

**Testimony of Karen E. Donfried, Assistant Secretary
Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs
Senate Foreign Relations Committee
June 22, 2022**

Chairman Menendez, Ranking Member Risch, and distinguished members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the critical role NATO plays in our security and the safeguarding of our freedom and democratic values, and Finland and Sweden's future place in the Alliance. I welcome the opportunity to share with you today why the Administration strongly and unequivocally supports Finland and Sweden's membership in NATO. We strongly support NATO's Open Door policy and firmly believe that these two countries' membership in the Alliance would benefit the national security of the United States and strengthen the collective defense of NATO and the broader security of the Euro-Atlantic region. As President Biden said when he welcomed Finnish President Niinistö and Swedish Prime Minister Andersson to the White House last month, we are proud to offer "the strong support of the United States for the applications of two great democracies and two close, highly capable partners to join the strongest, most powerful defensive alliance in the history of the world." Likewise, I want to thank the more than eighty senators who signaled their full support for Sweden and Finland's applications for NATO membership in a letter to the President, as well as the bipartisan Senate Resolution 646 in support of their NATO accession. This provided yet another endorsement for these two strong and capable democracies. The Administration has provided reports to Congress on Finland and Sweden's accession, as called for in the Senate's Resolution of Ratification of the NATO Accession protocols for Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic.

Russia's unprovoked February 24 full scale invasion of Ukraine caused a seismic change in both Swedish and Finnish public support for NATO membership. Each country carried out inclusive and thorough democratic processes leading to the decision to apply for NATO membership. In an historic foreign and security policy shift, Finland and Sweden together officially applied for NATO membership on May 18.

Since its inception, NATO's goal is to achieve a lasting peace in the North Atlantic area through collective security based on the common values of democracy, the rule of law, and individual liberty. As advanced democracies that uphold the rule of law and world leaders in protecting and promoting global human rights, Finland

and Sweden would strengthen NATO as an alliance of values and expand the circle of North American and European democracies committed to defending each other.

The United States has close bilateral defense relationships with both Finland and Sweden and has built robust cooperation and interoperability with these two countries through exercises and presence in the Baltic Sea region and elsewhere. In addition, Finland and Sweden both are already active in NATO political dialogues, exercises, and operations, and are highly interoperable with NATO. Since Russia's further invasion of Ukraine in February, Finland and Sweden have drawn even closer through enhanced political dialogue and sharing of information with the Alliance. The two countries began cooperating with NATO in 1994 through the Partnership for Peace program. In 2014, Finland and Sweden were granted "Enhanced Opportunities Partner" status, which affords partners the closest level of cooperation short of being a member. Sweden has participated in NATO missions since 1995 including in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, and Libya; shares cyber defense information; is home to a world-class defense industry, and is steadily increasing defense spending with the stated goal of reaching 2 percent of GDP as soon as possible. Finland has contributed to NATO missions in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iraq, and Kosovo and will spend 2.16 percent of its GDP on defense in 2022. In 2026, Finland will receive the first of its 64 F-35As from its \$12 billion deal – the largest national procurement in Finland's history – and one that will give Finland a significant military capability, increase interoperability with the United States and other NATO Allies, and have a positive economic impact on both the U.S. and Finnish economies. Both countries will enhance NATO's situational awareness and capabilities in the High North. In short, I concur with what many of you have said already: NATO enlargement that includes Finland and Sweden would further bolster the Alliance. They would be net providers of security to NATO and would enhance the national security interests of the United States.

Turkey has raised concerns about some of Finland and Sweden's policies in advance of NATO accession. We recognize Turkey's legitimate concerns regarding terrorism, which NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg has also highlighted. We continue to encourage Stockholm, Ankara, and Helsinki to work together to find a path forward that addresses the security concerns of all Allies, and urge the Alliance to reach consensus on the accession process in an expeditious manner. We are confident Sweden and Finland would be net contributors to the Alliance and their membership will bolster the security of every NATO member.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member, and distinguished Members of this Committee, Finland and Sweden are NATO's closest partners, and we look forward to welcoming them into the Alliance. Neither country's membership would detract from the ability of the United States to meet or fund its military requirements outside the North Atlantic area. We believe U.S. and overall Transatlantic security will be strengthened by their membership. Once the accession protocols are signed, we urge the Senate at the earliest opportunity to provide its advice and consent. Thank you. I look forward to your questions.