



NORDIS keynote speech 15.9.2021

It is my pleasure to join you today representing the Finnish chairmanship of the Nordic Council of Ministers this year. I am also pleased to speak as the Finnish Minister of Defence, representing the Finnish chairmanship of the Nordic Defence Cooperation, NORDEFECO.

Last week the Finnish Government published a new Defence Report. The review outlines challenges for Finland's security and guides further development of Finnish defence over the next ten years. National Defence is something we take rather seriously in a country of 5,5 million people, which covers some 1300 kilometres of European Union's Eastern border.

The Defence Review recognises the growing importance of the information domain - not only in our daily lives, but also for the survivability and resilience of our open society in any serious crisis. Finnish defence relies on Finnish people and society. It is based on general conscription, large reserves and comprehensive security model, which brings together all public authorities, academia and research communities, non-governmental organizations as well as industry and business sectors.

In other words, our defence relies on people's will to defend their own society and way of life. I am very pleased to say that the will is very strong among the Finnish population. But it can be challenged in many ways, especially in information domain. As the President of our Republic, Mr Sauli Niinistö says, "The defence is about will and deeds. The most important line of defence goes between the ears of every Finnish citizen."

The program you are about to launch is very much about preserving and protecting our respective societies. The issues you are dealing with, play a major role in shaping the future of our democracies and our welfare states.

When we try to cope with ever-increasing information flows in the age of digitalisation, we have to co-operate and understand what is going on. Furthermore, we must be able to distinguish what information is correct and what is incorrect. We must tackle these complex issues together among media outlets, authorities and research community - both on national, regional and multinational

levels. We cannot escape facing the same online disinformation challenges - both internal and external.

I can hardly imagine better company for doing this than our Nordic neighbours, within the wider European network. We share the same values in our open democratic societies. We believe in rule-of law and transparency. We have high-level of education. We have strong, independent and digitally advanced journalistic media. We also have very competent research, fact-checking and information capabilities. In my mind, the combination of these ingredients provides a recipe for a successful way to further strengthen our trust-based societies.

We the Nordic countries are each other's closest friends – both in our everyday lives and in difficult situations. This is something I have learned years ago as a Member of Parliament. And I have learned to respect this even more as Minister of Defence. Whenever something serious happens, the first foreign phone calls we make are with our Nordic colleagues. This is something I witnessed again recently when we had to evacuate people from the chaotic conditions in Afghanistan. It was in our "Nordic DNA" to automatically reach out to help and support each other.

I encourage you to build on this unique platform to join our efforts in monitoring and tackling information disorders. I look forward in hearing your results and encourage you to stay in contact also with Nordic Council.

Thank you very much