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Trust and confidence for Security

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Trust and confidence are key building blocks for relations among people, within societies and among nations. They are fundamental in our everyday life and a cornerstone in any society. We make a number of choices based on trust and confidence every day: where we shop, repair our car or save our money and when we ask a neighbor to look after our house – the list could be made long.

What does it take for us to place trust in others? We most likely do not think about why we trust some and not others – it just feels that way. We do not want to place trust blindly but with good judgment: judgment based on past experience, shared values or good reputation. Well-placed trust grows out of active inquiry rather than blind acceptance. Openness and transparency are important components in building trust. We can not have guarantees that everyone will keep trust – at some point we just have to trust.

It is essential that we develop trust among each other but also in the society we are living, its leadership and institutions, private or governmental. This applies to basic functions such as health care, schools, care taking of elderly and handicapped people, fire brigades, police and our political system as such. Here we, as individuals, have limited choices. For practical purposes we might have to trust institutions we claim not to trust. In Sweden the police has the lowest rating of all institutions. In a recent poll only a small fraction of the population was confident that our police can prevent and combat crime. This is probably an informed judgment as only 15 % of the “every day crimes” committed in Sweden are solved and many are not even being investigated.

There are other ways of showing lack of trust in public institutions. Private security companies are taking over more and more of the work to protect us. We see, not least in the US and South Africa, that people prefer to live in compounds, carefully fenced in and well guarded. They do not trust the authorities to provide the protection; they have lost their confidence in the society outside the wall. We are ending up in a strange world where we live within fence and guards and leave the streets and the rest of the society to the criminals.

In other places modern technology has been used to improve or maybe replace trust and confidence. London has installed huge numbers of closed-circuit TV cameras. They provide surveillance, maybe security, but how about trust and confidence? Many are hesitant to a society based on remote control. How can we trust and have confidence in a society where our lives are being constantly monitored? What happens to the

information and to our privacy? The public is becoming increasingly suspicious of authorities and their use of information, and for good reasons. In Sweden more than 200 policemen are facing criminal charges for unauthorized access to information in the police data bank in the murder case of Anna Lindh, our foreign minister.

We see many examples around the world where lack of trust and confidence in one or several key institutions or in the political system itself lead to the rapid deterioration of the society. In a similar way; establishing trust and confidence in key public functions are essential in rebuilding societies as we are witnessing now in the Balkans, Afghanistan and Iraq.

When it comes to industries and business we normally have choices. If we do not trust that a company provides fair goods or services and value for money we go somewhere else. Industries and business have to develop trust and confidence to get people to work for them or to invest money in their stocks. There are many examples: Enron, Anderson, WorldCom, Skandia and Parmalat, the list is long, where actions and behavior of the leadership of a company have totally ruined the trust in the company and the company itself and also deteriorated the confidence in the business sector in general.

Business must also be able to trust the environment in which it is working and in which it invests its money. We see that daily when money is being transferred among the finance centers of the world. There is a more severe perspective: the lack of trust in the stability of the social, legal and political environments in many countries, especially in the developing world, keeps international business and investments away. This is a major obstacle to a sustainable development in many parts of the world.

Trust and the media is a widely debated issue. "Who will guard the guardians?" How can we trust the reporting and those on whom they report? The recent BBC case is one illustration, but on a general basis how can we be sure that the reporting on CNN, or Al Jazeera, is accurate and not biased? A free press must be an accountable press and a part of a public culture based on mutual trust and confidence.

Trust and confidence are essential also in relations among nation. In the political domain specific confidence building measures have been established such as the Open Skies and the CFE treaties on security in Europe. Arms control agreements also contain verification measures to ensure that obligations are kept and confidence is maintained: "In God we trust, all others we verify" is a common attitude. On-site inspections and the results of such inspections have been widely discussed also at the highest political levels and have influenced far reaching political decisions. One example here is the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, which provides for a far-reaching international monitoring system as well as intrusive on-site inspections. I have been chairing the verification work for the implementation of this treaty for 7 years, and can attest to the complexity of obtaining trust among nations in the highly sensitive area of nuclear testing. A key consideration in planning, executing and concluding on-site inspections is that an inspection increases our

confidence in the actual conditions. This must be true whether we find what we were searching for or not.

