

Foreign Policy Statements

**Statement of government policy in the parliamentary debate on foreign affairs,
Wednesday 7 February 2001**

Unofficial translation, check against delivery

Madam Speaker,

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights opens with this premise. It is the basis for our work.

Its purpose is to defend the dignity, freedom and security of the individual.

This task is particularly important today. In an age of global economy, information and mobility we need, more than ever before, common basic values that unite civilisations and people.

We must equip the global economy with global rules that ensure fair conditions. We must balance the borderless market with values that transcend borders, based on democracy and human rights. We must see the opportunities rather than the threats inherent in the increased mobility of people. And we must fight poverty.

The aim of Sweden's integrated foreign policy is to achieve these goals.

This holistic approach is also the starting-point for the report entitled "A More Equitable Globalisation" and for the parliamentary committee that is to present its report on a cohesive Swedish policy for global development in the autumn.

The Government will resolutely pursue these issues in the EU, UN, World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the World Bank. All nations and forums must cooperate in developing the positive aspects of globalisation and preventing it from leading to new widened gaps between nations.

Sweden's most important tool for achieving these objectives is the EU. Today the Union is a major player in the foreign and security policy arena.

Sweden now holds the EU presidency for the first time. Our task is to carry its work forward in the interest of the whole Union and to be its voice in the world community.

Our presidency coincides with major challenges for the Union. Environmental degradation must be combated. Full employment must be achieved. The fight against xenophobia must be intensified. Many of these issues are of direct importance to citizens and illustrate the interplay between domestic and foreign policy.

The greatest challenge of all is enlargement. No other issue is as decisive for the future of the EU and for the development of Europe. Through enlargement we will pave the way for freedom, democracy and prosperity throughout Europe. Through enlargement we will reunite Eastern and Western Europe. Through enlargement we will become an even stronger global advocate of our common values.

We give priority to enlargement – and peace. We will work to achieve a political breakthrough in the negotiations and the fair treatment of all candidate countries. The programme for our continued work enjoys strong support in the EU, and the Treaty of Nice provides us with the necessary institutional base. We wholeheartedly support the conclusions of the European Council in Nice that the EU should be able to welcome new members as of the end of 2002.

We give priority to jobs – and growth. At the meeting of the European Council in Stockholm we will chart the course leading to an economically strong EU with full employment. Not only does this call for economic reforms and measures in support of new enterprise. We must also tackle the problem of an ageing and diminishing workforce and create a knowledge-based society in which everyone is needed and gender equality prevails. A society that can serve as a model for others in a global economy.

We give priority to the environment – and the future. At the meeting of the European Council in Göteborg we will adopt a strategy for sustainable development. The priorities include the climate and chemicals. This work will also provide the EU with a platform for its environmental efforts at the global level.

The future EU must be a citizens' Union in which decisions are transparent and can be influenced. Sweden is making intensive efforts to this end. We therefore welcome the task assigned to us at Nice to launch a pan-European debate on the future of the EU. In cooperation with Belgium and the Commission, and with the participation of the European Parliament, we are now preparing various initiatives. We hope we can involve as many people as possible in the discussion, both in member states and in candidate countries. Their parliaments will play a central part.

The future EU must also be a consumers' Union with enhanced food safety, better consumer protection and a fully developed internal market.

It is essential that the euro be a success and that the introduction of banknotes and coins run smoothly. The question of whether Sweden should participate in the European Monetary Union will be put to the Swedish people.

Sweden wants to achieve humane and equitable asylum and migration policies in the EU with a better sharing of responsibility between member states. Our goal is a Europe that is open to the world.

We will energetically carry these and other issues forward in the interest of the whole Union.

Madam Speaker,

Sweden now leads the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy. This has gradually become a central concern of the EU. Fifteen countries supporting the same message and measures ensure weight and impact.

An essential measure will be to create greater unity in EU external action.

The new Cotonou Agreement between the EU and 77 developing countries may serve as an example. Under this agreement, a dialogue on democracy and human rights integrates gender equality efforts, environmental considerations and regional trade promotion – all for the purpose of fighting poverty and laying the foundation for sustainable development.

We want to continue this work.

We also want to build on the fact that today the EU is one of the world community's foremost defenders of democracy and human rights. This will be effected through the requirements the EU imposes on candidate countries, such as Turkey. This will also be effected through the Union's dialogue with third countries and our joint efforts in the United Nations, the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

The promotion of democracy and human rights is, and will remain, the cornerstone of Sweden's foreign policy.

