

Joint Statement by Nordic Foreign Ministers (N5) from Bornholm

[to be published 17 September]

The Foreign Ministers of Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark met today at the Danish island of Bornholm. Situated in the Baltic Sea, they discussed matters of international security and foreign policy.

The ministers condemn in the strongest possible terms the poisoning of Russian opposition leader Alexey Navalny and call upon Russia to conduct an impartial and transparent investigation including experts from the OPCW. The Ministers express their deep concern by the use of a banned nerve agent on the territory of one of our neighbouring countries. Russia must immediately disclose any relevant information on how a chemical weapons attack could be conducted on its territory. Any attack with a chemical weapon is a clear breach of international law, undermining existing norms against the use of weapons of mass destruction. The international community needs to see those responsible held accountable. Further, attacks on members of the opposition are an unacceptable breach of democratic principles, human rights and international law. We regret this grave blow against democracy and political plurality in Russia.

The ministers also reiterated their support and solidarity with the people of Belarus who demand respect for fundamental freedoms and free and fair elections. The Belarusian authorities' brutal repression and disproportionate use of force against its own citizens must end. Referring to previous statements, the ministers call on the Belarusian authorities to immediately release all unlawfully detained, to launch a genuine national dialogue and to engage meaningfully with the OSCE. The foreign ministers underline the importance of swift imposition of sanctions by the EU and likeminded states on those responsible for electoral fraud and oppression of civilians.

The ministers also discussed Mr. Björn Bjarnasons report on Nordic Foreign and Security Policy, which opens an important new chapter in Nordic cooperation on foreign and security policy. Welcoming the report, the foreign ministers have agreed to look into recommendations within all three chapters of the report: climate, hybrid/cyber and multilateralism, with a view to taking them forward.

Finally, the ministers agreed on the need for further Nordic efforts related to conflict prevention and Women, Peace & Security (WPS). 20 years after the UN Security Council adopted the first resolution on WPS, underlining the importance of increasing women's full and equal participation in conflict prevention and sustainable peacebuilding, the agenda needs increased commitment globally to ensure its implementation. At the same time, conflicts are becoming more complex. The Nordic ministers reiterate that peace can only be achieved if women are at front and centre in peace processes, and they each commit to stronger Nordic cooperation as well as stronger integration of WPS in conflict prevention efforts.