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Statement of Government Policy in the Parliamentary Debate on Foreign Affairs, Wednesday 9 February 2005

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Tsunami: a word none of us will ever forget. An earthquake so violent that it shook the Earth on its axis, giant waves crushing everything in their path, an inconceivable 300 000 dead.

We probably lost more children on Boxing Day morning than on any other day in the history of Sweden. A mark that will always show in the statistics on child mortality in our country. A mark in time, a wound in the heart of every person who has lost someone.

We want to be able to help people in distress, even on the other side of the globe. We want to be able to do more, and to do more sooner. The Government looks forward to the special commission's proposals on ways of improving Sweden's capacity in emergency situations. Some initiatives have already been taken.

First, measures will be taken to ensure that the different systems for information, intelligence and analysis at the Government Offices are strengthened and coordinated. A computerised consular information system will be developed. Information exchange with other EU countries will be reinforced.

Second, it must be possible to deploy relief efforts without delay. The Swedish Rescue Services Agency must be able to act directly in an emergency. A consular contingency force is being set up at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Third, the EU must be able to send rapid reaction forces to assist its citizens in the event of crises and disasters abroad.

In the wake of the disaster we have witnessed many examples of sacrifice and cooperation. The Government sends warm thanks to all those who have made fantastic efforts in Sweden, in Thailand and in other countries. But many people will need help for a long time to come. To the children, the parents, the sisters and brothers who must live on with a wound in their heart, we must give all the comfort, all the support and all the respect we can.

The tsunami is a merciless reminder that we all share the same world. Natural disasters and environmental degradation, poverty and pandemics, terrorism and organised crime, failing states and regional conflicts, war and weapons of mass destruction – all these are a threat to every country.

These new threats require a broadened concept of security. They require a security policy that focuses on the protection and rights of the individual, and on international law. They require an active foreign policy. During the Cold War it was said that foreign policy is our first line of defence. This line now runs through Afghanistan, Africa, the Balkans and other places where Sweden is participating in missions to promote peace and in active development cooperation.

“The many who, together, form this Organisation – peoples, governments, and individuals – share one great responsibility. Future generations may come to say of us that we never achieved what we set

out to do. May they never be entitled to say that we failed because we lacked faith or permitted narrow self-interest to distort our efforts.”

This was how Dag Hammarskjöld formulated his vision of our responsibility for the global organisation. He succeeded in strengthening the United Nations, even in a time of sharp antagonisms.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan is continuing to build in the same spirit. In December the High-level Panel that he had appointed published one of the most comprehensive reform documents in the UN’s history, the report on global threats, challenges and change. Sweden has contributed both financial support and concrete proposals. In January, moreover, the challenging report of the Millennium Project was launched. Now it is up to the Member States to take their responsibility.

This year we will celebrate the 60th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations. In September the world’s heads of state and government will gather in New York. Ahead of this summit meeting – which will be chaired by Jan Eliasson, who will then be the newly elected President of the General Assembly – Sweden is working actively to ensure that it leads to concrete results.

We want to see a legitimate and effective Security Council that takes its full responsibility for international peace and security. The composition of the Security Council must better reflect the fact that the world has changed since 1945. Since the UN Charter was adopted, the number of Member States has almost quadrupled and a number of new countries around the world have developed into particularly important political and economic actors. Sweden considers that these states should be given a role in the Security Council that is commensurate with their growing importance and with their desire and ability to contribute to the work of the UN. An enlargement of the Security Council would safeguard its legitimacy and relevance. At the same time, the effectiveness of the

Security Council can be increased by restricting the use of the right of veto. The High-level Panel has launched two models for possible enlargement of the Security Council. Both fulfil the principal objective of making the Council more representative. Regardless of which model is chosen, the most important thing is that we reach a decision on enlargement in connection with the summit meeting this year.

We want to see stronger protection of people's security. The primary responsibility for people's security must continue to rest with the sovereign state. But sixty years after Auschwitz and ten years after Srebrenica and Rwanda, we know that states can be unwilling or unable to stop atrocities. In such cases, the international community must act. It follows from the UN Charter that the Security Council must take its responsibility for preventing genocide, mass murder and ethnic cleansing. If the Security Council fails to take this responsibility, or if the right of veto is abused, we must, after careful assessment of the political and international law dimensions, consider what can be done in other ways in urgent circumstances to save people from serious injustices. The duty to protect is a common responsibility that we should all be prepared to take.

