

Seminar on "Security Prospects in the High North", Reykjavik, January 29, 2009

Speech by Danish Minister of Defence Søren Gade, session three "Options for closer cooperation"

Good afternoon... Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, let me express my appreciation to Iceland for organising this important event at this fantastic place. It is a great pleasure to see such a gathering of leaders from governments, military bodies of NATO as well as academics.

Iceland seems to be the perfect place for discussing issues in relation to climate change and international security. So thank you very much for your generous hospitality and for the invitation to take part in the discussions.

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First, allow me to mention a few facts:

- Today's security challenges and threats have no boundaries.
- Some might regard the High North as an isolated place. But the High North is not just a cold and remote wilderness. **As we speak**, more than 4 million people call it "home".
- Security related issues in the High North are very much on the radar of the Danish Government. One illustration of this is that I travel to the region at least once or twice a year.

To me there are no easy solutions to the future security challenges in the High North. And it is clear that no single nation can face them alone.

That is why Denmark took the initiative to the **Iulissat Declaration** between Canada, Norway, the Russian Federation, USA and Denmark. The basic principle is the commitment to international law and to the orderly settlement of any possible overlapping claims.

Before addressing the 3 questions I have been asked, let me make some general remarks.

My **first** overall message here today is that the security dimension of climate change in the High North has to be identified and addressed.

And **secondly**, as I see it, NATO has an important role to play – not alone of course. But together with other international organisations.

Thirdly, let me also say that we have to be realistic about how far we can go in order to tackle the upcoming challenges in the High North. Key dimensions such as **extreme distances and often very tough weather conditions in the Arctic** will always place limits on our ability to meet a number of challenges.

One just has to imagine a scenario where a **cruise liner** is in serious trouble in tough weather conditions. Such a situation will never be easy to tackle – not even if we spent huge amounts of money on search and rescue assets.

That said, much can be achieved if we share views on best practises, enhance cooperation across borders and consider ways of pooling our efforts - to lower the cost and increase the overall effect.

What are the main challenges?

What do we know?

We know that climate change is coming and that we have no time to waste.

As far as the High North goes, **we also know** that the signs of **climate change** are more evident here than in other regions of the world. The melting of the polar ice cap is likely to lead to both opportunities and challenges.

With the polar ice cap shrinking, new shipping lanes will open. The distance from mainland Europe to Japan will shorten by up to 40 % in periods where the Northwest and Northeast routes are open.

Like climate change, increasing **demand for energy** is a global challenge in its own right. So is the growing **competition for energy resources**. Both could have serious security implications in areas of disputed maritime boundaries.

The High North is believed to hold great undiscovered energy resources. According to a US Geological Survey, up to 25 % of the world's **undiscovered oil and gas reserves** are expected to be located in the High North. Despite the present international financial crisis, the global demand for energy is likely to continue to increase. Especially with fast growing economies such as **Brazil, Russia, China and India**.

In addition, the melting ice cap and technology are making the energy resources of High North easier to get to.

Put these things together, and the possible outcome could be an increased race for energy sources in the region. This could lead to **increased political tensions** and **escalating disputes about territory**.

Rising tourism – you know travelling onboard large cruise ships to explore the “untouched, hidden” jewels of the High North – it also increases the **risk of accidents** in the Arctic Ocean.

New transport routes, tourism, research, and the race for energy sources **increases the risk of pollution of the maritime environment**. This may cause permanent damage to the very sensitive ecological balance in the High North.

I have been asked to address three specific questions:

First question: is the current level of international cooperation in the Arctic region sufficient?

Clearly there is a need for effective multinational responses.

In the past 10 to 20 years, many international fora and initiatives have seen the light. Some of them are the **Arctic Council** (1996), the **Barents Euro-Arctic Council** (1993), and the **North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum** (2007).

The **Ilulissat Declaration** is another good example. With the Arctic Ocean Conference in Ilulissat last year, the five coastal states Canada, Norway, the Russian Federation, USA and Denmark committed to an orderly settlement of any possible overlapping claims.

