

Foreign Policy Statements

**Statement of government policy in the parliamentary debate on foreign affairs,
Wednesday 11 February 1998**

Unofficial translation, check against delivery

Madam/Mr Speaker,

On the threshold of a new century, there is reason to feel both confidence in the future and uncertainty about the way the world is developing.

Behind us lie two world wars and countless regional conflicts, colonialism, genocide and - the most infamous chapter in history - the Holocaust.

The paralysis of the cold war has passed and democracy is advancing in major parts of the world. Free trade creates preconditions for economic development and a fairer distribution of resources. People's everyday interests are woven together across borders. Security is increasingly created through cooperation. Sweden's own security situation has probably never been better.

Nevertheless, we cannot close our eyes to the threats and challenges. Lack of respect for human rights exists in our world, along with mass poverty, epidemics and environmental threats. We are plagued by civil wars caused by the oppression of minorities and fear of what is different. Our own societies are fighting against unemployment, organized crime and increasing divisions between people.

In this situation it is important to bear in mind the great progress that has been made, and vigorously attend to the tasks that still face us. We must make our own societies safe and sustainable, at the same time as we affirm international cooperation and the necessity for solidarity.

Active participation in the vitalization of cooperation in our immediate vicinity and in Europe, while at the same time assuming our global responsibility, must be regarded as a natural concern for Sweden.

Madam/Mr Speaker,

We in the Nordic countries have a shared history and culture, and largely understand each other's languages. Here is an integration that is so far-reaching that it is taken for granted. Nordic cooperation is one of the foundations for government action in our immediate vicinity, in Europe and in the world.

This year Sweden is chairing Nordic intergovernmental cooperation. The Swedish Government wishes to intensify the cooperation by concentrating on increasing employment opportunities and improving our environment.

The Baltic region and the Barents region which, during the cold war, were marked by confrontation, are today developing into models of cooperation and security in the new Europe. The Baltic summit in Riga and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council's Ministerial meeting in Luleå confirm the community of values that exists today. The region has the potential to become a European growth centre.

The Barents cooperation has led to greater nuclear safety, improved conditions for economic development and more cross-border contacts.

The Baltic cooperation not only seizes the new opportunities. It also provides a way of dealing with some of the problems that have accompanied the positive developments in Central and Eastern Europe. The Task Force on Organized Crime in the Baltic Sea Region was given a new mandate at the Riga summit. On Sweden's initiative, the Ministers for Trade will attempt to ease trading conditions in the region for small and medium-sized businesses. At the Foreign Ministers' meeting in June, a proposal for an Agenda 21 to promote sustainable development in the Baltic region will be adopted.

Sweden is making large-scale contributions to the creation of good neighbourly relations in our immediate vicinity and the successful enlargement of the EU. In March the Government will present its proposal for a new three-year programme for cooperation with Central and Eastern Europe. The cooperation is now directed increasingly towards supporting Estonia's, Latvia's, Lithuania's and Poland's membership of the EU and in involving Russia more closely in the European security structure.

In order to achieve an integrated Europe - one that goes beyond historical, political and economic divisions - every state and organization concerned must combine efforts. The driving force in this process is the EU and its opening up to the east. Our recent decision to invite new members to join was a great step forward for Europe. All the candidate countries are now included in the enlargement process, which strengthens their work for reform and has a stabilizing effect on democracy.

The most important motive for enlargement is the enhancement of security throughout Europe. At the same time, enlargement contributes to economic development and a sound environment in both today's and tomorrow's member states.

We must renew the institutions of the EU and reform EU cooperation - particularly in the agricultural sector - so that the Union can work effectively even with new members. The candidate countries must satisfy the membership criteria concerning democracy, a sound environment, and a well-functioning market economy, public administration and judicial system.

The integration of the Baltic states into the new Europe is of great interest to Sweden. They are now vigorously reforming their social systems in order to qualify for

membership of the EU. Cooperation between them and with Russia has developed in a positive direction. Their economic development is impressive. The Swedish Government has initiated a Nordic programme to give support to the Baltic states in the judicial, police and migration sectors.

Enlargement should go hand in hand with the development and deepening of cooperation within the EU. At the same time as the Community becomes larger, it must also be a more effective tool to deal with the realities faced by the citizens of Europe - high unemployment, environmental problems and social injustice.

Enlargement negotiations are also being initiated with Cyprus. The peace efforts thereby move into a qualitatively new phase, which should enhance the preconditions for finally achieving a lasting solution to the conflict.

