

Foreign Policy Statements

**Statement of government policy in the parliamentary debate on foreign affairs,
Wednesday 10 February 1999**

Unofficial translation, check against delivery

Madam/Mr Speaker,

Overloaded carts with fleeing women and children. A war machine that kills, destroys and terrorises. Ethnic cleansing, intransigence and lies used as political tools. Snipers and mass graves.

This is going on today, on our own continent, in Europe. This is the awful reality that will once more be played out before us if the negotiations at Rambouillet do not produce results and pave the way for a peaceful development.

It reminds us what politics - including foreign policy - is ultimately about: people's desire to live in safety, to have their rights respected, and to have the chance to realise their dreams.

But today the Balkans are a tragic exception in the European context.

The rest of Europe has in the last decade experienced a dynamic political and economic development. It is high time for the Balkans to find their place in modern Europe.

Madam/Mr Speaker,

Sweden's efforts in the Baltic Sea region, in the EU, in the Balkans and globally show how the basis for our foreign policy has changed.

Foreign and domestic policies merge. The link between politics and economics becomes increasingly clear, as does the role economic development plays for democracy and security. Foreign policy is about trade and investment as well as development cooperation and migration. This is reflected in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' new organisation.

Sweden's membership of the European Union gives us an opportunity to work for a continent characterised by democracy, solidarity and openness. Enlargement and the European Union's contacts with Russia will help unite a Europe that has been too long divided.

We want to contribute to the formation of a Union that is close to its citizens by working actively for employment, gender equality, the environment and consumer

protection. Our presidency in 2001 will be a new milestone in Sweden's work in the EU.

The direction in which international developments are moving is basically positive and promising. The number of armed conflicts, especially between states, is decreasing. Infant mortality is declining. International work for sustainable development is intensifying. We see a growing community of values based on democracy, human rights, international law and free trade.

The Defence Commission has concluded that Sweden's security situation is good. An invasion of the whole or parts of Sweden in the next ten years is unfeasible.

At the same time, long-term threats remain. Divisions are increasing. Ruthless exploitation is threatening the global environment. Economic uncertainties in Asia, Russia and Latin America send shock waves throughout the global economy.

Armed conflicts must be prevented by tackling the underlying causes with all the political, economic and military instruments at the disposal of the world community.

Development cooperation, trade policy and conflict prevention measures are important tools in our overall foreign policy. They must be continuously developed in order to meet the changes globalisation entails.

Sweden's extensive development cooperation has won the respect of the international community. The evaluation carried out in recent years will be further developed in a parliamentary review.

The Government wants to stimulate economic development and employment through an active policy of trade promotion. Foreign policy is instrumental to our own material prosperity.

Participation in peace support and humanitarian operations is one of the primary tasks of the total defence.

An action programme for conflict prevention measures is currently being drawn up.

Madam/Mr Speaker,

The Government wants to strengthen cooperation for democracy, security and development in the Nordic and Baltic region.

For half a century the Baltic Sea formed a moat between east and west. Today the same sea unites free countries and people through increasing trade, cultural exchange, political cooperation and contacts between municipalities, companies and popular movements.

A network of cooperation becomes a safety-net for peace.

Despite the economic crisis in Russia, the Baltic Sea region has the potential to become one of Europe's most dynamic growth regions.

In addition to previous extensive investments, the Government will allocate a further one billion kronor over the next five years to the development of the business sector and to raising prosperity levels in the region. The Government has appointed a Committee on Economic Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region to draw up guidelines on how these funds should be used.

Patterns of security in the Baltic Sea region are still evolving. The principle of each country's right to choose its own security policy direction is of fundamental importance. The responsibility to consider security in the whole of Europe does not diminish that right.

European security is indivisible. Security in our part of the continent is, therefore, an issue for the whole of Europe and the North American countries. Russia is a part of Europe and must also be a part of a pan-European security order.

