

Foreign Policy Statements

**Statement of government policy in the parliamentary debate on foreign affairs,
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Madam Speaker,

By this time next year, Sweden will be president of the European Union. The coming year will be largely devoted to preparations for this task, at once a major political challenge and an exceptional opportunity.

The 20th century saw the spread of freedom, democracy and human rights to all parts of the globe. Societies were created that secured the prosperity of the majority of their citizens. No previous century has witnessed greater technical and scientific progress.

But it was also during the 20th century that humankind first acquired the ability to destroy both itself and its environment. It was the century of world wars and totalitarian dictatorships. We carry with us the memory of the Holocaust, Hiroshima, the Gulag, Cambodia and Rwanda.

Perceptions of the past that help us shape our foreign policy must give a true picture of what took place. This notion formed the basis of the initiative that led to the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust. Only by learning from the past can we prevent anything similar from happening again.

The guiding principles underlying our endeavours in the new century must be the protection of human rights and the dignity and security of the individual.

We now have a global economy; information technology, communications and trade are steadily diminishing the importance of national boundaries. But a common economy must be based on and balanced by the common basic values of human rights and democracy.

Political cooperation at global level is essential if we are to prevent the emergence of a global class-based society. Foreign policy, development cooperation and trade must aspire to the same goals for the 21st century: respect for human dignity and worth, justice and welfare for all.

Madam Speaker,

Sweden is a Nordic country. It is linked to the countries in the Nordic region and the Baltic Sea area by a common history, close cultural ties and economic exchange.

Sweden is part of Europe. Our society and culture have been shaped by currents as diverse as the continent from which they flowed.

Sweden's commitment has long been global in scope.

These are the three distinguishing features of Sweden's foreign policy.

Nordic cooperation is based on daily contact between people, associations, companies and municipalities. It is part and parcel of our everyday lives. The same close-knit network is now being woven between the Nordic and Baltic countries.

Sweden wants to consolidate the sense of kinship that has evolved in the Nordic region and around the Baltic Sea. Our part of Europe must be distinguished by common security, economic growth and a sound environment. This can only benefit security and development in Europe as a whole.

The Council of the Baltic Sea States must be strengthened and cooperation in the Barents region intensified. We will broaden our security on the basis of cross-border cooperation.

"The Year of the Baltic States", like "Poland in Focus" before it, will be devoted to deepening ties across the Baltic Sea. The Government will support Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and other candidate countries as they prepare for membership of the EU.

Russia is still undergoing a painful process of transformation. Sweden supports Russian efforts to bring about democratic, social and economic reform.

It is not worthy of a European democracy to reduce cities to ruins. Sweden respects Russia's territorial integrity and condemns terrorism wherever it occurs. But the conflict in Chechnya must be brought to an end. Russian military operations must cease. Russia must negotiate a political solution with Chechen representatives.

All those involved in the conflict must respect human rights and humanitarian law. The civilian population must be protected.

Russia is part of Europe as well as being Sweden's close neighbour. The incorporation of a democratic Russia into European and Euro-Atlantic cooperation structures is very much in Sweden's security interests. That Russia is the subject of the EU's first common strategy is an indication of the strong awareness of that country's significance for Europe.

For the EU, the Northern Dimension opens up new opportunities to promote cooperation, economic growth, a sounder environment and cultural exchange in northern Europe. As president of the EU, Sweden will strive to further develop the Northern Dimension.

Madam Speaker,

The security of Europe is indivisible. Northern Europe – the Barents region and the Arctic as well as the Baltic Sea region – is securely tied into a pan-European security structure which includes the other countries of Europe and North America.

The favourable security policy development in Sweden's vicinity continues despite the questions that must be asked about Russia. The risk of a European war involving major powers has receded and is unlikely to return in the foreseeable future.

Present-day security conditions in Europe provide new opportunities to prevent violent conflict. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as well as the Council of Europe, has important conflict prevention tasks.

The EU is uniquely equipped to play a central role in this area. The EU's political authority and economic strength are combined with a broad spectrum of instruments that can be used to prevent conflicts. In the run-up to the EU presidency, the Government will seek to develop the Union's preventive capability.