The new century has brought important advances in the field of human rights. The establishment of an international criminal court is finally under way and national courts are bringing an increasing number of offenders to trial.

However, much remains to be done.

This includes the fight against capital punishment. While the rest of the world is moving towards its abolition, countries such as China, the United States and Saudi Arabia still adhere to this inhuman punishment.

It includes the fight against torture. Governments all over the world continue to flout the prohibition against this cruelty. As the EU's presiding country we will strengthen the Union's counter-offensive.

It includes the fight against trafficking in humans, particularly women and children. Governments must do more to put a stop to this new slave trade.

Throughout the world democracy is gaining ground. The change of regime in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is a particularly gratifying example. Nevertheless, political oppression continues in countries such as Cuba, Iraq and Belarus.

Sweden and the EU will continue to be a strong voice for all human rights.

The Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees will celebrate its 50th anniversary this year. The focus will be on the need to strengthen the right of asylum

at the international level. We will continue to work to ensure that more countries take responsibility for both refugees and others in need of protection.

Trade is instrumental to cooperation and can thus promote justice.

More nations must therefore open their borders to trade and investment. Here, the rich countries have a special responsibility. Sweden is pressing for the early introduction by the EU of exemption from customs duties for the world's 48 poorest countries.

World trade must be based on fair and impartial rules. Accordingly, Sweden is pushing for a new trade round in the WTO and supporting the interests of developing countries. Our goal is a comprehensive regulatory framework that will open trade to all countries. Trade rules must be in harmony with international environmental conventions. The WTO should also promote human rights in working life.

Sweden is actively seeking to increase WTO membership. We support China's application. Membership of the WTO will help speed up the country's reform process. We also support Russia's efforts to become incorporated into the world economy and its application for membership of the WTO.

Sweden must have a strong position in the internationalised economy. We must therefore continually seek to promote increased competition, both in Sweden and in foreign markets. To this end we are stepping up the promotion of trade and investment, with special emphasis on sectors such as IT and biotechnology. The Government is also focusing on export promotion and will be laying a bill on the Swedish Trade Council before the Riksdag in the spring.

Development cooperation is an effective instrument for promoting respect for human rights and democracy.

The EU is the world's largest donor of development assistance. It is essential that these resources be used effectively and appropriately. Sweden is actively involved in efforts to establish the EU as an advocate of solidarity and justice and an effective instrument for combating poverty. The goal is to reduce global poverty by half by 2015 – a target supported by all the world's governments.

The Swedish Government is not only anxious to make more resources available to the poor, but also to give them more say and greater freedom of action. Development cooperation must promote human rights, democracy, growth and the equitable distribution of power and resources.

We will also seek to ensure that the EU plays a constructive part in all the conferences and meetings arranged by the United Nations during the coming year. These all share a common aim: to combat poverty and build structures and partnerships for long-term economic development designed to benefit poor women, men and children. This is an important step towards the realisation of our commitments on economic and social rights.

Swedish assistance is now growing rapidly, both due to domestic economic growth and as a percentage of GNP. The Government stands by its intention to achieve the 1 per cent target.

The increased resources will be applied in the promotion of democracy and respect for human rights, debt relief and the fight against HIV/Aids. We also want to make IT more accessible to the poor, support regional cooperation among developing countries and clarify the role of assistance in conflict prevention.

Conflicts must be prevented if we are to make way for development and justice.

The tragedies in the Balkans and Europe's inability to act in time clearly demonstrate the need for early measures aimed at preventing war from breaking out. This need lay behind the Swedish–Finnish initiative which made crisis management an EU task.

The crisis management structures were adopted at the meeting of the European Council in Nice. It is now Sweden's turn to move the process forward and provide the Union with basic conflict prevention and crisis management capability. This capability could prove an important contribution to peace and the upholding of international law.

Our work is based on the following premises:

The EU has immense potential in conflict prevention. We want to strengthen this capability. Given its scope and its history as a peace project, the EU can play a vital role in preventing violent conflicts, in the global arena also. We will therefore seek to ensure that the European Council in Göteborg adopts a programme of tangible proposals on ways in which the EU can be more effective at conflict prevention.

Few conflict management operations are exclusively military. We have accordingly developed an integrated approach to conflict prevention and civil and military crisis management. It is also important that these efforts be coordinated with development assistance at all stages of the process.

Action requires tools. Each country records its civil and military contributions in a common roster. This permits the identification of resources that can be speedily used in the event of a crisis. Inventories of the military resources were made last autumn. Sweden is now presiding over the work of compiling civil resources. Sweden is also responsible for developing the structures for EU–Nato collaboration.