The Government wants the EU to develop its relations with Turkey. The country has a clear membership perspective, which means that we expect improvements to be made concerning respect for human rights, democracy, and the protection of minorities.

The Government seeks to ensure that the EU demonstrates openness towards the rest of the world and a strong global commitment. For example, the European Mediterranean policy must to a greater extent include the aims of creating free trade in all areas, including agriculture, strong commitment to development and cultural dialogue.

The Government is working, through the EU, for the continued reduction of barriers to economic exchange, trade and investment within the framework of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) system of rules for multilateral trade policy.

The introduction of the common currency is of great importance for the whole of the EU, including those countries that are not joining at the start. Sweden will therefore contribute to the success of Emu.

The Government is working to ensure that the opportunities offered by the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy are utilized. The Amsterdam Treaty has created the preconditions for a deepening of this cooperation, inter alia through a strengthened capacity to prevent and manage conflicts.

The EU needs a more restrictive arms exports policy. The Government wants the guidelines adopted by the European Council to be clarified and interpreted in a restrictive direction in a code of conduct. The Government is also making efforts to ensure that the Commission's initiative for a Union strategy for the defence industry leads, among other things, to more restrictive regulations for the export of military equipment and increased openness with regard to EU countries' arms exports.

President Yeltsin's important visit to Sweden was a confirmation of the increasingly intensive Russo-Swedish cooperation. The positive development of exchanges in all areas between Russia and Sweden is creating growing affinity between our countries.

The visit was also part of efforts to engage Russia more deeply in European cooperation. The Government wants to facilitate this rapprochement by giving increased support to the reform work in Russia.

The Government urges Russia to sign the border agreements with Estonia and Latvia. Such a step would have a confidence-building effect of significance to the entire Baltic region.

It is gratifying that Russia has presented concrete proposals to strengthen confidence and cooperation in the Baltic region. The Government wants to continue to discuss these, particularly those relating to economy, the environment and international contacts. The Government wants to extend practical military cooperation with Russia within the framework of the Partnership for Peace. However, we reject the notion of regional military security arrangements.

The framework agreement between NATO and Russia is a foundation-stone of the pan-European security structure. Both parties have a responsibility to give concrete substance to the agreement. The whole of Europe has an interest in a positive and constructive relationship between Russia and NATO.

This agreement, together with the intensification of Partnership for Peace, the establishment of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council and the decision to invite three Central European countries to become members, is an expression of NATO's new orientation. Broad cooperation contributes to the security of the whole of Europe. It is essential that this process of change continue.

It is increasingly evident that joint crisis management and peace support are becoming the main military tasks for Europe's states. The Government is cooperating with NATO to tackle the new security policy agenda. In this area, as in other matters relating to security policy, Sweden closely cooperates with Finland.

Cooperation with NATO does not include the defence of our territory. Sweden's policy of 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. As a non-participant in military alliances with a strong commitment to the United Nations, Sweden has always differentiated between defence of our territory and peace promotion efforts at the request of the United Nations. This clear division will remain and constitutes a foundation for our cooperation with NATO.

The Government is aiming for a pan-European security order in which the European countries cooperate in tackling the security problems of the new era. In this process the preconditions will be created for reduced arms levels and a gradual phasing out of nuclear weapons.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, OSCE, with its broad membership and comprehensive security concept, is another foundation-stone of the European security structure. OSCE's most important tasks today are conflict prevention, crisis management, post-conflict reconciliation, and arms control.

The increase in the Council of Europe's membership is an expression of the advance of democracy on our continent. The Council's efforts contribute to the consolidation of democracy, the strengthening of respect for human rights and the promotion of the principles of the rule of law. The Government is working for an effective follow-up of the Council of Europe's summit meeting of October 1997. This applies in particular to the programme on children's need of protection which was initiated in response to a Swedish proposal.

The peaceful development in the Balkans presupposes long-term international commitment. The forces in the region that support the Dayton Agreement need the assistance of the international community if reconciliation is to become stronger than the divisive forces. In this way, opportunities will be created for people to return home.

In its contributions to the work of reconstruction, Sweden gives priority to helping democratic and economic structures and the return of refugees. This support is designed to contribute to an integration of the region into European cooperation.

The peace work in Bosnia requires a continued military and police presence. The Swedish Government is prepared to continue to contribute troops on condition that the UN Security Council provides a mandate. Like the present force, this force should be organized by NATO and include some American troops on the ground. Continued broad participation, including Russian, is also crucial.