The EU cannot stand by, powerless to intervene, when crises flare up in Europe. The Balkan experience has shown us that we must be prepared and able to act swiftly when a crisis looms.

The Government therefore welcomes the progress already achieved in strengthening the Union's crisis management capability, both military and civilian. Providing the EU with leadership in this area will be a central task of the Swedish presidency.

Sweden's non-participation in military alliances, with the aim of making it possible for our country to be neutral in the event of war in our vicinity, remains unchanged. It serves to strengthen security in our part of Europe, thereby enhancing our own security.

Sweden's security has a clear European dimension. As members of the European Union, we are growing ever closer to one another through cooperation and shared values. These close ties serve to generate mutual solidarity and common security.

European security must be predicated on the international rule of law and the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The ability that we are developing in Europe to prevent and manage crises must serve to support the UN and global peace efforts.

The intermeshing of countries and people within the EU is the best guarantee of long-term peace and security in Europe. This is why EU enlargement and cooperation with Russia and other countries in the EU's vicinity are so important.

Sweden's participation in peace support operations in the Balkans is an expression of our commitment to common security in Europe. Swedish personnel are making outstanding contributions to these operations. The ongoing restructuring of our military defence system is aimed at improving our ability to participate rapidly and efficiently in crisis management.

Sweden is actively involved in the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and Partnership for Peace. These organisations are important confidence-builders, politically as well as militarily. Collaboration with NATO is also of major importance for the Union's military crisis management capability.

Madam Speaker,

As president of the EU, Sweden shall act in the interests of the Union as a whole, and thus our own. Our task will be to lead and represent the Union and effectively advance the issues on the agenda.

For Sweden this primarily means strengthening the EU as a peace project and bringing the Union closer to its citizens.

Enlargement is a peace project. It is guided by the same visions and ideals that carried European integration forward after the Second World War. Enlargement gives us the opportunity to build a coherent entity out of a Europe divided by world war, occupation and oppression. We, the members of the Union, bear a historical responsibility towards those who for decades have been deprived of freedom and democracy.

Enlargement is about consolidating our democratic community of values. Recent events in Austria underline the importance of safeguarding these values within the existing Union.

The task of the Intergovernmental Conference due to open next week will be to reform EU institutions so that enlargement can be carried through. The Conference must defend the right of all member states to exercise their due measure of influence.

During the Swedish presidency, the Government will promote:

- An enlarged Union. Sweden will seek to bring the candidate countries closer to membership and will attach considerable importance to the relevant negotiations.
- An open, modern and efficient Union. The EU must be more transparent; its working routines and procedures must be reformed.
- A Union for sustainable development, prosperity and security – a Union which is close to its citizens. Environmental considerations must inform policy-making at every level. Gender equality should be mainstreamed into all activities. All citizens are entitled to prosperity and security. The EU should represent a migration and asylum policy based on the principles of humanity and solidarity.
- Increased employment and growth in a competitive Union. We must make good use of the knowledge and expertise of every citizen. Modern technology must be utilised to boost Europe's competitiveness and create new jobs. We must complete the work of improving the single market.
- An internationally active Union based on the principle of solidarity. The EU must be better at preventing and managing crises. Interaction between different spheres of

activity will open up the Union to the rest of the world. Human rights and democracy should be prominent in the Union's international activities.

As members of the EU we can seek to ensure that Europe shoulders its responsibility for international solidarity. Our membership of the Union enables us to maintain our interests and influence a globalised world economy.

It is in Sweden's interests to sustain the political dialogue and cooperation between the EU and the United States. This cooperation is of fundamental importance for security policy and economic development.

It is vital that the EMU project succeed. The single currency will facilitate economic exchange within the Union and may serve as a counterweight to the forces of global capital.

A wide-ranging discussion about Sweden's participation in the third phase of EMU is now under way. A decision will be put to the Swedish people in a referendum or a parliamentary election.