In the future, major crisis operations are likely to be the responsibility of the entire international community. Supreme responsibility for peace and security rests with the UN and its Security Council. EU crisis management must conform to the principles of the UN Charter and be appropriate for use in UN or OSCE operations. Sweden is engaged in building up this capability in close cooperation with the UN. Peace enforcement requires the approval of the UN Security Council.

Decisions to initiate EU-led operations must be taken unanimously by the member states. Each country makes its own decisions with regard to participation.

It is also appropriate to establish what EU crisis management does not entail:

It does not entail mutual defence commitments or the creation of a European army. The EU is not a defence alliance. Nor is it a closed club. EU crisis management is open to participation by non-member states.

Peace must be safeguarded through disarmament and arms export controls.

Sweden and the EU are working to prevent the uncontrolled spread of small arms through illicit trade and other means. We want the UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons, due to take place in the summer, to adopt an action programme that gives priority to export controls, international cooperation and special assistance to affected countries.

The Government will continue to move the nuclear disarmament process forward. We intend to ensure that the commitments entered into at the 2000 NPT Review Conference are met. One sub-goal is the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. Another is to negotiate a treaty banning the production of fissile material for military purposes. A third is to promote the elimination of tactical nuclear weapons. We will also continue to work within the New Agenda Coalition Initiative to induce the nuclear weapon states and the rest of the international community to implement the 13 steps to disarmament on which we have all agreed.

We call on the USA to consider the consequences for disarmament and non-proliferation of developing a national missile defence system, and to refrain from pursuing this project.

The fight against biological weapons must continue. This year, we are aiming to make the Biological Weapons Convention more effective through a control mechanism.

Better surveillance of trade in defence materiel and technology for weapons of mass destruction is a further important contribution to peace efforts. Sweden pursues a restrictive policy and promotes its adoption at the international level.

Madam Speaker,

Since 1992, Sweden's security policy has been summed up as follows: "Sweden's non-participation in military alliances, with the aim of making it possible for our country to remain neutral in the event of war in our vicinity, remains unchanged."

In our opinion it is now time to review this formulation. We have therefore invited all the political parties in the Riksdag to discussions on this subject. It is our aim to generate broad agreement, and a broad debate, in order to arrive at a better description of the orientation of our security policy.

It is not our intention to abandon the policy of non-participation in military alliances.

The policy of non-participation in military alliances is an asset for Sweden and has the strong support of the Swedish people. It allows us freedom of action. It helps

reduce the risk of conflicts and tension in our part of Europe. It makes it possible for us to be proactive in the work for nuclear disarmament.

All these factors form the basis for our choice of security policy. We are looking forward to the discussions, which we hope can start this month.

In an era of globalisation the role of the United Nations is growing.

The strength of the UN lies in its unique breadth, both in terms of membership and activities. Sweden will continue to contribute to a more modern and efficient United Nations.

It is essential to strengthen the capacity of the UN in the area of peace and security. We must learn from the lessons of Rwanda and Srebrenica. The 'Brahimi Report' does just that. It calls for coordination between the member states to enable them to put peacekeepers at the disposal of the UN at short notice. It also points to the need for the UN to adapt to requirements of the complex missions of today, such as those in Kosovo and East Timor.

Sweden supports the proposals put forward in the report and is working for their rapid implementation. Closer cooperation between the EU and the UN can make an important contribution to increased coordination, both in the areas of peacekeeping and development assistance.

Yet another area under discussion and undergoing development is that of sanctions. Efficient, targeted sanctions should have an effect on those in power without causing the civilian population to suffer. But it has proved difficult to impose such sanctions. Sweden has decided to take over the coordination of an international project on targeted sanctions, with the participation of a wide circle of countries, the UN Secretariat, researchers and NGOs later this year.

The OSCE plays an important role in the security of Europe, thanks to its broad range of activities in the field, its special High Commissioner on National Minorities and its efforts to establish norms. The right of every country to choose the direction of its own security policy is an important principle of the OSCE. As EU presiding country, Sweden intends to develop cooperation with the OSCE in the fields of crisis management and conflict prevention. The idea is that it should be possible to use EU resources in OSCE missions.

Madam Speaker,

The strength of Sweden's foreign policy is threefold – by virtue of its Nordic, European and global identities. It is our goal to continuously develop each of these identities, and to increase the interplay between them.

We want to continue to promote and deepen integration within the Nordic area, for example by reducing and abolishing a number of border barriers.