It is essential that the American commitment to Europe be maintained. The presence of the United States has been of major importance for peace and development throughout Europe.

Madam/Mr Speaker,

Sweden's membership of and strong commitment to the United Nations will remain a mainstay of the Government's foreign policy.

Through the United Nations we are participating in the consolidation of an international judicial system that also safeguards our own security. The UN is an indispensable tool in the fight against the long-term threats to human survival.

Sweden's election to the Security Council for the 1997-98 period was an expression of confidence in our foreign policy. The Government is guided in its work on the Council by the programme which I presented to the Riksdag after Sweden's election to the Council. We want to work for early, preferably preventive, and coordinated UN operations in conflict situations and for a more open Security Council. The overall goal is that the UN and the Security Council should be able to maintain international peace and security as effectively as possible.

The Government advocates firm and unified UN action in Iraq. Security Council resolutions must be respected and Iraq's weapons of mass destruction eliminated. It is unacceptable that Iraq is seriously obstructing the UN inspection activities. Saddam Hussein's policy has caused enormous human suffering for the country's

inhabitants, particularly the Kurdish people in the north. Iraq's leadership must cooperate with the UN and make possible a peaceful solution to a serious international crisis.

The Government is making efforts to limit as far as possible the negative humanitarian consequences of international sanctions. Humanitarian needs and respect for human rights are at the forefront when Sweden deliberates its standpoints.

We want to achieve better cooperation between military, police and other civil UN operations. This is the reason why as President of the Council in July last year we took a new initiative for civilian police in UN operations - in many cases a key group for handling civil conflicts. We are now following up this initiative, both within the UN and in Sweden. One hundred Swedish police are available today for the UN Stand-by Arrangement System for peace-support operations.

Since Kofi Annan took up his duties as Secretary-General, considerable progress has been made in reforming the UN. We now have better political leadership and a more effective organization.

In 1998, the Government will work for the introduction of a new financing system for the UN's development activities that allows greater predictability and a more even sharing of the burden. The planned millennium meeting of the General Assembly will provide an opportunity to focus on the future tasks of the UN.

What will ultimately determine the success of the UN is the political will of the member states to support and utilize the UN and to place the necessary resources at its disposal. All member states must pay their assessed contributions in full, on time and unconditionally. This applies in particular to the largest donor. The reluctance of the United States of America to pay its contribution jeopardizes continued reform efforts.

A decade after the end of the cold war, massive nuclear weapons arsenals still confront each other, and the threat of proliferation remains. The Swedish Government continues to accord high priority to work for a world free from weapons of mass destruction.

The nuclear-weapon states should take their nuclear weapons off alert status. The Government is working for the inclusion of the Canberra Commission's proposals on the achievement of a nuclear-free world in the international work for disarmament.

States that have refrained voluntarily from the possession of nuclear weapons have a right to guarantees that they will not be subjected to the use of or threatened use of nuclear weapons. The Government wants to bring about an international, legally binding agreement in this area.

Sweden plays an active role in the international control of exports, which is an important part of disarmament endeavours. We must prevent weapons and sensitive high technology from falling into the wrong hands and make it more difficult for countries to manufacture weapons of mass destruction.

In civil wars, light weapons cause dreadful human suffering. The Government will work actively for concrete measures designed to monitor these weapons. The Government recently informed the Secretary-General of the UN that we already apply on a provisional basis the basic undertakings laid down in the Ottawa Convention on a total ban on anti-personnel mines.

On 10 December 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Here, the foundation was laid for the extensive international body of rules that exists today to defend human dignity.

In connection with the 50th Anniversary, the Government will carry out a review of its human rights policy. More attention will be paid than previously to economic, social and cultural rights. Other areas that will be highlighted are the rights of children, women and minority groups. We will intensify our efforts to bring about the total abolition of the death penalty. Human rights are decisive for the promotion of the culture of democracy.

Development cooperation is an indispensable instrument of Sweden's international commitment. Democratic and economic progress in many of our cooperating countries enables Sweden to be a valued partner for those who must now demand their own rights, liberate themselves from poverty and take control of their future. Thanks to the new development cooperation policy that has evolved we have laid a solid foundation for increases in development cooperation in the next few years.

Madam/Mr Speaker,

From the security point of view it is largely a positive development that nations' borders are opening up and that countries and peoples are being brought closer together through the rapid internationalization of the economy, culture, technology and values that we are experiencing today.