We want to see forceful common action against international terrorism. This requires long-term global cooperation with full respect for human rights and the rule of law.

We want to see clearer collective responsibility in the fight against weapons of mass destruction. The proliferation of nuclear weapons must be prevented. It is important that every effort is pursued to prevent countries such as North Korea and Iran from obtaining such weapons, and that the commitments of the nuclear-weapon states regarding disarmament are implemented without further delay. These will be Sweden's priorities ahead of the non-proliferation review conference that will be held in May.

We want to reform the United Nations Economic and Social Council so as to make it an effective global forum that contributes to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

We want to see a vigorous General Assembly that tackles relevant current issues. There must be an end to repetitive and fruitless discussions.

We want to see a strengthened crisis management capacity at the UN. The UN must be able to act swiftly – and to act long-term. We want a peace-building commission under the Security Council to be given responsibility for filling the gap between urgent crisis management and long-term development. Liberia is a current example of a case where a peace-keeping mission succeeded in stopping the fighting, but where sustainable peace has nonetheless not been secured because the combatants have not been reintegrated into civil society. The ongoing UN mission in the country, in which Sweden is participating, has a broader and more long-term mandate.

We want women to be more actively involved in peace processes and peace-support operations and we want stronger protection of women's rights, in accordance with UN Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

We want stronger protection for the most vulnerable victims of conflicts – children.

We want to improve the ability of the UN to prevent armed conflicts. In Sudan five million people are displaced in their own country. While we welcome the peace agreement in the south, the situation in Darfur, where two million people are in urgent need, is deteriorating. This is a first test of the capability of the African Union. We welcome the fact

that the AU is taking the lead in efforts to solve the continent's conflicts. A partnership is evolving between the AU and the EU. The EU is currently contributing military and civilian personnel, as well as funding, to AU operations in Darfur.

We want a stronger international legal system. We want those responsible for human rights offences in Darfur to be held accountable before the International Criminal Court, and we want the Security Council to consider when to introduce targeted sanctions against those responsible for violations.

The Government wants to make the most of the commitment of popular movements in the work of reforming the UN. The Dag Hammarskjöld anniversary will provide an important opportunity, as will the seminar on UN reform that Sweden is to organise jointly with Norway in April.

The UN has a crucial role in global security. But the UN cannot and should not do everything. Regional cooperation is assuming an increasingly important role all over the world. As Kofi Annan has pointed out, the global organisation cannot give priority to operations in Europe. Our rich continent must itself take prime responsibility. And considerable efforts are needed, despite the prosperity in our part of the world.

Many transnational threats are interconnected in Europe. Ninety per cent of all heroin in Sweden is transported from Afghanistan via criminal networks in the Balkans and other areas in the EU's vicinity. Such networks are responsible for hundreds of thousands of women and children falling victim to the sex trade, and these networks often finance terrorism. We need to strengthen European cooperation to meet these threats.

The most effective countermeasures are democracy, economic development and respect for human rights and the rule of law throughout Europe. These were the preconditions for progress and prosperity in our country, as in all other European countries. The EU's ability to propagate these values is the foremost contribution to security in Europe. The pull of the EU has helped more than a dozen countries achieve impressive democratic, economic and social progress, and has led to the start of a fundamental transformation of Turkish society.

The peaceful revolutions in Georgia and most recently in Ukraine show that the dream of freedom can never be defeated. When Viktor Yushchenko recently swore the presidential oath, it was a historic event comparable with earlier revolutionary changes in Central and Eastern Europe. We must support the reform efforts of the new Ukrainian government. Sweden is stepping up the exchange of visits and doubling development assistance. The dream of freedom is also a dream of the EU. The Ukrainian people have shown clearly that they share the fundamental values on which the EU is based. Ukraine has the same right as other European countries to a membership perspective.

When the wars in former Yugoslavia broke out at the beginning of the 1990s, the EU was unable to deal with the situation. Today the EU is taking a major responsibility for developments in the Western Balkans. A free trade area is being built up with the EU as the role model for lasting peace. The EU perspective is an important driving force for reform. But membership negotiations are conditional on cooperation in bringing war criminals to trial. Sweden also continues to work actively to achieve a solution to the future status of Kosovo.