Madam Speaker,

Globalisation entails risks as well as opportunities. It is clearer than ever today that the various aspects of foreign policy must work together if we are to prevent conflict, oppression and poverty.

The Government's action plan "Preventing Violent Conflict" has had a wide impact in the international arena. It has been presented in a great many countries as well as the UN, EU, OSCE and NATO. Conflict prevention must be an integral part of foreign and security policy.

A Government report on conflict prevention will be submitted to the Riksdag later this year.

The Government's five main global security policy goals are:

Human rights and democracy – because democratic states that respect human rights can resolve conflicts by peaceful means.

Economic and social justice – because closing poverty gaps eliminates tension within and between states.

International free trade – because this contributes to development and prosperity.

A sound environment – because in the long term it assures survival, promotes good health and provides opportunities for development.

Disarmament – because it creates security and stability and frees us from the threat of weapons of mass destruction.

Each of these goals is in itself vital if people are to enjoy a life in dignity and if countries are to develop in security. But they are also essential elements of a coherent policy for the prevention of violent conflict.

Sweden shall be forthright in its advocacy of human rights and democracy.

In politics and international law the emphasis is shifting from issues of national security and sovereignty to the security of the individual and human rights. Those ultimately responsible for murder, torture and persecution must never be allowed to sleep peacefully at night. Violation of human rights is a universal concern, of consequence to the whole of humankind.

Sweden is actively seeking to centre attention on the individual and promote human rights in forums such as the UN, the EU, the OSCE and the Council of Europe.

We do this by virtue of our commitment to the fight against racism, xenophobia and intolerance, regardless of who is affected, be they homosexuals in Zimbabwe, Roma in Slovakia or Jews in Russia.

We do this by virtue of active measures – coordinated within the EU – against the death penalty. This barbaric punishment has been abolished either formally or in practice in virtually the whole of Europe, and we are astonished and outraged by its continued use in the United States.

We do this by virtue of our work to put an end to the sexual exploitation of children and our efforts to strengthen the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. An important step was taken under Sweden's leadership in January, when agreement was reached on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child banning child soldiers.

We do this by drawing attention to the gender discrimination which to a greater or lesser extent affects half of the world's population. Women make up the majority of the world's poor. Most women are not in a position to assert their rights.

We do this by fostering a dialogue between Christianity, Islam and Judaism.

Throughout the world democracy is gaining ground. Despite this, people are persecuted for their opinions by those in power in countries such as Belarus, Iran, Cuba and China. Sweden will continue to maintain that respect for civil and political rights is part of all countries' international obligations.

The human rights situation in Turkey must improve. Sweden will be following developments closely.

Sweden shall be in the forefront of efforts to promote economic and social justice.

Swedish development cooperation is based on the idea that poor people shall be empowered to take control of their future. The fight against poverty, oppression and conflict must continue. One-fifth of the world's population still live in extreme poverty. Development cooperation alone cannot achieve the agreed goal to halve the number

of people living in extreme poverty by the year 2015. All policy areas must be mutually supportive.

The parliamentary committee appointed by the Government to present a policy proposal for global development has been instructed to take a broad view centred on the rights of the poor.

The EU and its member states account for 60 per cent of the world's development assistance. Sweden will contribute to improving the effectiveness of assistance. The Union's common policy must make a more effective contribution to global development.

The Government attaches special importance to developing long-term, stable financial systems for the UN and the development banks, to following up the UN conferences held in the 1990s and to strengthening the work of the UN agencies.

The Government is seeking to prevail upon the Bretton Woods institutions to do more to fight poverty. The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the regional banks need to coordinate their operations more effectively. Greater consideration must be given to social and humanitarian requirements. For many poor countries the burden of debt is a major obstacle to development. This calls for action. Sweden is actively encouraging the prompt implementation of the international debt initiatives launched by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Sweden shall champion free trade.

Sweden vigorously opposes all protectionist tendencies. This stand is important – not only for us, but also for Europe and the global economy. Customs tariffs, quotas and trade barriers only benefit the few. The price is paid by the poor of Africa, Asia and Latin America and by consumers the world over.

