

# Strategic priorities of the Foreign Service

The goal of the foreign and security policy of Finland is to strengthen Finland's international position, secure the country's independence and regional integrity, improve the security and welfare of people in Finland, and maintain the functionality of society. An economy grounded in a sustainable base and international competitiveness support the achievement of these objectives. Finland pursues an active bilateral and multilateral foreign and security policy. In a world of mutual interdependencies, Finland promotes sustainable development as well as international stability, peace, democracy, human rights, the rule of law and equality. Finland, in a goal-oriented manner, influences the operating environment as part of the Nordic, European and international community.

## Operating environment

Intense change in the international operating environment offers Finland both new opportunities and serious concerns. States and other actors are more closely and more diversely intertwined and interdependent on each other than before. Their relative strengths are constantly changing. Respect for universal values is faltering. From the European perspective, the international security situation has deteriorated in recent years. The altered operating environment is characterised by the speed and unpredictability of changes.

Awareness of problems affecting the entire globe is increasing. As concerns sustainable development and climate policy, it has been possible to make new global commitments. The operational capability of international institutions is limited in relation to expectations, and the course of action based on respect for agreed rules has come under pressure.

Population trends and migration as well as the so-called fourth industrial revolution – including technological developments, especially digitalisation, globalisation of the economy and international value networks – affect Finland both directly and indirectly. At the same time, measures restricting world trade and turning inward are on the rise. Climate change, the sufficiency of natural resources, food security and poverty as well as changes in energy production affect the global operating environment. The life of millions of people around the world has improved, but the development has been focused unevenly. The governments of many countries restrict the functioning of democratic institutions and encroach on human rights. The polarisation trend between and within societies increases the risks of conflict. Difficult and often protracted conflicts and extremist movements aggravate the security situation and prevent development in many countries. Terrorism is a serious international problem. Conflicts, poverty and the consequences of climate change increase refugees and the need for humanitarian assistance has become greater. All of this also adds to the vulnerability of Western democracies. The need for more effective international cooperation has increased further.

The security situation of Europe and the Baltic Sea region has weakened. Russia's actions in Ukraine have changed the security policy environment. Russia has increased its military presence and activity also in Finland's neighbouring areas. Russia challenges the entire Western community, requiring determined measures in response, including in the EU, while at the same time maintaining good dialogue connections to alleviate tensions.

The European Union is Finland's primary foreign and security policy framework and an important security community. Activities of the EU are characterised by the UK's exit process and the internal political development in many Member States as well as by the EU's own efforts to enhance its efficiency. Migration and the threat of terrorism and radicalisation increase expectations of the EU's operational capability. At the same time the EU has the will to develop the Union and intensify cooperation for instance in security and defence policy.

Along with changes in the environment, Nordic communications and cooperation especially between Finland and Sweden, as well as transatlantic cooperation, deepen. In NATO's activities, the strengthening of deterrence and collective defence has become central. This will also affect the development of Finland's and Sweden's partnerships with NATO. NATO's presence and activities in the Baltic Sea region stabilise the security situation.

There are open questions associated with the shaping of the role of the United States. China and Russia seek to expand their influence. Political developments in the Western Balkans arouse uncertainty. The situation has become more unstable also in Turkey. The development of the Eastern European Neighbourhood is open in many ways, and the situation in the Southern Neighbourhood remains unstable.

## Strategic priorities of the Foreign Service 2018–2022

1. The Foreign Service promotes the security and welfare of Finland and the Finns by working on behalf of the security and stability of Finland and its neighbouring areas as well as on behalf of international security and stability.

The aim of the Foreign Service is a coherent, strong and operationally capable EU that focuses especially on growth and security. The remaining 27 Member States of the EU have started development work, which requires active exertion of influence from Finland, including on the EU as a security community. Concrete results are needed particularly in deepening the internal market, promoting free trade, strengthening the EU's external action and defence cooperation as well as in migration management.

The Foreign Service promotes the stability, security and prosperity of the Baltic Sea region. It deepens practical cooperation especially with Sweden. Nordic cooperation is utilised in dealing with both regional and international challenges.

The Foreign Service intensifies political and economic cooperation with the United States. NATO is a key actor promoting transatlantic security. The Foreign Service widely develops cooperation between Finland and NATO.

Stability and the economic potential of the Arctic region are promoted in cooperation with the States of the region. During its chairmanship of the Arctic Council (2017–2019), Finland works to consolidate the position of the Council and advance the national interests of Finland.

The Foreign Service builds cooperation and maintains dialogue with Russia. It actively influences the European Union's Common policies on Russia, which are the base of Finland's activities. The precondition for improved cooperation between the EU and Russia is that Russia complies with international law and its other international commitments.

The Foreign Service participates in efforts to resolve conflicts and rebuild societies by means of crisis management, peacebuilding and development cooperation. It strengthens mediation and dialogues as priorities of foreign and security policy. The building of democracy, good governance and crisis tolerance in fragile states, especially in the zone extending from Afghanistan to the Sahel, is an important part of this work. Support for democratic, sustainable development can prevent crises and forced migration. The Foreign Service is prepared for unexpected events such as natural disasters and other humanitarian crises, and participates in mitigating their effects.

The importance of the link between external and internal security has increased and is manifested in combating terrorism and responding to cyber and hybrid threats. The Foreign Service participates in international cooperation to combat terrorism and weaken the cultivation base of extremism. The fight against terrorism requires seamless cooperation between different actors, including the intensification of cooperation with EU partner countries. The Foreign Service works to prevent hybrid threats and strengthen the national crisis tolerance by means of international cooperation. It participates in the fight against cyber threats and promotes stability, security and freedom of interaction in the digital environment.