A number of international institutions have been established to promote international trust and confidence, foremost among them is the UN and its many subsidiary organs. States from time to time are showing limited confidence in its ability to fulfill its high goals, but still the UN is a cornerstone in building international trust and confidence. The European Union is in my mind primarily a confidence and security building arrangement. It has developed into large-scale and complex body and the trust and confidence of the European citizen in this institution are at best mixed. We saw this in Sweden when a large majority rebelled against the establishment and voted no to the EURO.

Trust and confidence are fundamental in bringing long-term security to any society. A security that, for each of us, depends increasingly on our ability to handle non-military crises. The terrorist attacks in New York, Washington, Istanbul and on Bali are tragic illustrations of the vulnerability of modern societies. Weapons of mass destruction-- be it nuclear, biological or chemical--if put in the hands of terrorists and rogue states, pose the most severe threats to our societies. Non-military threats can also include "conventional" crime, including drugs and trafficking, which is on the rise and becoming well organised across borders. In many parts of the world, the greatest threats to human security are still famine and disease. The outbreak and rapid spread of the SARS and other viruses demonstrates the global consequences of such events. We are also facing a growing number of threats to modern societies of an economic and technical nature. Deliberate attacks on information systems to manipulate the very nerves of our societies can be launched from any point on earth and by small groups of people.

Many of the threats confronting us are reflected every day on the front pages of our newspapers. We have, in short, moved away from the situation where we were planning to cope with low probability, disastrous military confrontations to one of actually coping with the threats to our security and safety facing us every day.

Human rights are a fundamental component of our security. It is essential that our actions to counteract any external or internal security threats respect and uphold human rights. We must ensure the legitimacy of the institutions involved and of the actions taken. We must not, in trying to preserve our security, destroy the fundamental values on which our societies are built

Trust and confidence building is essential for the security also of the most vulnerable persons in our societies. Focusing on particularly vulnerable groups can have a consolidating role in the rebuilding of a society that is far beyond the immediate area of concern. An example is the current difficult situation in Afghanistan: rebuilding a tolerable existence for disabled people has become one of the few unifying aims in an otherwise deeply divide country.

Fear is the main weapon of terror. Fear is basically a question of perception and does not necessarily reflect the real danger. For example, we all know that many people – in fact more than 40.000 in the US and an almost equal number in EU – die in traffic accidents. The traffic tolls are far beyond those incurred from terrorism, yet we have little hesitation driving every day. This is because we feel we are in control, and we have confidence in our own driving. Yet we are not prepared to accept equipment in our cars that prevents drunk driving and enforces speed limits that would dramatically reduce the tolls on the road. At the same time, we accept more and more rigorous measures to feel confident to travel by air safely.

What happens when many loose confidence and get frightened at the same time? Mad cow, SARS, 11 September, Bali: all had significant social, economical and political consequences. We know too well what happens when we loose confidence in businesses and their stocks. What will happen if we loose confidence in the banks and run there to get our money back? If our lack of trust in the police leads us to establish our own home guards? It is easy to see that widespread lack of trust could create economic or social chaos in any country.

With all our best efforts and increased international cooperation we will not be able to fully root out terror at any time soon. It is dangerous to create a feeling or perception that we are or can be invulnerable. We rather have to create a society that is resilient, a society that can cope with difficult events and recover.

The resilience of a society depends on the interaction of events occurring and actions taken in different sectors: the political, social and financial. This interdependence among actors and actions taken is complex and far from understood. How comes that certain social systems survive and others pass away quickly? What makes for a stable society? What are the indicators that we are on the right way to create a stable and lasting society in Afganistan, Iraq or some other State? How can we see that a State is about to fall apart, when Sovietunion fell apart in front of our eyes without anyone predicting it? How comes we are not trying harder to understand these fundamental issues that are so crucial to the security of all of us? Senator Sum Nunn said refering to Weapons of Mass Destruction: “when something happen next time what would we wish we had done to prevent it and why are we not doing that today”.

We as scientist have our responsibilities in contributing to building resilient societies and to use science and technology fully in this ambition as we have done for centuries when developing the military component of our security. We can also use tools, developed by the military, such as scenarios and games to bring together knowledge across sciences and bridge the gap between the different actors needed to create robust and resilient societies. Huge amount of research results and knowledge is available in universities, research organizations and industries Our challenge now is to put that knowledge into action