Belarus is a neighbour. From this Chamber, it is closer to Minsk than to Kiruna. But democracy and human rights have been set aside. This is why the top political leadership must be isolated and the democratic

forces supported. The Belarusian people have a natural place in the pan-European community.

Moldova is an almost forgotten country in Europe. But we cannot accept frozen conflicts, lawless breakaway republics and trafficking in human beings. We must help Moldova set the right course.

Cooperation with Russia is a cornerstone in security work in our common vicinity. We have well-developed regional cooperation that is helping to bring Russia closer to Sweden, the Nordic countries and the EU. Sweden wants to deepen cooperation with Russia. We want Russia to be more involved in global issues. It was important that Russia ratified the Kyoto Protocol. We are working to facilitate free trade between the EU and Russia. We share the commitment to the problems facing Russia, including the threat of terrorism. We witnessed the terrorist action in Beslan with great dismay. A precondition for deepened cooperation is that the Russian government ensures that democratic development in the country moves in the right direction and breaches of human rights cease. The situation in Chechnya must be solved by a political process.

With a population of 450 million and a quarter of the world's total GDP, with the world's largest trade area by virtue of the internal market, and with more than half the world's development assistance, the EU is undeniably a global actor. With an EU agenda for the global challenges in which all the Union's instruments interact – development assistance, conflict prevention, peace-keeping, environment and trade policy – the Union can effectively combat the new threats.

This is why we are working in the EU for ambitious and coherent action in support of the UN Millennium Development Goals. Political decisions affect not only our own citizens but the world as a whole. All policy areas interact in Sweden's new global development policy. But

development cooperation retains its important role. More development assistance is needed. Sweden is now reaching the one per cent target and is pushing for the total level of EU development assistance to be raised.

This is why we are working in the EU for more transparent and more equitable world trade rules. Trade creates conditions for growth and development in poor countries too, and combats threats and conflicts. We want to see results from the WTO negotiations. Tariff walls and other trade barriers must be demolished and agricultural subsidies must be radically reduced. Sweden is also investing in special development assistance to enable developing countries to participate seriously in international trade.

This is why we are working in the EU for an ambitious refugee policy. The fact that people cross borders to work and study encourages cooperation, development and growth. But no one should be forced to leave their country because of conflict or oppression. This is where our refugee policy begins. People who are persecuted will be offered refuge in Sweden and in the EU. Sweden will contribute to a functional asylum system in countries that do not have one, and will further develop its own system for the reception of refugees. Legal security in the asylum process will be strengthened both nationally and at EU level. Sweden wants to see common rules for international migration too. We have a functional global system of cross-border movement for goods, services and money, but not for people. The Global Migration Commission's report this summer will hopefully be a first step.

This is why we are working in the EU to promote peace and manage crises. The EU is undertaking crisis management in Africa, the Middle East, Southern Caucasus and the Balkans. Sweden is taking part in all EU operations. But we must be able to respond more rapidly, not least when the UN needs support. This is why we are proud that Sweden, together with Finland, Norway and Estonia, will shortly be able to

establish a military rapid reaction force in the EU. During 2005, the Government will increase the allocation for participation in peace-keeping operations, including longer-term missions led by the UN, the EU or NATO.

This is why we are working in the EU for the establishment of civilian rapid reaction units such as rescue services, medical staff, evacuation teams, administrators and police. It should also be possible to deploy these quickly to help citizens affected by natural disasters or other crises outside EU borders. EU crisis preparedness should be complemented by a Nordic equivalent. The first large group of seriously injured Swedes was flown home from Thailand on a Norwegian plane. We can become even better at supporting each other in emergencies.

During its ten years of membership, Sweden has helped make the EU its most important forum – alongside the UN – for influencing the global agenda. The new treaty and the efforts to create the world's most competitive knowledge-based economy are important steps towards more open and effective intergovernmental cooperation.

But other forms of cooperation are also important. The Government will continue to place emphasis on our own region and the Nordic-Baltic cooperation. The centenary of the dissolution of the union with Norway will be observed in many ways, including presenting it as an example of peaceful conflict resolution and how long-term close cooperation can take the place of serious differences.