The Council of Baltic Sea States, which last year established a Secretariat in Stockholm, is an increasingly important forum for cooperation. A task force under Swedish leadership is building up cooperation against organised crime. A regional Agenda 21 will be realised.

At Sweden's initiative, special measures are being carried out to protect children at risk. A conference of ministers responsible for family and children's issues will be held in Stockholm later in the spring.

Under Finland's Presidency, the EU will develop its Nordic dimension. This creates the conditions for the strengthening of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, the Arctic Council and the Barents Euro-Arctic Council.

Relations between the Baltic states and Russia have developed positively, even though there are still outstanding issues between them. Russia should sign the border treaties with Estonia and Latvia without delay, and the Russian Parliament should ratify the border agreement with Lithuania.

Estonia and Latvia, with the support of Sweden and other countries, are taking important and necessary steps to integrate the Russian-speaking populations into their societies.

The Government supports Russia's incorporation into European cooperation. The Government is working to expand cooperation at regional and local levels, and supports the social reform work in Russia.

Sweden is participating actively in the work of the EU towards a strategy on Russia concerning such issues as trade, improved nuclear safety and democracy support. It is of the utmost importance that a democratic Russia moves forward in order to create a well-functioning state governed by law, and a socially sustainable market economy.

Under the motto "Sweden-Poland: Baltic Sea neighbours in the new Europe" the Government is launching a broad initiative this year to strengthen ties between

Poland and Sweden. It is important that both Poland and Germany participate actively in the cooperation between the Baltic Sea countries.

Nordic cooperation has acquired new significance and dynamism through Sweden's and Finland's membership of the EU. Sweden handed over the presidency of the Nordic intergovernmental cooperation to Iceland. We have been able to contribute to giving the cooperation a purposeful and strategic focus.

The Nordic region is an important starting-point for further international commitment. Nordic cooperation is also stimulated by the increasingly close cooperation with the Baltic states.

Madam/Mr Speaker,

The Government wants to strengthen cooperation for democracy, security and development throughout Europe.

Sweden has a European identity and a European responsibility.

Active commitment to the European Union is the most important expression of our willingness to accept our European responsibilities.

Membership of the EU benefits our country. It enhances our ability to safeguard our economic and security interests. The Government intends to pursue an active and forward-looking EU policy.

In the next few years the EU faces revolutionary changes. The Government will work actively both for Union enlargement and for the intensification and further development of the cooperation.

EU procedures and institutions must be reformed. Strong and effective institutions are in the interests of Member States such as Sweden. Sweden will work hard during our Presidency in 2001 to ensure that the European Union develops in a way that enables it to meet the demands of the 21st century.

The character of the EU is changing. Issues that are close to the citizens – employment, the environment, gender equality, consumer policy, the fight against crime – have become increasingly central to the Union. This development means that the popular support we would like to see for the EU is increasing.

The European Parliament plays an important role for transparency in the EU. A high turn-out in the parliamentary election in June will strengthen the voice of the citizens of Europe.

The Swedish Government played an active part in bringing about the agreement on employment in the Treaty of Amsterdam. On the basis of this common agreement, objectives and guidelines for combating unemployment are now being drafted at the EU level and in national action plans.

The Agenda 2000 negotiations should be concluded in the spring. They should smooth the way for enlargement, a more efficient use of EU resources and a fairer distribution of the burden. The agricultural policy must be reformed.

The Government attaches the highest priority to the enlargement of the EU. We must counteract the drawing of new dividing lines in Europe, both through a successful enlargement process and by strengthening EU cooperation with the European countries not included in the enlargement.

It is a vital Swedish interest that the countries in our vicinity are incorporated into the new Europe.

Estonia – like Poland – has commenced formal membership negotiations with the EU. Latvia and Lithuania have carried out important reforms in order to fulfil the membership requirements. These countries should without delay be invited to join the formal negotiations.

The introduction of the euro was a historic step for Europe. It is important also for Sweden that EMU becomes a success. A decision about Sweden's participation in the third phase of EMU will be put before the Swedish people in an election or a referendum. This year the Government will invest 20 million kronor to stimulate debate and public information about EMU.