It is important to continue cooperation in the Baltic Sea region. The combination of new market economies and mature welfare states has produced a strong foundation

for development, making this one of Europe's fastest growing regions. The objective of Sweden's Baltic Sea policy is to support sustainable development, social justice and the enhancement of democracy. This policy should also strengthen the standing of Swedish companies in the region and promote contact between people and organisations.

Sweden will have the same goals for the Barents Euro-Arctic Council when it takes over the chairmanship in March.

Sweden will continue to promote the integration of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in its region. The same applies to Poland. Alongside these efforts we are gradually focusing more on bilateral cooperation with Russia and Ukraine. We will be laying a government bill on continued cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe before the Riksdag in the spring.

We are endeavouring to enhance cooperation with Russia on every level and in all spheres. In the area of EU cooperation with Russia, which is largely based on the work within the Northern Dimension, our intention is to intensify the political dialogue and establish collaboration in conflict prevention, crisis management, disarmament and non-proliferation. In particular, we would like to highlight issues such as the environment, nuclear safety and the fight against organised crime. We will work in the long term for the complete integration of Russia into the world trade community.

However, we cannot remain silent when developments give cause for alarm. The conflict in Chechnya must be brought to an end. This will require a political solution. It will also require an investigation into acts of violence and steps to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice.

The transatlantic link and a continuing vigorous role for the USA in Europe and our neighbourhood are of major importance for the security of Sweden as well as of Europe.

As EU presiding country Sweden aims to strengthen relations with the USA and Canada. Transatlantic cooperation is based on a solid community of basic values and represents the world's biggest flow of trade and investments. At the summit meetings in the spring between the EU and the USA and Canada respectively, the opportunity should be taken to intensify cooperation.

The Middle East peace process has entered into a new phase since Ariel Sharon yesterday was elected Prime Minister of Israel. Sweden and the EU take for granted that the peace efforts will continue. We have made it plain in our statement that the Union is prepared to continue its support for the peace process.

Negotiations must be resumed as soon as possible. When they do, it is of central importance that the parties base their talks on agreements and results that have already been reached.

A peace agreement must be rooted in international law, including the relevant Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, the principle of land for peace and the

prohibition on acquiring territory by means of violence. It must also include the establishment of a democratic, vital and peaceful Palestinian state.

The end result must be a fair and sustainable peace. A peace that implies secure and recognised borders for all the states in the region and that normalises relations between them.

In the short run, the parties must do everything in their power to prevent violence that threatens to exacerbate the already fragile situation in the region. Sweden and the EU will also continue to closely observe Israel's settlement policies.

The Balkans will remain a priority. Peace and democracy are gaining ground, but we must be prepared for setbacks. Complicated issues pertaining to the federal structure of Yugoslavia have yet to be resolved, such as the future status of Kosovo and Montenegro. The treatment of minorities must be improved and refugees given the opportunity to return home.

Sweden will remain strongly committed to the Balkans. The Swedish battalion and the Swedish police officers in Kosovo provide concrete evidence of this.

The continued violence in Colombia is deeply disturbing. As presiding country we want to step up EU efforts to contribute to a lasting peace. We are also strengthening Sweden's support for the peace process, for example by increasing development cooperation.

The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is a threat to the peace and development of the entire region, and it is the most serious crisis in Africa today. Sweden is working to persuade the parties to observe the 1999 peace agreement.

During the spring Sweden will be putting forward concrete proposals for ways in which the EU could strengthen Africa's conflict-prevention and conflict-resolution capabilities in the long term. As a step in this direction an informal meeting of Nordic and African foreign ministers was held in Stockholm last December.

Developments on the Korean Peninsula are very gratifying. Sweden has great hopes of a rapprochement between North and South Korea. We also hope to see results from the dialogue between the government and the opposition in Burma – results leading to the reinstatement of democracy and an end to many years of oppression.

Madam Speaker,

Today, dissidents are thrown into prison in China. Courts are misused for political ends in Iran. Public discontent and demonstrations are met by brutal violence in many places in Africa, most recently in Tanzania.

Countless crimes are committed against human rights on a daily basis.

But at the same time it is getting harder for those responsible to conceal their criminal acts. In an age of internationalisation the world is becoming smaller, and more eyes can see the evil that is done.

Globalisation also increases the opportunities to exert an influence and to spread the concept of the equal dignity and rights of all human beings.

Through our foreign policy and as EU presiding country we will work towards more equitable globalisation, a citizen's Europe and favourable development in our neighbouring region.

We will do this on the basis of common democratic values, diversity and broad dialogue.

We will seek to achieve our goals in Nyköping, in Brussels and in the Latin American countryside. Because human dignity is universal.