



NORDIC COUNCIL

International Strategy of the Nordic Council 2018–2022



This strategy sets out the main priorities for the Nordic Council's international work in the five-year period from 2018 until 2022. The strategy builds on what the Nordic Council has learned about international work in recent years and on an assessment of the current state of international affairs. It provides guidance about the relationships and themes that the Nordic Council will prioritise going forward. The strategy also identifies areas in which the Nordic Council calls upon the Nordic governments to play a more prominent international role.

TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER

The Nordic countries are small, but together we are strong. The combined Nordic economy ranks number 10–12 in the world. The Nordic social model has proved to be sustainable and successful. The Nordic Region is characterised by peace, freedom, equality, trust and democracy, as well as a high degree of political and economic stability. The Region has what it takes to make a constructive contribution to debates on the future of Europe and the world.

The fact that the Nordic countries have different attitudes to membership of various international alliances does not preclude far closer co-operation on international relations, defence, economics, security, culture, education, research, embassies,

freedom of movement, integration, development aid and health. The Stoltenberg, Könberg and Poul Nielsen reports bear witness to this.

The Nordic Council will, therefore, pursue the following objectives:

- that the Nordic governments exploit the opportunities inherent in Nordic co-operation to a far greater extent. Experience shows that when the Nordic countries consult each other in advance of meetings in international forums, they exert greater – and often decisive – influence. Pre-meetings and coordination ought to be the rule rather than the exception.
- that all of the Nordic countries, irrespective of membership of alliances, work more closely together on international affairs, defence and security, including civil defence, which contributes to the general level of security. Together, we have major strategic, military and security-policy significance. Nordic defence co-operation threatens no one but helps ensure stability and predictability in the Region.
- that the Nordic countries continue their efforts in peace-making and civilian crisis management.
- that the Nordic countries make more of the potential to market the Nordic Region as a unit at international level (Nordic Branding).



- that more Nordic embassies/representatives abroad share premises. In addition to cost-effectiveness and economies of scale, this can contribute to closer co-operation and enhance the sense of Nordic identity and visibility.
- that the Nordic Council engages in closer dialogue with the Nordic Council of Ministers on international issues, including at the administrative level.

MAIN PRIORITIES IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

In spite of borders and party-political differences, the Nordic Region is characterised by deep respect for democracy, the rule of law, equality and human rights. Although we take these values for granted, that is not the case in many other countries. The Nordic Region can make a difference in the world by always speaking up clearly in support of these values.

In its international work, the Nordic Council will, therefore:

- strive to ensure that democracy, the rule of law, equality and human rights are always high on the international agenda. Specifically, this means raising such matters in bilateral meetings, at international conferences, in informal conversations and official statements. The Nordic Region must take the lead in combating extremism, anti-democratic attitudes, racism and all other forms of hate and discrimination.
- pay particular attention to areas where the Nordic Region leads the way and can make a difference, e.g. on rights for children, women, sexual minorities, people of disability and indigenous peoples.

In spite of borders and party-political differences, the Nordic Region is characterised by the desire for a society based on equality and support for the welfare state. It is also the region with the lowest level of corruption and the highest level of openness and trust anywhere in the world, and that is an important reason for the economic success of the Region.

In its international work, the Nordic Council will, therefore:

- work to make the Nordic social model better known and a source of inspiration for others
- work to make the economic and social benefits of openness and trust better known
- work to raise awareness of the serious social consequences of corruption.

The world is facing enormous climate and environmental challenges which can only be solved by international co-operation. The UN sustainable development goals (SDGs)¹ are the world's action plan to eliminate poverty, combat inequality and solve the climate crisis by 2030. The Nordic countries are already at the forefront of green transition in many areas and driving forces behind the UN SDGs, but much remains to be done.

The Nordic Council will, therefore, strive to ensure that:

- more attention is paid to the UN SDGs in our bilateral meetings and in international forums
- best practice from the Nordic Region is deployed to benefit others, and that we have an active, inquisitive approach towards learning from others.

¹ The Nordic Council has drawn up a report on Nordic co-operation and Agenda 2030.



European cohesion has been put to the test by events such as the increasing flow of refugees and migrants, particularly from countries in Africa and the Middle East.

The Nordic Council will, therefore, strive to ensure that:

- more countries around the world accept their share of responsibility for solving the refugee crisis
- more countries work more closely together and share best practice on the successful integration of refugees and immigrants.

PRIORITISED COUNTRIES, REGIONS AND ORGANISATIONS

The Nordic Council will prioritise co-operation with our neighbours, in particular around the Baltic Sea, in the Arctic and the EU.

THE BALTIC SEA

- The Baltic countries and the **Baltic Assembly** have been mainstays of Nordic international co-operation. The Nordic Council will strive to work even more closely together with the Baltic countries. The Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (**BSPC**) brings together parliamentarians and officials from all the countries around the Baltic Sea and will continue to be an important platform for co-operation. The Nordic Council will strive to make the work of the BSPC more specific and results-oriented.

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THE ARCTIC

- The Arctic is of great importance for the whole of the Nordic Region and is, of course, part of Nordic international work. All of the Nordic countries sit on the **Arctic Council** and the Conference of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region (**CPAR**), at which the Nordic Council has observer status. **Canada**, the **USA** and **Russia** are important partners. In recent years, the **West Nordic Council** has concentrated on the Arctic to a greater extent and has been granted observer status on the Arctic Council.

THE EU

- In an increasingly unstable and unpredictable world, it is important to forge even close relationships with good friends and reliable partners. Many of the countries that fall into this category are EU member states, for example, **Germany** and the Benelux countries. Despite Brexit, the **United Kingdom** is also a natural partner for the Nordic Region.
- Irrespective of whether they are member states or not, the EU will remain a particularly important organisation for all of the countries in the Nordic Region. The Nordic Council will, therefore, forge closer contacts with **MEPs** and the **EU institutions**. In September 2017, the Nordic Council appointed a member of staff in Brussels, who will work with the Nordic parliaments to achieve this.

Provide it has the capacity, the Nordic Council may also consider working with other countries and organisations, e.g. the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). To the fullest extent possible, this should take place within the framework of existing co-operation in the Baltic Sea Region/the Baltic, the Arctic and the EU.