Through the EU's internal market we want to take part in the creation of a modern, open and efficient economy – for the benefit of the Union's citizens, and also for people outside the Union. The Government intends to promote the development of the internal market, a unique and successful project, which is conducive to economic development and employment.

The Government continues to work for better competition surveillance. There must be greater respect for the regulations on government subsidies, and more effective and fairer rules for public procurement must be applied. Financial control must be strengthened.

Sustainable development and the integration of environmental considerations into EU policies in different areas have become a goal for the Union. The Government will work to ensure that the environmental regulations contained in the Treaty of Amsterdam have a strong impact, for example through effective measures against acidification.

Developing and extending the European community of values based on democracy and human rights has been the main task of the Council of Europe since it was founded in 1949. The Government has set up a national committee to coordinate activities in Sweden in preparation for the organisation's 50th anniversary. In response to a Swedish-Norwegian initiative, the Council of Europe has decided to launch a European children's programme.

The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, OSCE, plays an important role in conflict prevention through, inter alia, field activities and the work of the special High Commissioner on National Minorities.

In Kosovo the OSCE is currently facing its greatest and most challenging mission so far. Personnel from more than 30 countries are cooperating in a situation which will play a decisive role for the region and for Europe.

Sweden is prepared, following a decision in the UN Security Council, to take part in a peace support operation to enable an agreement on the future of Kosovo to be implemented.

Since the cold war, NATO has undergone dynamic change with respect to its tasks, its organisation and its membership. The mission in Bosnia – to which Sweden continues to make a substantial contribution – has given NATO a new and central role in crisis management in cooperation with countries outside the alliance.

Sweden is actively engaged in the work of the Partnership for Peace (PfP) and the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC).

The PfP plays a significant role in confidence-building, not least in our own neighbourhood. The Partnership is an important element in the work of building up a crisis management capability in our part of the world so that together we can face threats and crises.

Sweden's non-participation in military alliances with the aim of retaining the possibility of neutrality in the event of war in our vicinity remains unchanged. It reduces tension and increases security in our part of Europe. We have chosen this policy ourselves and we define its content.

Non-participation in military alliances does not mean exclusion. Sweden takes a concrete and active part in cooperation to promote peace and prevent conflicts both in Europe and globally.

The Government wants to strengthen Europe's crisis management capability. With its breadth and community of values, the EU has great potential in this area. On the suggestion of Sweden and Finland, crisis management has been defined as a task for the EU in the Treaty of Amsterdam.

An intensive discussion on these issues is now in progress in Europe. The Government welcomes this. First and foremost the countries' common will to act must be strengthened. We are also prepared to examine decision-making procedures and institutional solutions relating to crisis management. A clear dividing line between crisis management and territorial defence should be upheld.

Madam/Mr Speaker,

The Government wants to strengthen cooperation for democracy, security and development at the global level.

It is our ambition also at this level to create a cooperation and security order, which builds on an increasingly strong community of values.

The UN Security Council is the core of the international security order.

The UN's responsibility is ultimately to serve as guarantor for the primacy of international law in world politics. It is the task of the Security Council to decide upon the use of military force, except in cases of self defence or in situations of extreme duress. This applies regardless of who has been assigned to head the peace support mission.

As a member of the Security Council for the past two years, Sweden saw it as its foremost task to strengthen the will and ability of the Security Council to take its full responsibility for international peace and security. In many situations we were able to contribute to achieving important results.

At the same time we acquired hands-on experience of the problems that confront the Security Council. Sometimes vital Council decisions have been blocked, sometimes the Council has been side-stepped.

The lessons learned from our time in the Security Council are an asset in our continuing commitment to the UN, which remains a cornerstone of our foreign policy.

Sweden's work in the UN is characterised by a holistic approach. In a long-term perspective, peace, security, democracy, human rights, humanitarian work and sustainable development are inseparable.

