



Press conference in light of Russia's illegal annexation of additional regions in Ukraine

On 30 September, Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson held a press conference in light of Russia's illegal annexation of a further four Ukrainian regions. Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde and Minister for Defence Peter Hultqvist also took part.

“Illegal annexation has no legal force. Like Crimea, these four regions therefore remain within Ukraine's internationally recognised borders. Sweden condemns Russia's actions in the strongest possible terms,” said Ms Andersson.

An eighth package of sanctions is now being prepared at EU level. Sweden and the EU will continue to provide financial, military and humanitarian support to Ukraine for as long as is necessary. Russia's decision to annex additional areas will also be the focus of next week's informal meeting of the European Council.

Ms Linde announced that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs will summon Russia's Ambassador to formally convey Sweden's strong condemnation.

The current caretaker government has full powers to act for the security of Sweden and the Swedish people until the new government takes office. Sweden always has a functioning government in place.



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Sweden does not, and will not, recognise Russia's illegal annexations of Ukrainian territory.

Today, Russia announced its intention of illegally annexing the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia

Sweden strongly condemns Russia's actions, which are a violation of international law, including the United Nations Charter. We have communicated this to Russia's Ambassador today.

Sweden does not, and will not, recognise Russia's illegal annexations of Ukrainian territory. Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, like Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, are part of Ukraine, within that country's internationally recognised borders.

Russia's illegal annexations have no standing or legal force in international law. They do not affect Ukraine's right to defend itself and to reclaim its own territory.

Moreover, Russia's illegal annexations do not affect Sweden's unwavering support for Ukraine. Sweden stands in solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. Within the EU, Sweden will continue to advocate further restrictive measures against Russia, and push for increased pressure on Russia to end its unjust war.

Russia's ruthless aggression against Ukraine is the most serious threat to peace and security in Europe since the end of the Second World War. Those responsible will be held to account.

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Prime Minister comments on Wednesday's security policy council meeting

Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson and Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde gave their comments following the meeting of the Government's security policy council on Wednesday 28 September. Head of the Swedish Coast Guard's Operations Department Johan Norrman was also present.

The Government gathered for an extraordinary meeting of the security policy council in view of the leaks in the Nord Stream 1 and 2 gas pipelines in the Baltic Sea.

“It is likely that a deliberate act – in other words, sabotage – caused the leaks, which are located in the Swedish and Danish economic zones. This is thus not a direct attack on Sweden,” said Ms Andersson.

The Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and representatives of the Swedish Security Service and the Military Intelligence and Security Service attended the meeting, along with representatives of the Swedish Coast Guard, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency and the Swedish Energy Agency. Ms Andersson emphasised that contact with international partners within the EU and NATO and with the United States had been maintained throughout the day.

“The Government and, of course, other countries take a very serious view of this situation, because these explosions must be seen against the backdrop of the security situation. The Government and the relevant authorities are now working flat out to investigate what happened and take necessary measures,” Ms Andersson said.

The Prime Minister also reminded the Swedish people to seek information from credible sources, and not to spread information that does not come from such sources.

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Likely deliberate act behind leaks in Nord Stream 1 and 2 Baltic Sea gas pipelines

On Tuesday 27 September, Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde and Minister for Defence Peter Hultqvist outlined the Government's views on the explosions that have caused leaks in the Nord Stream 1 and 2 gas pipelines in the Baltic Sea.

The Government considers that a deliberate act is behind the explosions, and takes a serious view of the incident given the security situation. Ms Andersson stated that Sweden is in close contact with Denmark and Germany in particular, but also with the EU, NATO, Norway, Finland and the United States.

“I will be convening the Government's security policy council, and the relevant Swedish authorities are taking all necessary measures. The Swedish Police Authority has also launched a preliminary investigation into possible sabotage. At the same time, I would like to emphasise that this is not an attack on Sweden. The explosions did not take place on Swedish territory, but rather in our economic zone,” Ms Andersson said.

The Prime Minister also urged the Swedish people to be vigilant, to seek information from credible sources and not to spread information about Swedish Armed Forces activities. The current caretaker government has full powers to act for the security of Sweden and the Swedish people until the new government takes office. Sweden always has a functioning government in place.



