

JEF Leaders Joint Statement

Visby, 13 October 2023

We, the leaders of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom - members of the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) - met today in Visby, on the strategically important island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea.

We strongly condemn the appalling terrorist attacks committed by Hamas against the Israeli people, and emphasise Israel's right to defend itself in accordance with international law.

Recalling the JEF Leaders' Summit in Riga in December 2022, today we reiterate the valuable contribution of the JEF to deterring and defending against the threats we face in our common region of the High North, North Atlantic and Baltic Sea, underscoring that Russia is the most significant and direct threat to security and to peace and stability in the Euro-Atlantic area.

For all JEF Participant Nations, NATO is the foundation of collective security in the Euro-Atlantic area. The JEF, from its inception, has been designed to complement both NATO and Participant Nations' own response capabilities. The JEF needs to be ready to respond in scenarios ranging from below the threshold of NATO's Article 5 through to full-spectrum interventions during times of crisis or conflict, operating seamlessly with NATO. The accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO fundamentally strengthens the Alliance and the JEF, bringing greater operational synergies. We underline the importance of Sweden's swift accession into the Alliance. As set out in the ten-year Vision, the JEF will integrate with and contribute to NATO deterrence at all times to strengthen our collective security and defence through bolstering national and multinational responses.

We heard first hand from our friend President Zelenskyy of Ukraine's enduring resolve in the face of Russia's illegal war, and of the determination of Ukraine's people to restore and rebuild their country within the internationally recognised borders of Ukraine. We remain steadfast in our support for Ukraine and are committed to providing military, political, humanitarian, economic and legal support for as long as it takes to ensure Ukraine is best able to defend itself, to restore its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and deter Russian aggression in the future. As signatories of the Joint Declaration of Support for Ukraine we will set out our respective long-term security commitments and arrangements with Ukraine. We reiterate that Ukraine's victory is vital to all our security and the preservation of rules-

based international order. We are committed to supporting the principles of the Peace Formula proposed by President Zelenskyy in line with the UN Charter, underscoring that no just peace can be realised without the complete and unconditional withdrawal of Russian troops and military equipment from Ukraine's territory in its entirety.

We condemn Russia's aggression against Ukraine in the strongest terms, and utterly reject Russia's assaults on Ukraine's territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence. We condemn Russia's aggression in the Black Sea, its attacks on civilians, incidents of conflict-related sexual violence, indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks and direct attacks against civilian infrastructure which constitute war crimes. We reiterate our determination to ensure full accountability for crimes committed in and against Ukraine. We also condemn Russia's weaponisation of food and its subsequent impact on global food security. Russia's full-scale illegal invasion of Ukraine has only increased the importance of both NATO and the JEF as enablers of regional security for their members. The security of Ukraine is integral to the security of the Euro-Atlantic area, hence we are committed to support Ukraine on its Euro-Atlantic integration path towards future membership in NATO. In order to increase interoperability, and enhance the capability of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, we have agreed today that the JEF shall invite Ukraine to observe JEF exercises during 2024 and 2025.

On the island of Gotland today we have agreed and published a ten-year vision for the JEF: *The JEF - Working Together as One*. It reiterates the founding principles for the JEF, outlines our ambition for its further development, and reaffirms our commitment to support Ukraine. There has been a step change in JEF events. Over the past 18 months JEF nations have undertaken more than eight times as many activities across the Maritime, Land, and Air domains than in the entire preceding eight years. We have agreed an ambitious joint programme over the next two years beginning with a large-scale Command Post Exercise, Ex JOINT PROTECTOR 24, which will rehearse the JEF Operational HQ's role and relationship with NATO in a regional security scenario. This, and other supporting activity, will be brought together in a large-scale JEF Mission Rehearsal Exercise in 2025.

Since Riga, we have accelerated cooperation in tackling hybrid threats, and deterring and defending against threats to our critical national infrastructure, including shared communications and energy infrastructure. We have continuously worked to increase cooperation, reassure JEF partners and demonstrate collective commitment to the security and stability of Northern Europe. Today, we have discussed how to continue to address hybrid threats, including through the concept of Total Defence.

We discussed the damage likely caused by external activity in the undersea infrastructure between Finland and Estonia. The JEF partners stand ready to support in the investigation. The incident demonstrates that threats to critical undersea infrastructure are real and reinforces the need to maintain our resilience both at a national level and as a collective endeavour.

To continue the progress of the JEF, Joint Response Options have been developed which, in complementarity to NATO, will increase our collective capability to address military threats and deter malign actions in our neighbourhood, including against our critical national infrastructure. These Joint Response Options will form the basis for deeper cooperation and the development of the JEF over the next two years. They will enhance our collective security by providing military options to the JEF in times of crisis. These Response Options are reflected within broader NATO defence plans and our respective National Defence Plans. We commit to invest in the capabilities and resources required in order to plan, exercise and operate effectively together within NATO and the JEF. In the interest of collective security and interoperability, and to support Ukraine's defence against Russia's illegal invasion, we also agree to foster stronger defence industrial cooperation within Europe and across the Atlantic, and to reduce obstacles to defence trade and investment in the Euro-Atlantic area wherever relevant.