A central feature of the Government's UN policy is to work to strengthen and reform the UN. Sweden has been assigned a leading role in the work of reforming the Security Council. The Member States must fulfil their financial obligations.

The UN's conflict prevention work needs to be developed. Respect for human rights should permeate the work of the UN. Special attention must be paid to the rights and living conditions of children. A strategy for poverty eradication should be adopted by the Millennium Assembly in the year 2000. Humanitarian assistance is part of the international work for peace, democracy and development.

The nuclear tests performed by India and Pakistan remind us of the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction. Our goal is a world free from weapons of mass destruction.

The Government is working actively to strengthen international cooperation for non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. The eight-nation initiative points at a pragmatic route to nuclear disarmament. It emphasises the close connection between preventing the spread of such weapons and the nuclear weapon states' undertakings with respect to disarmament and the abolition of all nuclear weapons.

We have seen what chemical and biological weapons can do in the hands of Saddam Hussein or, for example, the terrorists who attacked the Tokyo underground.

We must have a strategy that will enable us to handle new threats such as terrorists with weapons of mass destruction, or attacks on information systems. International

cooperation must be strengthened, not least in relation to the conventions banning chemical and biological weapons.

Sweden was active in bringing about the Ottawa Convention on a total ban on anti-personnel land-mines. We play a leading role in mine clearance and efforts to support land-mine victims.

Disarmament and arms control are important tasks also in Europe. The negotiations on two key agreements due to be concluded this year – the Vienna Document and the CFE Treaty on conventional weapons – are also of great importance for Sweden's security.

The Government is working for greater restrictions on the export of arms by, inter alia, seeking to further develop the EU's code of conduct.

Sweden is also working with other countries to find effective measures to alleviate the immense suffering caused by the proliferation and use of light weapons in today's conflicts.

Madam/Mr Speaker,

Respect for human rights creates a stable foundation for peace and security. This perspective will inform our foreign policy. It is equally essential in our work in Europe, at the global level and in our bilateral cooperation with other states.

Racism in all its forms will be fought, firmly and without compromise, here at home and beyond our borders.

The Living History project is about never forgetting. It is about drawing conclusions for our own time. The Government will carry on with this work.

Gender equality is a priority for the Government. We have a long way to go in a world of discrimination, widespread violence and repression of women.

In our human rights work we will contribute towards the development of an international system of norms and take action in concrete cases where these norms are violated.

The Government often acts within the EU to strengthen human rights. The Treaty of Amsterdam established that the EU is based on fundamental freedoms and respect for human rights which must be observed by both present and future Member States.

It is now ten years since the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted. No other human rights convention has been adhered to by so many states. The review of children's issues which the Government has initiated aims to ensure that the rights of the child permeate Sweden's international development cooperation.

The Government is working to bring about an additional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child prohibiting the use of soldiers under 18 years of age.

The fight against capital punishment will continue with unabated vigour. The Government wants to see a universal ban on this shameful relic of times past. It is gratifying that last year several countries abolished or ceased to apply the death penalty, although it is still applied to an alarming degree in many countries.

The Rome Statute for an international criminal court marks an important breakthrough in reducing chances of escaping punishment for serious violations of international law. National sovereignty must not impede the process of bringing to justice those who have violated international law.

Madam/Mr Speaker,

International cooperation is needed to prevent and manage crises. Multilateralism must be defended. The UN plays a key role. The great powers must assume their share of responsibility. Regional organisations play an increasingly important role.

The World Trade Organisation can contribute towards sound and clear rules in a globalised economy. It is of major importance that the WTO can proceed to open up markets and hence stimulate trade, investment and growth. Sweden advocates a new major round of negotiations during 1999.

The global economic problems require that all the nations of the world take responsibility for maintaining demand and thus growth.

The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank can contribute towards preventing conflicts by creating the preconditions for political and economic stability and development. The international financial system must be reformed. The Government will participate actively in efforts to strengthen the Bretton Woods institutions and improve cooperation between them.