NATO members sign Accession Protocols for Sweden and Finland at North Atlantic Council meeting

Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde took part in the North Atlantic Council meeting on 5 July 2022 at NATO headquarters in Brussels, where all NATO members signed the Accession Protocols for Sweden and Finland. This enables all the NATO members to proceed with the accession process and ratify the protocols in the next step towards Swedish and Finnish membership. Following ratification by the NATO members, Sweden's accession will be referred to the Riksdag for approval. Sweden and Finland have Invitee status until the accession protocols have been ratified.

“Today's meeting marks an important step towards full NATO membership. Now that the accession protocols have been signed, and during the accession process, we will be integrated into the work within NATO's structures. A great deal remains to be done before we become full members, but today's step is very positive for the security of Sweden and the Swedish people,” said Ms Linde after the meeting.

Ms Linde led the Swedish delegation in the accession discussions at NATO headquarters yesterday ahead of today's signing. Finland's accession discussions were also held yesterday.



Government Offices of Sweden

Op-ed by Ann Linde and Matilda Ernkrans: Stockholm+50: Drafting the narrative for a green future

Opinion piece by Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde and Matilda Ernkrans, Minister for International Development Cooperation in Politico, June 5, 2022.

It's time to take on the responsibility of leadership for a shared green future. But taking responsibility doesn't only mean doing more — it means doing better.

Following two U.N. General Assembly resolutions, and after months of work, the world descended on Sweden's capital last week for Stockholm +50 to discuss the acceleration of efforts to create a healthy planet for the prosperity of all.

Hosted by Sweden and Kenya, the U.N. meeting was more than just a commemoration of the landmark 1972 Stockholm conference — the first world gathering to make the environment a central issue. New complexities in the areas of environment and energy, security and development, and climate and equity mean that isolated responses are simply not good enough. And now is the time for stronger global action that demonstrates the potency of multilateralism.

Along with hundreds of U.N. officials, heads of state, ministers and other government representatives, Stockholm +50 was a gathering that involved civil society – including activists, businesses and scientists – in ways that set new standards for multilateral meetings. And ahead of the meeting in Stockholm, over 50,000 people from all over the world — men and women, young and old, from all walks of life — provided their insights and recommendations.

From this clamor of voices, one message arose loud and clear: the need to

speed up green and fair transitions. If 1972 was the starting point for global efforts to address environmental challenges, Stockholm+50 was about shifting to a faster gear.

The urgency isn't surprising. These are difficult times.

A triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution is already impacting people all over the world. The COVID-19 pandemic is far from over; inequalities and hunger are increasing rather than receding; and through its invasion of Ukraine, Russia's challenging the rules-based global order, causing a humanitarian crisis reaching far beyond Ukraine's borders, deepening the global hunger crisis.

All of this demonstrates the connectedness of our challenges. Human wellbeing and human security depend on a healthy biosphere, requiring broad engagement by responsible governments and vibrant civil society, as well as a functioning international system characterized by adherence to agreed principles, multilateralism and cooperation.

So how do we bring this to life?

Before all else, we must work together. If our aim is human security for all, we'll need integrated analysis and action, and with the Stockholm Hub on Environment, Climate and Security, Sweden's offering a resource for the global community to navigate a complex landscape and make sounder decisions for a safer and more sustainable future. Sweden's newly named ambassador for climate and security will also play a key role as our government moves this agenda forward. We hope that others will follow.

Time is also of the essence. We only have eight years to deliver on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, and even less time to change the course on climate and the environment. There is no time to lose, and we all need to do more and do better.

International development aid can play a catalyzing role here, increasing both public and private financial flows into building resilient societies that are net-zero, nature friendly and zero-pollution. Climate adaptation is a global priority, and scaling up support for the least developed countries so they can adapt to a warming climate is a question of justice and solidarity.

The good news, however, is that the acceleration has already begun, and the transition is full of opportunities for people and our planet.

Visualizing our destination means imagining a world that's safer, healthier and more stable than the one we live in today — but transitions underway are already improving lives, while providing ecological and climate benefits.

In Sweden, for example, a green industrial revolution is emerging with flagships, such as the HYBRIT partnership for fossil-free steel, bringing new jobs and development to its neighborhood. Sweden's also one of the few countries allocating 1 percent of its gross national income to international development aid — with the intention of doubling its climate aid in the years to come as well.

But as Stockholm+50 demonstrated, it's not just Sweden — there's a wealth of such examples from all over the world. And these positive stories must feed the engine of transformation.