We need more free trade, not less. At the same time we will promote sustainable development and labour legislation of a high standard.

The Government is actively promoting an open EU that pursues a consistent free-trade policy based on solidarity. Sweden wants to intensify efforts to bring about a new round of global trade negotiations as soon as possible, notwithstanding the failure of the WTO meeting in Seattle. The negotiations may be launched during the Swedish EU presidency.

A natural feature of our foreign policy is the promotion of Sweden's economic interests. Increased exports and imports stimulate growth and employment, and more foreign investments generate jobs, skills and competitiveness. It is also important to project Sweden's image as new, young and exciting throughout the world.

Sweden shall play a leading role in international environmental endeavours.

Climate change, dwindling water resources, hazardous chemicals and rising levels of traffic emissions are a threat to the global environment. Efforts to create and maintain a sound environment are inextricably linked to the fight against world poverty. At the

same time we are seeing an inability among the world's decision-makers to allow environmental considerations to affect key policy decisions.

But environmental requirements also imply new opportunities. They teach us to be economical with scarce resources. They create new business opportunities and help modernise business and industry.

Many environmental problems call for global agreements. Within the EU, the Government will press for concrete measures at the climate conference to be held in The Hague this autumn. The world's energy resources will be discussed at the UN during the Swedish EU presidency.

The Government is seeking to bring about globally binding commitments to phase out the use of hazardous chemicals. Negotiations to this effect will be concluded in Stockholm next year.

In its development cooperation programmes, the Government will give priority to supporting sustainable agriculture and forestry and managing limited water resources.

Using all the knowledge at its disposal Sweden shall fulfil its commitment to disarmament.

The Government attaches the utmost importance to disarmament, particularly in the field of nuclear arms. We regret the setbacks that have occurred in the aftermath of the nuclear tests carried out by India and Pakistan.

Sweden has expressed its grave concern about the consequences of the refusal of the American Congress to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test Ban Treaty and about the current discussion concerning a national missile defence system. The Russian nuclear arms policy and the large number of tactical nuclear weapons in our immediate vicinity confirm our fears that nuclear arms may be accorded greater importance.

The work of eliminating Iraq's weapons of mass destruction is not yet complete. This difficult task has once again been entrusted to a Swede.

The credibility of the non-proliferation treaty is contingent on the conduct of the nuclear weapons states. Sweden wants to highlight the close relationship between non-proliferation and disarmament. Sweden's cooperation with EU member states and other countries within the New Agenda Coalition is of particular importance.

The goal is still to achieve a world free from weapons of mass destruction.

The Government welcomes the impact made by the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on their Destruction. We will work with other countries to introduce measures to prevent the spread and use of light weapons. We are active participants in efforts to implement arms control in Europe.

Madam Speaker,

It is the ultimate responsibility of the UN to guarantee that right takes precedence over might in world politics. The UN Security Council is the core of the international legal order. Through global cooperation we can safeguard international peace and security and find solutions to the major issues of human survival.

The Government wants to strengthen global cooperation by focusing on the individual and on human rights. A broader concept of security is gaining ground within the UN. One example of this is the recent meeting of the Security Council to discuss HIV/Aids.

The UN must be strengthened so that it is better equipped to meet the challenges the world is facing. All member states must pay their assessed contributions to the UN – in full, on time and unconditionally. The Millennium Assembly, which will begin in September, will provide a golden opportunity to revitalise the United Nations.

Sweden has been given special responsibility for the task of reforming the UN Security Council. Our goal is to reach agreement on greater transparency and efficiency in the work of the Council and on a membership that reflects the modern world.

There is broad agreement that the Security Council must improve its conflict prevention capability. Sweden welcomes the intensified discussion of preventive measures initiated in the UN.

When crises nevertheless arise and international intervention is required, the Security Council must take responsibility and make the necessary decisions. The international community can draw important conclusions from the recent reports about Srebrenica and Rwanda.

Under the Charter of the United Nations it is incumbent on the Security Council to decide on the use of military force for purposes other than self-defence. All avenues for reaching a peaceful solution must have been fully explored. There is a risk that the use of force without the requisite mandate from the Security Council will weaken the international legal order.