A priority task for the Government will be to strengthen international undertakings with respect to sustainable development. The decision taken in Kyoto in 1997 that the industrial countries shall reduce emissions of greenhouse gases must be implemented. We must at the same time create the preconditions for environmental investments in developing countries.

Sweden welcomes a positive commitment on the part of the United States to multilateral cooperation. This concerns the United Nations and the international economic organisations as well as European security and cooperation in the Nordic and Baltic region.

The Government aims to intensify its political dialogue with Latin America. We attach great importance to the summit meeting being arranged this year between the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean countries.

Sweden has been given a leading role in coordinating reconstruction following the havoc caused by hurricane Mitch in Central America. In May the Government will host an international conference which will lay the foundation for a new development strategy for the affected countries.

Africa is undergoing revolutionary change. In several areas war and crises rage, resulting in enormous human suffering. At the same time, democratisation and economic reforms are just as evident in Africa as conflicts and war.

Solutions to the deep conflicts in the Great Lakes region, Angola, the Horn of Africa, Sierra Leone and Guinea Bissau call for major international efforts. Sweden is strongly committed to these efforts through the UN, the EU and the Bretton Woods institutions as well as through a direct partnership with African countries. During the year, special efforts will be made to achieve broad cooperation with South Africa.

Sweden promotes cultural dialogue between Europe and the Muslim countries and is actively participating in the Mediterranean cooperation initiated by the EU. In the long term, it can contribute both to security in Europe and to increased prosperity south and east of the Mediterranean.

After half a century, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is still unresolved. The peace process has come to a halt. What is needed now is political will on both sides, particularly from the stronger party, Israel. Firmer commitment from the rest of the world is also needed.

Israel is entitled to secure and recognised borders. The Palestinians have the right to establish a state of their own. Israel's settlement policy which is in contravention of international law must cease. The interim agreement, the Wye Accord and the negotiations on final status must be implemented.

Responsibility for the Iraq issue must revert to the United Nations Security Council. Iraq must not be permitted to keep, develop or use weapons of mass destruction. At the same time, we must try to protect the people of Iraq - who have suffered for so long - from the consequences of Saddam Hussein's devastating politics. This particularly applies to the Kurdish section of the population in northern Iraq.

The economic crisis which hit several countries in Asia last year was not unique to Asia. Countries all over the world face similar problems. They must be met by democracy, functioning financial systems and social safety-nets.

The negotiations on East Timor appear to have acquired new energy. The willingness of the Indonesian Government to heed the wishes of the East Timorese concerning the future of the area is a welcome step in the right direction. Last year Sweden took an active part in promoting a dialogue with Indonesia and Portugal concerning the conflict.

Through reform the Asian countries will gain renewed strength. For Sweden this means new political and economic opportunities. In a written communication to the Riksdag the Government will present a proposal for a Swedish Asia strategy.

Madam/Mr Speaker,

In the Government's active foreign policy, international solidarity is combined with protection of our own interests.

The democratic and social ideals that form the foundation of our own society and of the European peace project must also have a global impact.

Just as solidarity must characterise Swedish society, so must it also characterise our foreign policy.

Foreign policy strengthens our security. It also contributes to economic development and employment in Sweden.

Old threats and problems recede into the background while new ones emerge.

Military tension is diminishing, but the threat of terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction remain. Security in our neighbourhood is increasing, but conflicts elsewhere continue to cause vast human suffering and flows of refugees which also reach us. Progress is being made in the environmental field, but the risk of climatic changes is increasing. Growth in the global economy means increased prosperity, but divisions are broadening.

Old barriers and limitations are removed and new openings are created.

Sweden has perhaps never before had such great opportunities to contribute, in cooperation with other countries, to peace, freedom and confidence in the future.

We possess the will and the tools needed to avail ourselves of these opportunities - in the Nordic and Baltic region, in Europe and globally.

In cooperation we are building our common security and our common future.