Today, on World Environment Day — one of the legacies of 1972 — the outcome of last week's conference brings momentum to our efforts for the months and years to come.

Together, we can change the story of the future.

Published 06 June 2022



Government Offices of Sweden

Formal request for NATO membership signed and presented

On 17 May, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde signed Sweden's formal request for NATO membership, which was then presented to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on 18 May.

“It's a historic day. It feels significant, it feels momentous. Joining NATO is the right thing for Sweden's security and for security and stability in our part of Europe,” Ms Linde said at the signing.

Sweden's request was presented to Secretary General Stoltenberg in Brussels by Sweden's Ambassador to NATO, Axel Wernhoff. Finland's request was presented at the same time.

Published 23 May 2022



Sweden re-launches research partnership for increased support to the environment, climate and security

A research partnership was re-launched 18 May for the environment, climate and security. Called the Stockholm Hub on Environment, Climate and Security, it combines the strengths of four world-leading Swedish research institutes in the environment, climate and security area. The hub will receive more funding for its continuing work to promote knowledge development and policy dialogue.

The effects of climate change, in combination with environmental damage and declining biodiversity, have major implications for the planet's natural resources and the human environment. More and more people will have to share fewer and fewer resources. Extreme weather events are putting people's livelihoods at risk. Consequently, the risk of conflicts is increasing, and preventive efforts are becoming more important.

“For years, Sweden has prioritised highlighting the links between the climate and security, and we have contributed to important steps being taken in the UN, OSCE and EU. We need to continue to improve our understanding of the links between these issues to prevent geopolitical competition for natural resources and avoid new conflicts,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

“The countries that are most vulnerable and exposed to climate change and environmental damage are often developing countries, even if we are all affected. This research partnership is one step in providing the best support to the most vulnerable countries through evidence-based analysis and

dialogue,” says Minister for International Development Cooperation Matilda Ernkrans.

“Stockholm has become a hub for research on the challenges facing peace and security in the wake of the environmental and climate crisis. This research partnership is aimed at inspiring and supporting Sweden in our leading role in multilateral efforts to find and win support for sustainable solutions together with our partners,” says Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Chair Jan Eliasson.

The Stockholm Hub on Environment, Climate and Security is a partnership between the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) and the Stockholm Resilience Centre (SRC). Taking part in the re-launch of the partnership were Ms Linde, Ms Ernkrans, Mr Eliasson, the heads of the four institutes, and the heads and high-level representatives of a number of other Swedish ministries, government agencies and institutes, including Sida and the Folke Bernadotte Academy. Ongoing funding will be provided by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Published 19 May 2022



Sweden and United Kingdom sign political declaration of solidarity

On Wednesday May 11, Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson received UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson at Harpsund for discussions aimed at further deepening their countries' bilateral security and defence policy cooperation.

One outcome of the meeting was that the ministers signed a political declaration of solidarity, which means that the countries have agreed to support each other in times of peace, crisis and conflict.

[Political declaration of solidarity](#)

“We have agreed on a new political declaration of solidarity between Sweden and the UK. This means that if one of us asks for help in the event of a disaster or attack, we will help one another. This may also include military resources,” says Ms Anderson.

The aim of the declaration is to express solidarity in line with Sweden's unilateral declaration of solidarity and the Nordic declaration of solidarity. Both sides wish to express this solidarity following the UK's withdrawal from the EU, which means that it is no longer covered by the EU's joint declaration of solidarity. The declaration will complement today's European and Euro-Atlantic cooperation, but not replace it.

Published 13 May 2022



Sweden advanced priority issues during OSCE Chairpersonship

Sweden's term as OSCE Chair concludes at the end of the year. At a time of major security policy challenges, Sweden has worked during the year to increase the Organization's relevance and advance Sweden's priority issues – such as gender equality and climate change.

“It has been an active Chairpersonship during which we have been able to increase the Organization's relevance, help resolve crises and conflicts, and advance the women, peace and security agenda. We also succeeded in achieving a breakthrough on the issue of climate change and how the OSCE now has a mandate to take action on climate change and security, and identify where climate change may lead to conflict,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

Carrying out the Chairpersonship has required intense diplomatic efforts and focus on the OSCE's important principles and commitments for dealing with conflicts and preventing new ones from arising.