By investing in arms control, the Foreign Service promotes regional and global security. The Foreign Service acts to prevent illicit arms trafficking and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Activities consistently take account of the operational priorities – the Arctic, Baltic security, the strengthening of the cooperation between Finland and Sweden, transatlantic cooperation and mediation.

## 2. The Foreign Service promotes a rules-based international system.

The Foreign Service works to strengthen an international system grounded in international law and deepen rules-based cooperation. It is important for Finland that international relations are based on common goals and principles, especially those of the UN Charter and the OSCE.

In the work of the Foreign Service, strengthening the unity and operational capability of the EU on the basis of common values takes precedence. Development of the EU as a security community and further development of the Union's external capabilities strengthen Finland's own position as well. A united EU has the most effective influence in promoting universal values, sustainable development and the security of Europe.

The Foreign Service promotes an international system based on agreements, which forms the basis for the welfare of Finland's society, including the operating conditions for companies.

3. The Foreign Service promotes open economic relations supporting Finland's growth and supports the participation of Finnish companies in international trade and value chains.

The Foreign Service promotes solutions supporting open economic interaction and liberalisation of trade as well as EU trade agreements, which are an important precondition also for Finland's expanding international trade relations and Finland's welfare as the international operating environment changes. The Foreign Services advances Finland's exports by influencing business environments and combating trade barriers.

The Foreign Service supports both the participation of Finnish companies in international value chains and partnerships based on innovative know-how. In addition, the Foreign Service supports the participation of Finnish actors in international procurement, in development cooperation projects financed by Finland and in cooperation on digitalisation, and promotes attracting investments to Finland.

Through all of these commercial and economic activities, the Foreign Service seeks to promote sustainable development in Finland and globally. The Foreign Service works to strengthen the sustainable development of developing countries also by bolstering the economic base, jobs and livelihoods, and the taxation capacity.

4. The Foreign Service works to strengthen human rights, equality and democracy.

The Foreign Service promotes human rights, equality, equity and support for participation as part of global responsibility. Defending and further developing international law and human rights norms, including putting an end to impunity, is an essential part of this work.

The Foreign Service intensifies efforts to strengthen the position and rights of girls and women for instance by supporting the work of international actors as well as by means of advocacy and resourcing. Equality is also supported by open international trade regulations.

The Foreign Service works to strengthen democracy and the operational capability of societies globally.

The Foreign Service offers the knowledge and experiences based on the development and operating models of Finland's own society for use by cooperation partners. Strengthening education and training and the related capacity by offering Finland's own know-how is part of this work.

The Foreign Service works to promote the full commitment of the EU Member States to compliance with the EU Treaties, including the values therein – such as freedom, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law.

5. The Foreign Service promotes implementation of the 2030 Agenda and works to mitigate climate change.

Finland is committed, for its part, to shouldering global responsibility in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. All the priorities of the Foreign Service's activities promote

achievement of the goals set in the 2030 Agenda. Sustainable development is also promoted through the practices of the Foreign Service as well as in the Ministry and the diplomatic missions.

The Foreign Service promotes implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change and takes part in international cooperation to limit climate change and promote adaptation, including through the energy and climate diplomacy of the EU. In addition, the Foreign Service strengthens the environmentally sustainable development of developing countries by supporting sector-specific programmes in these countries, participating in international climate and environmental financing and by taking part in normative work.

The Foreign Service supports sustainable development by working to promote exports, innovations and investments of Finnish cleantech know-how, as well as striving to strengthen research and innovation activities. The Foreign Service promotes clean energy solutions and circular economy solutions.

Through Arctic cooperation, security aspects, environment and climate perspectives, and commercial and economic angles are promoted in order to strengthen well-being both in Arctic region and globally.

## 6. The Foreign Service serves.

The Foreign Service serves the entire state administration, citizens, companies, organisations, the media and other cooperation partners. Activities of the Foreign Service are grounded in a comprehensive and agile network of diplomatic missions, which offers channels and tools that should be utilised to the maximum.

A rapidly changing environment requires the following of the Foreign Service: effective forecasting, monitoring, analysis, information distribution and flexible use of resources. Diverse know-how enables the promotion of Finland's objectives and better risk management, as part of comprehensive security, in even rapidly changing conditions. Strengthening Finland's crisis tolerance and the Foreign Service's own crisis tolerance is central.

Effective bilateral and multilateral diplomacy at various levels, based on solid know-how and compact networks, is a pivotal tool of the Foreign Service for exerting influence. The Foreign Service pays attention increasingly to exploiting digitalisation, including social media as an operating environment.

The Foreign Service serves companies. Work aiming to enhance the functionality of Team Finland structures is a key factor. The role and responsibility of Heads of Mission as country leaders of Team Finland activities is clarified. The role of diplomatic missions in export promotion becomes stronger and is based on effective collaboration with the Business Finland organisation. Practical export promotion know-how in the Foreign Service is developed with determination.

The citizens' services and consular services offered by the Foreign Service are used by a growing number of Finns. Among other things, travel safety and its improvement, assistance for Finns in distress abroad, issuing passports and visas, handling cases of death, entry and family reunification matters, etc. are an integral part of the daily service provided by the Foreign Service. It is ensured

that the services included in the scope of the Foreign Service's tasks are a positive factor when competing for international experts who consider moving to Finland. The citizen's services provided by the Foreign Service are developed, taking the revised Citizen Services Act into account.

Finland's interests are promoted through effective communications and country brand work. The point of departure in the country brand work of the Foreign Service is Finland as a constitutional state and an equal, dynamic Nordic welfare state anchored in a Western value base, with the European Union as its most important political reference group. External economic relations are promoted by showcasing Finnish know-how, experts, phenomena, and culture and the strengths of Finnish society. The Foreign Service communicates using up-to-date means. Improvement of the communications preparedness of the entire Foreign Service is essential.