Nor must necessary measures to prevent systematic violations of human rights be blocked by a veto or threat of a veto. This would undermine the standing of the Security Council and the UN.

The international community cannot stand by passively in the face of humanitarian disasters. The question of how to act must be examined from case to case. It is also essential to take into account long-term aspects and matters of principle, and to develop the existing body of international law.

The permanent members bear a special responsibility for the Security Council's ability to act. As far as possible they should refrain from using or threatening to use the veto. A first step towards a veto-free culture would be to restrict the right of veto to peace-enforcement operations.

Madam Speaker,

A look at the world around us reveals the tasks that face us in our efforts to attain peace, democracy and development.

The Western Balkans remain an open wound in Europe. New wars must be prevented, democracy strengthened, the economy developed and refugees given the opportunity to return home.

Ethnic cleansing, war, mass exodus and continued acts of cruelty in Kosovo make an early reconciliation illusory. A democratic transformation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is crucial to development in the entire region. Recent events in Croatia inspire hope that the forces of cooperation will triumph.

The Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe is the expression of a political vision of a region that will gradually be incorporated into European cooperation.

Sweden's commitment to the Western Balkans continues through participation in KFOR and SFOR, support for the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, international police, election observers and extensive efforts for refugees, as well as assistance to the region.

Africa is a continent of contrasts where serious conflicts, extreme poverty and marginalisation exist side by side with democracy and dynamic economies.

Africa's ability to prevent and resolve conflicts will be severely put to the test. Sweden would like to see the EU take special responsibility for supporting the African countries in these long-term endeavours.

The Government would like to further develop its cooperation with Africa. Broader, long-term partnerships with African countries will be built up through contacts with business and industry, NGOs and other institutions in Sweden.

In the Middle East the opening of the Israeli-Syrian negotiations marks a new phase. This year a positive outcome is possible between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, between Israel and Syria and also between Israel and Lebanon. A just peace presupposes that Israel will be able to live in safety within secure and recognised borders and that the Palestinians can establish a state of their own.

The establishment of the Swedish Institute in Alexandria will serve to deepen Sweden's cooperation with the countries in the Middle East and North Africa. One feature of this policy is Sweden's support for the EU's Barcelona process.

The Asian crisis now seems to have been reversed in a trend that indicates new powerful growth among the countries in the region. The crisis showed how strongly developments in Asian countries affect our own country and international economics and politics.

China's increasing openness in the economic sphere is a welcome development – in stark contrast to the human rights situation there. The democratic development in Indonesia is taking place under extremely difficult circumstances and merits the support of the world community.

With the help of the UN, East Timor is moving towards independence. This leaves one large area on the UN's list of colonies; the Western Sahara issue has not yet been resolved.

In Latin America, democracy has gained a strong foothold. At the same time wide gaps remain between population groups, and violations of human rights still occur in some places.

Sweden's and the Union's relations with Latin America have been strengthened. The Rio summit affirmed the cooperation which has emerged in politics and development cooperation, and which is intensified through closer economic ties.

Madam Speaker,

The refugees who fled from Kosovo last year rebuild on the ruins of their former homes. Swedish soldiers supply food to Serbs in an isolated village.

Terrified families hide from tanks in Chechnya. Child soldiers with machine guns spread terror in Sierra Leone.

A girls' school in Afghanistan is closed when donor organisations are forced to withdraw. Another school is opened in Mozambique where peace has returned following a successful UN mission.

In Turkey, EU demands strengthen the rights of the Kurds. New technology breaks down the monopoly on information and builds networks for human rights and disarmament.

EU enlargement secures democracy in Slovakia. Thanks to the EU, young Swedes can study in Germany and Swedish entrepreneurs can set up businesses in France.

This is what the foreign policy of the 21st century will ultimately be about. Peace, democracy and development – the individual's dreams and fears, hopes and opportunities.

This is our responsibility – in all our cooperative undertakings – in the Nordic area, the Baltic Sea region, in Europe and in the world.