The Chairpersonship has taken action through visits, dialogue, agenda-setting in Vienna, conferences and seminars, and direct contact on various levels. Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde has conducted more than 20 visits this year as Chairperson-in-Office, including to Ukraine, Russia, Moldova and the countries in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. She has visited all countries in which there are ongoing conflicts and has held meetings with all OSCE presences in the region. During all her visits, she has met with civil society representatives, including women's organisations, to hear their views on the situation and to highlight the importance that Sweden as Chair attaches to civil society's role.

Throughout the year, the Swedish Chairpersonship has promoted respect for OSCE principles and commitments, including democracy and human rights, which provide the foundation for sustainable peace and security. Examples

of this are the Stockholm Media Freedom Conference, which resulted in recommendations for how the OSCE participating States can counter the undermining of confidence in the media, and the seminar on anti-Semitism held early this year. Sweden has also highlighted youth issues, not least through active work by the Chairperson-in-Office's Special Representative on Youth and Security. By consistently addressing gender issues, Sweden has helped ensure that they remain on the agenda also after our term as Chair, including in the various OSCE missions and offices in the field and in the formats for conflict resolution. An expert advisory group appointed by Sweden will continue to support the OSCE on issues regarding women, peace and security.

“The Swedish Chair has left a lasting mark on the Organization, not least in the area of gender equality,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

Participants at the concluding Ministerial Council in Stockholm on 2–3 December included some 50 foreign ministers. This unusually high number of high-level participants is a testament to the importance of the OSCE and Sweden's success in increasing the Organization's relevance.

“I am proud that in 2021, Sweden has been able to stand up for our common security and our commitments in the OSCE – for stronger security policy cooperation at a challenging time,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

Published 29 December 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

Minister for Foreign Affairs to host OSCE Ministerial Council in Stockholm

On 2–3 December, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde will host 56 of her foreign minister colleagues in Stockholm at the annual OSCE Ministerial Council.

The invited guests include foreign ministers from North America, Europe and Central Asia, including Russia and the United States. The Council is the culmination of Sweden's term as OSCE Chair in 2021, which concludes at the end of the year, and comes at a time of major security policy challenges.

The OSCE Ministerial Council is an important opportunity for the foreign ministers from the 57 OSCE participating States to meet and discuss a wide range of issues facing the region. Important recurring challenges include the political crises and unresolved conflicts in the OSCE region, such as the developments in and around Ukraine, the southern Caucasus and in Moldova.

As Chair, Sweden is working to make the Council a catalyst to motivate stronger commitments on priority issues such as women's economic empowerment, climate action and security. Cooperation within the OSCE has an important role to play in identifying solutions to conflicts and crises in the OSCE region that also impact security in Sweden's neighbourhood. The joint principles and commitments that have been undertaken in the OSCE are more important than ever in terms of managing existing challenges and preventing new ones arising.

Published 26 November 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

Co-Chairs' Statement - International Ministerial Conference in Support of UNRWA

Foreign Ministers Ann Linde of Sweden and Ayman Safadi of Jordan co-chaired the International Ministerial Conference in support of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) that took place in Brussels on 16 November 2021.

The conference brought together representatives of over 50 UN member states, international and regional organisations as well as United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini, several UN agencies and other institutions, both in-person and virtually. The participants pledged political and financial support for a modernised UNRWA fit for its times and for taking steps towards a sufficient, predictable and sustainable funding of the Agency.

Published 18 November 2021



Sweden pushes for economic justice and rights in the OSCE

During the autumn, Sweden intends to present a draft Ministerial Council decision on women's economic empowerment in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). If all 57 OSCE participating States can reach consensus on the decision, it will help to highlight the link between women's economic empowerment and security.

The Concluding Meeting of the 29th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum was held on 9–10 September in Prague. During the meeting, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde – who in 2021 is also the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office – stated that Sweden intends to present a draft Ministerial Council decision on women's economic empowerment that will be negotiated during the autumn. If the decision is adopted, it will represent a very successful outcome for Sweden's Chairpersonship and provide a good backdrop for the concluding Ministerial Council to be held in Stockholm on 2–3 December. At the same time, taking decisions in the OSCE represents a challenge, as important decisions in the organisation are taken by consensus.

Strong engagement but different views on gender equality issues in the OSCE

The discussions at the meeting in Prague showed that several OSCE participating States are strongly engaged in the issue. Countries from different parts of the OSCE region highlighted different aspects of women's economic empowerment – everything from the significance of gender-sensitive legislation and gender-responsive budgeting to the importance of reducing the gender digital divide. At the same time, the discussions revealed differing views on certain issues, such as the role of women in the family and how the term 'gender equality' should be defined.