These fora and initiatives provide an opportunity to **drive cooperation** at national, regional and international levels. But, apart from the **Coast Guard Forum**, the cooperation is mainly focusing on the political dimensions.

The broad spectre of the North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum agenda and the extensive support from 18 countries (including Russia) shows that there is will to work together. And to work practically in dealing with current and future challenges.

The Coast Guard Forum offers a practical dialogue on how best to coordinate the existing assets. And how best to address Coast Guard tasks such as environmental and fishery protection as well as search and rescue. The cooperation has for example made it easier to catch oil spillers in the region.

Despite of this, **further initiatives and cooperation may be required** to meet the many challenges of climate change for the Arctic area... There is always **room for further development**.

At a regional level, there may be gaps to be filled in the roles and responsibilities of the existing arrangements. Denmark will continue to engage in dialogue in the Arctic Council, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the North Atlantic Coast Guard Forum – as well as with the coastal states and other relevant partners.

Finally, at a global level, clearly the most obvious way is a global climate policy that effectively deals with climate change through ambitious emission reductions.

An effective climate policy is an integrated part of a sound, preventive security policy. I am confident that the international society will address this important issue at the UN climate conference in Copenhagen this autumn.

I can assure you that – as host of the UN Climate Conference – Denmark will work hard to ensure that an ambitious global agreement is reached.

The second question I was asked to address is whether the institutional framework is adequate?

We know that future challenges will be **multi-dimensional** in nature. We also know they will require a **multi-national** response. Therefore, we need to use the tools of **international cooperation** like organisations such as NATO and the EU.

I do not mind **some overlap** between organisations in addressing these issues. It is better than having **serious underlaps**. This – as always – with a watchful eye on resources!

How do we go about it?

I believe we should start by examining possible gaps in roles and responsibilities within the existing institutional framework for dealing with Arctic challenges.

This brings me to the third question on NATO's perspective?

NATO is, together with other international bodies, in a good position to address these issues - **and to make a difference**.

NATO is one of the few **security organisations** in the region offering a framework for coordination of the security requirements of the High North.

NATO's contribution to meet the challenges should of course **add value** to the current co-operation.

NATO – and its member states - has a toolbox, and we should openly discuss if and how it could be used – in order to meet some of the challenges in the High North. For example air- and maritime patrolling as well as Search and Rescue assets.

At the political level we may need to consider establishing a **High North Dialogue Forum** within a NATO context. This forum could not only include the most obvious partner, Russia, but could also be extended to other partners with clear interests in the High North. Such forum would be a platform for political dialogue and practical co-operation, and as such an excellent tool for obtaining results.

This brings me to my **last point: partnerships**.

When Harry Truman signed the North Atlantic Treaty six decades ago, he observed, "Events of this century have taught us that we cannot achieve peace independently. **The world has grown too small**".

The words are still true, **and as I see it**, those words should be applied for the NATO-EU partnership today. Moving forward in a NATO context also requires that we strengthen the NATO-EU relationship. But we need to advance our partnerships even further, both regionally and globally.

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Ladies and gentlemen,

Many of us are focusing on the upcoming NATO 60th Anniversary. We have a very full agenda in NATO right now – for example **Afghanistan** – but we also have an obligation to look towards other upcoming tasks.

The consequences of **climate change** are not only global. They are also multi-dimensional, unpredictable, and borderless. Addressing the security challenges coming from **climate change** calls for a broader approach in international security.

I am confident that **NATO in the years to come** will be able to further adapt to meet the security challenges we face today and in the future - also those challenges stemming from climate change. You know – as it is said – we should all be concerned about the future, because we all have to spend the rest of our lives there.

“From yesterday’s problems to tomorrow’s opportunities”, Denmark will be an active partner to this end... Today, at the UN Climate Conference in Copenhagen in the autumn, and in the future.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for your attention.