

JEF DEFENCE MINISTERS' STATEMENT
FINLAND AND SWEDEN'S APPLICATION FOR NATO MEMBERSHIP

Today, the Defence Ministers of the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) – comprising Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the UK – met in Oslo.

JEF Defence Ministers discussed current security challenges, including the implications of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and considered the future development of the JEF to ensure it continues to make an effective contribution to security and stability in its core region of the High North, North Atlantic and Baltic Sea. JEF Defence Ministers also took part in a table-top exercise to practise the JEF's role in responding to an escalating crisis, including the relationship between the JEF and NATO in such a scenario.

All JEF Defence Ministers strongly welcome Finland's and Sweden's applications for NATO membership. Each country has made its sovereign decision to join NATO after a clear, open and democratic process; they share the Alliance's values and are modern, highly capable defence and security partners with whom together we will enhance our collective, transatlantic security.

The allied JEF Partners will stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Finland and Sweden in a spirit of solidarity through their accession to NATO membership. We shall work closely with our NATO Allies to integrate both Finland and Sweden into the Alliance as soon as possible. The JEF shall engage in multi-domain activity across our core regions to provide enhanced levels of assurance to our Finnish and Swedish friends as they complete the process of joining NATO. This is in addition to the series of integrated activities and exercises in northern Europe that JEF Defence Ministers agreed at their meeting at Belvoir Castle on 21-22 February 2022.

We reaffirm the shared purpose and common resolve of the JEF to work together to enhance security and stability in northern Europe and be ready to respond to a wide range of contingencies, both in peacetime and at times of crisis and conflict; all in a way which is coherent with, and complementary to, the role of NATO.