Economic gender equality – a clear Swedish priority

Economic gender equality is a central area for Sweden's feminist Government, its feminist foreign policy and during its OSCE Chairpersonship in 2021. This priority was clear in Ms Linde's opening address in Prague, which she held in her capacity as OSCE Chairperson-in-Office. In her address, she emphasised the importance of countries' mainstreaming a gender perspective into their COVID-19 recovery and promoting stronger economic gender equality, as many women have been hit very hard financially during the pandemic.

Sweden's priorities for women's economic empowerment are based in part on Sweden's engagement in a global Action Coalition on economic gender equality which was initiated by the UN. For the next five years, Sweden will have a leading role in the Coalition, together with other countries and actors. Issues that Sweden is pursuing in the Coalition include economic reforms for gender equality, efforts against discriminatory legislation, gender equality in the labour market and feminist trade policy.

Environmental issues also addressed at the meeting

In connection with the meeting, Sweden was also able to highlight the work related to environmental issues carried out during the year. At the instructions of the Swedish Chairpersonship, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) produced a study on how the OSCE's climate security efforts can be strengthened, which the Chairpersonship intends to continue to build on. During the autumn, Sweden will also present a draft Ministerial Council decision on environment and security and on climate and security.

Published 28 September 2021



International cooperation more important than ever

No country can tackle the world's challenges alone: wars and conflicts, climate change, poverty, lack of equality, lack of respect for human rights, nuclear weapons proliferation – unfortunately the list is long. International cooperation is vital – and it makes us stronger. Sweden remains a firm and tireless voice for more – not less – cooperation.

Last year, the UN celebrated its 75th anniversary. The organisation rose from the ashes of the Second World War with a promise to work for peace and prosperity for coming generations.

The work being done by the UN, the EU, the World Bank, the WTO, the OSCE and other multilateral bodies is just as important now, if not more so. Today, we see multilateral frameworks increasingly being called into question. An increasing number of countries believe that they can solve their problems on their own and that cooperation is a burden – or even a threat to their national interests or an intrusion on their national sovereignty.

This negative trend must be reversed if we are to tackle the many global challenges facing us today. Cooperation strengthens nations. Isolation makes them weaker; history shows many examples of this.

“The alternative to multilateralism is unilateralism; where has unilateralism taken the world in the past? And where does unilateralism, fanned by the forces of populism and authoritarianism, risk leading us in the future?” says Ann Linde, Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Sweden stands up for the rules-based international order and we will continue to defend and devote energy to strengthening multilateralism and international cooperation.

“At the core of the multilateral system is the United Nations. Sweden – together with the EU – will continue to advocate for the need to invest in a strong, effective and accountable UN, including by promoting closer cooperation between the EU and the UN,” says Ms Linde.

Throughout the years, multilateral cooperation has resulted in important international agreements, the most recent of which include the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development, the Paris Agreement on the climate and the Sustaining Peace Agenda.

Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde concludes:

“Multilateralism matters to me because it is the only way forward. For my country, Sweden, multilateralism is the guarantee for our security and prosperity. Without a rules-based order and international cooperation, in a world without spheres of influence and where ‘might is right’, our lives would be very different.”

Written by Mats Samuelsson

Published 31 May 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Ann Linde's Special Representatives meet to strengthen conflict resolution efforts

In her role as Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde today hosted a meeting with her Special and Personal Representatives to the protracted conflicts in the region. The representatives are meeting digitally over two days to exchange experiences on conflict resolution and how to make these processes more inclusive.

As part of the Swedish OSCE Chairpersonship's ambition to strengthen the organization's conflict resolution efforts in the long term, Ms Linde invited the Special and Personal Representatives dealing with some of the protracted conflicts in the OSCE region, and her Special Envoy, to a two-day meeting co-organised with the Folke Bernadotte Academy. The meeting is being held on 3–4 May.

One of Sweden's main priorities for its OSCE Chairpersonship is to contribute to resolving conflicts in the OSCE region. The seminar represents a concrete contribution to this through skills development and experience exchanges for the representatives tasked with taking part in the negotiations to resolve some of the protracted conflicts in the OSCE area. At the meeting – being held for the first time on Sweden's initiative – the representatives will have a chance to discuss common challenges and exchange experiences from their work with conflict resolution. Among the questions that will be discussed are how to make conflict resolution processes more inclusive and what the OSCE can do to strengthen civil society's and women's and girls'

participation and influence in them.