The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe played an important part when the nations of Central and Eastern Europe won their freedom and now has a similar role regarding Ukraine, Belarus and other countries immediately to the east of the EU and in Central Asia. Through the OSCE we also work against organised crime, terrorism and trafficking in human beings, and for minority rights.

Sweden does not participate in military alliances. At the same time, NATO is an important partner to Sweden when it comes to efforts in crisis areas. We are continuing to contribute forces for NATO/PfP operations in the Balkans and in Afghanistan. In May Sweden is hosting a ministerial meeting within the framework of the partnership with NATO, which will provide an opportunity to discuss current security policy challenges in this extensive forum.

Being a member of the EU and a partner in various organisations gives us additional means for pursuing an active foreign policy and developing our long tradition of mediation and conflict resolution.

Sweden helps make the world a safer place through its involvement in the Middle East and through the new Anna Lindh Foundation for dialogue between cultures. We will make use of the opportunity presented by the Palestinian and Iraqi people's impressive "yes" to peace and freedom and their clear "no" to terror and oppression.

The Iraqi parliamentary election represents a promising start for a political process towards full democracy. The international military presence should be gradually phased out. Sweden is assisting Iraq by training and educating police officers and judges. We are supporting democracy and human rights and will assist in rebuilding the ruined infrastructure.

The Palestinian presidential election became a symbol for the new ray of hope that now exists for finding a solution to the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Understanding has to increase, as illustrated by Abu Mazen's words from the presidential inauguration that "we are two peoples destined to live side by side".

We have seen how violence begets violence – but we also know that peace begets peace. The new Palestinian leadership needs support. Israel is preparing to evacuate all settlements in Gaza. The Government welcomes Israel's withdrawal as a first step towards ending the occupation of the Palestinian areas. The separation barrier in occupied territory is in violation of international law and can never be accepted.

The Palestinian leadership has a responsibility to continue building democracy and to take measures against terrorism. Sweden is contributing personnel to the EU group that will support Palestinians in improving law and order. Israel, as well as the United States, has a great responsibility to help the Palestinian leadership become established. Israel must facilitate freedom of movement in the Palestinian areas so that normal economic activity can get underway.

The entire international community must contribute to these efforts. Clear commitment is needed from all members of the Quartet to ensure that the roadmap's objective of a viable and democratic Palestinian state and an Israel within secure and recognised borders can be fulfilled. It is high time to realise the vision of peace and development in the Middle East.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a clear example of the need for American involvement. The EU and the USA must cooperate in order for the international community to be able to meet the challenges it faces. Differences of opinion must not overshadow the realisation that we share fundamental values regarding freedom and democracy. The Government wants to see revitalised transatlantic cooperation.

Sweden is helping to make the world a safer place through contact with the world's most populous country, China, which has become an increasingly important global actor. The Government is convinced that dialogue and cooperation are necessary in order to be able to influence

the country towards democracy and greater respect for human rights. China is also a key country in efforts for environmentally sustainable development and against communicable diseases such as HIV/AIDS. At the same time, we also wish to emphasise the importance of dialogue between China and Taiwan. This conflict must be solved through peaceful methods, without the use of military threats as a means of applying pressure.

Sweden is helping to make the world a safer place through its efforts to stop the most serious epidemic in the world, HIV/AIDS, which threatens development in large parts of Africa and increasingly in countries in Asia and Europe. The Government wants to use all means available to fight HIV/AIDS: from massive preventive measures and increased research to a major initiative to provide more people with the right to health care on the same terms as in the rich world. It is a question of solidarity and a question of fairness.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

After the tsunami we have been brought together in sorrow, but we have also been united in solidarity. Let this serve as the starting point for deeper international cooperation.

Let us continue to strengthen cooperation in our region and in the Nordic-Baltic sphere. We need our closest friends even in a global world.

Let us take action for freedom and development throughout Europe, and let us in the EU also tackle the global challenges.

Let us support the peoples of Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, Ukraine and others on the path away from oppression and towards freedom and democracy.

Let us take the historic opportunity to develop the United Nations. Let us turn the UN into the force that the international community needs in the fight for international peace and security, development, democracy and human rights.

Let these be the challenges for an active Swedish foreign policy.