Globalization has offered an opportunity for many millions of people in previously poor parts of the world to lift themselves out of poverty. But in its wake we also see increased social differences. The most skilled and competitive can take advantage of the global economy's dynamic forces. For many people the world is shrinking and new opportunities are opening up.

Others experience that they are not needed or lose the place they once had as a result of the global economy's centrifugal forces. Many poorly educated people, disadvantaged regions and entire countries find themselves marginalized.

The positive aspects of globalization – integration and economic progress – offer the best opportunities we have ever known for achieving peace, democracy and development. But globalization also needs a global, political and ethical framework. The development of political instruments at an international level to deal with the negative forces of globalization is also a way of preventing conflicts.

This is particularly evident in East and South-east Asia, where the situation has changed rapidly. Countries that have seen unprecedented growth have been thrown into a deep financial and structural crisis. Weaknesses in economic and political systems have become evident. The social and environmental problems are considerable.

Recovery can take time. But the adjustments that are now being made can in the long term restore these countries to a prominent position in the global economy. Countries can emerge from the crisis stronger if they are able to reform their form of government in the direction of increased democracy, pluralism and openness. The ongoing work of drafting a Swedish strategy for Asia marks the Government's strong interest in developing relations with the countries of Asia.

The crisis in Asia has reminded us of the powerful interdependency of countries and peoples, and also of the need for international cooperation. Today's open economies, free trade and rapid financial transactions call for an economic and political leadership that can respond quickly to crises, and at the same time take a broad, global, long-term approach to common issues concerning survival.

The Middle East shares with Europe a long, common history and a rich cultural heritage. Peace in the region is in the interest of all. The Government is deeply concerned that the peace process has ground to a halt.

Israel has a right to secure and recognized borders. The Palestinians have a right to found a democratic state and to achieve economic security. A settlement presupposes that Israel withdraws from the West Bank and Gaza in accordance with the requirements of international law and the agreements between the parties. All positive forces in the region and the international community must work together to ensure that confrontation is replaced by cooperation.

Israel must end its settlement policy, which is in contravention of international law, and stop the enforced displacement of Palestinians from Jerusalem. The security cooperation must be maintained in order to prevent acts of terror. The status of Jerusalem must be included in a comprehensive and just peace agreement. International law and respect for human rights must be upheld by both parties.

Africa presents many faces. Want and violence are realities for a great number of people. At the same time promising changes are taking place. An "African Renaissance" seems possible. The Government seeks to develop a closer partnership with the emerging democratic societies of Africa. We want to develop our strong, historical commitment to meet the demands of a new era. In March, the Government is to present its proposal for a new Africa policy.

Violence in Algeria resurged with new force at the beginning of the holy month, Ramadan. The Government has taken action to try to put an end to the horrific violence through dialogue with Algeria. The Algerian Government must rally the nation's support against this cowardly and shocking terrorism. Openness, democracy and the functioning rule of law are preconditions for putting an end to the violence and isolating those responsible.

It is gratifying that the parties have now agreed to implement the UN peace plan for Western Sahara. The Government is supporting the peace process with civilian police officers and is also prepared to provide election observers. We are considering the possibility of mine clearance operations.

Developments in Latin America are positive. The painstaking work for a democratic development and more open economies has resulted in a positive development in practically the entire region. There is still a need for social reforms, for example, in education and health care, in order to reduce poverty and secure democracy. In May, Sweden is to host a meeting between the Ministers for Trade and Finance from the EU and Latin America, the purpose being to stimulate trade and investments.

In Central America, painstaking work for peace by both national democratic forces and international efforts has led to peace and democracy in the entire region for the first time since independence at the beginning of the last century.

Madam/Mr Speaker,

When events outside our country increasingly affect the lives of Swedes, the division between domestic and foreign policy becomes less clear-cut. The community of values that forms the basis of a living democracy at national level must today be sought at international level as well. The future prosperity of the Swedish people is closely interwoven with the prosperity of the people around us. Our participation and solidarity contribute to other people's hopes for the future.

We want, therefore, to intensify and broaden cooperation in our immediate vicinity and Europe. We must seize the historic opportunity to create an integrated democratic Europe and bring into being an order where security is sought in cooperation and where force is not accepted as a solution to political differences.

We want, therefore, to revitalize global cooperation. The challenges to people's lives and prosperity – global environmental threats, poor health, poverty, weapons of mass destruction, protectionism and infringements of human rights can only be met through international cooperation.