



EDUSKUNTA
RIKSDAGEN

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

FIIA Forum 2022
CHANGES AND CHALLENGES
IN THE NORDIC SECURITY CLIMATE

Opening remarks by the
Speaker of the Parliament of Finland
Matti Vanhanen

Helsinki April 27, 2022

Director Aaltola, thank you very much for your introductory words.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, I am pleased to attend this annual FIIA Forum, that is a third in series. I am especially grateful, that this year's forum is organised in a physical format. I also greet the participants who are following the event online.

This year's Forum is co-organised with the Finnish Security and Intelligence Service SUPO. Considering the situation, we are living at, this makes all the sense. The theme and the timing of the Forum could not have been more relevant either. The reason is of course unfortunate one - Russia's war against Ukraine.

The war has been ongoing since 2014. But in the early hours of 24th of February it got a new and shocking turn when Russia launched an unprovoked invasion in Ukraine from the sea, air, and land. Russia's actions have been a blatant violation of everything sacred which the international cooperation is based on. Territorial integrity and sovereignty of an independent state, fundamental human rights, UN Charter, rules-based order. The list is endless.

Russia has caused cruel devastation and humanitarian suffering in Ukraine. We will remember destruction and war crimes committed by Russia in Bucha, Mariupol, Kharkiv, Borodyanka. And the list unfortunately, goes on. Those responsible for these crimes need to be held accountable.

At the same time, we have followed with the greatest admiration the resolve of Ukrainians and their leadership in their fight for a free and independent homeland. Ukrainians deserve our utmost respect and support and Finland among others has been united in this. Our support has been comprehensive consisting also military aid. We are also committed to reconstruction of even stronger Ukraine. This is because Ukraine's cause is just and Ukraine's cause matters.

Along with providing Ukraine material assistance, we need to push the efforts to agree on a ceasefire and to guarantee the access on humanitarian assistance. We need to support those fleeing the war. We need to put pressure on Russia to withdraw from Ukraine and end the war without conditions. Unfortunately, the ears and eyes in Moscow seem to be deaf and blind for these demands.

Ladies, and gentlemen,

Russia has broken the trust with the international community by its aggression in Ukraine. One might even think, whether there has been for a long time any genuine attempt by Russia to abide by its commitments.

Russia's invasion has shattered the building blocks of the European security. It has also dramatically changed the basis of our own foreign and security policy. And we need to adapt ourselves to this new situation and to ensure and strengthen our own security.

Hence, the Finnish Government prepared its report on the changing security situation. The report handles our foreign, security and defence policy, economic impacts of the situation, security of supply, preparedness, border and cyber security, and hybrid influencing. Although the report is often called as a *Nato report*, it does not contain a proposal, whether Finland should join the Nato or not.

Government's report is now under parliamentary handling. Foreign Affairs Committee will prepare a report after receiving statements by other committees. It is estimated that this process could be ready by mid-May. Based on this process and if so decided, the Government will submit to the Parliament a second report, that would cover the question of possibly application to Nato.

We are of course all the time closely following the developments with regard Russia's invasion in Ukraine. Hence, the ongoing parliamentary process considering the first report does not limit in any way the President and the Government to proceed with the possible Nato application sooner, should they so decide. In this case, Government would submit the Parliament a second report even though the handling of the first one would not be finished.

There has been some criticism on our chosen process. Firstly, the key role of the Parliament in the process has been questioned. Secondly, it has been argued whether the government's report and its parliamentary handling will only unnecessarily delay the obvious conclusion, namely application of the Nato membership. Thirdly, the role of the parliamentary coordination group, that I chair, has been unclear.

I have personally argued just the opposite. For me, and I dare to say, for the president and the government, it has been essential to ensure that regardless of the outcome, the decision is based on a strong and wide support. Secondly, we need to ensure, that the decision is made in a manner, that follows strictly our constitution and its obligations. The coordination group ensures the flow of information between key parliamentary and party actors. This chosen process sends a strong message internally, but also externally.

It is also of utmost importance, that we have a constant dialogue with our Swedish counterparts. Sweden is our closest ally and partner, and the current situation highlights this even further. It is crucial, that we both are aware of our respective internal discussions and state of play. It would be beneficial to do our decisions hand in hand. But at the end,

Finland will however, make an independent and sovereign decision of its own when it comes to the Nato question.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have just stressed our close and deep cooperation with Sweden. This is obvious considering the time we are living and the questions that are on our tables. However, the value of Nordic cooperation as a whole is irreplaceable for us. We five Nordic countries are our closest allies and partners, we share the same values and interests and strong belief on multilateral cooperation.

Nordic cooperation is one of the most integrated forms of regional cooperation in the world. Just few weeks ago we celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Helsinki Agreement, that forms the basis for Nordic Cooperation. The pandemic has stressed the value and importance of our collaboration even further. It has also highlighted the need to lift all the remaining obstacles that might hinder our cooperation.

As the new threats emerge, we adapt ourselves along. We are strengthening cooperation on hybrid threats and cyber security and enhancing our joint preparedness for crises. Within Nordefco we have intensified our security and defence cooperation. Nordefco has just proven its crucial value during the current circumstances.

Nordic cooperation is something, that needs to be safeguarded especially in the situation, when the stability in our region is under threat. At the same time, it is also important to strengthen our cooperation with the Baltic states.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As a summary of my opening remarks, I would like to propose few items for discussion during this Forum and beyond. The first: what would be the consequences for bilateral Finnish-Swedish defence cooperation, if we decide to make opposite decisions on Nato. Second, what implications would there be on the security and defence cooperation in Nordic region if we all were Nato members. What implications would it have on Nordefco, on our bilateral cooperation with Sweden or trilateral cooperation with Sweden and Norway.

With these remarks, I wish you interesting and fruitful discussions. I thank you for the attention.