

Transparency and exchange of relevant information will be crucial if we want to pool and share in economic hard times. But how do we nationally optimize the balance between air force, army and navy, keeping in mind that we need to cooperate between nations and organizations in several areas. This is something that has to be discussed among ourselves and also between our political masters in different constellations. I believe we have to conduct this kind of discussions, both nationally as well as in different bilateral and multinational settings. This will be even more important where

we in the western world have shrinking military budgets, but where we militaries are expected to deliver the same or even more output.

Here I think an open, frank and long lasting relationship – as the one between our two countries can be a pivotal precursor for how to conduct cooperation in an ever changing world!

Thank you!

Sverker Göranson
General