Taking part in the meeting are Ambassador Heidi Grau (Special Representative for Ukraine), Ambassador Annika Söder (Special Representative for South Caucasus), Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk (Special Representative for Nagorno-Karabakh) and Ambassador Thomas Mayr-Harting (Personal Representative for Transnistria). Ms Linde's Special Envoy, Kent Härstedt, will also take part in the meetings.

This year marks ten years since the OSCE Ministerial Council decided to strengthen the OSCE's various conflict resolution tools, such as conflict prevention efforts, early warning, dialogue facilitation, mediation support and post-conflict rehabilitation (referred to in the OSCE as 'the conflict cycle'). The Swedish Chairpersonship will highlight this tenth anniversary with a series of meetings and seminars on how to strengthen work on the conflict cycle.

Ms Linde opened the meeting with an initial discussion with all representatives. In the following days, the representatives will continue discussions under the leadership of the Folke Bernadotte Academy. The meetings are being held digitally in accordance with prevailing COVID-19 restrictions.

Published 03 May 2021



Sweden pushes for economic justice and rights

On 8 March, International Women's Day, a stakeholder meeting was held at which Minister for Gender Equality Märta Stenevi and Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde met with more than 40 civil society organisations to get input for Sweden's engagement in a global action coalition on economic gender equality.

The global action coalition on economic gender equality is one of six action coalitions that will promote gender equality and women's and girls' rights as part of the Generation Equality Forum. This initiative was launched by UN Women together with various gender champions with the aim of fulfilling the international commitments made under the Beijing Platform for Action.

“As early as the UN Conference on Women, in Beijing in 1995, Hillary Clinton made the famous statement that ‘human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights’. This is self-evident, but even so it is still far from being realised,” says Minister Stenevi, and continues:

“In this action coalition, Sweden will contribute with its experience from working with economic and social reforms and gender equality policy. We will highlight issues such as individual taxation, parental leave, childcare reforms and gender-transformative budgeting. But above all, we will learn from other stakeholders and strengthen one another in our work – this is why the stakeholders meeting with civil society is so important.”

Sweden shares the leadership of the action coalition with South Africa, Mexico, Spain and Germany, the OECD, the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the civil society organisations Care International, FEMNET, the Huairou Commission, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the Women's Working Group on Financing for Development. Sweden's priorities in the action

coalition are efforts for economic and social reforms for gender equality, efforts against discriminatory legislation, a gender-equal labour market including promoting the initiative Global Deal, and a feminist trade policy.

“To strengthen economic gender equality, women and girls must have greater access to economic resources, work and education. The majority of the world’s poorest are women, and this has increased during the pandemic. That’s why extensive reforms for economic gender equality are needed, as are enhanced efforts to combat discriminatory legislation and norms that obstruct women’s and girls’ access to resources. Only then can we achieve the global goals on gender equality,” says Minister Linde.

The action coalition’s action plan for economic gender equality will be discussed at the Generation Equality Forum in Mexico City, to be held on 29–31 March 2021. The action plan will later be launched globally at the follow-up Generation Equality Forum in Paris, to be held on 30 June–2 July at which President Emmanuel Macron will be the host.

Published 12 March 2021



OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Ann Linde launches advisory group of experts on women, peace and security

The Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde, launched 26 February 2021 a new advisory group of experts on women, peace and security. The group will play an advisory role to strengthen work on the women, peace and security agenda in the OSCE – an important issue for Sweden as Chair of the organisation in 2021.

The first advisory group meeting was held on 26 February under the leadership of its Chair, Lena Ag, Director General of the Swedish Gender Equality Agency. The advisory group's objective is to provide advice and proposals to Ms Linde on how she, as Chairperson-in-Office, in cooperation with her Special Representative on Gender Liliana Palihovici, can work to strengthen the OSCE's implementation of the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda.

Implementation of the WPS agenda is one of Sweden's top priorities as OSCE Chair in 2021. Sweden's efforts will also focus on defending the European security order and the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security, as well as working to resolve the protracted conflicts in the OSCE region. During its term as Chair, Sweden will give considerable emphasis to mainstreaming the WPS perspective into the day-to-day work, and to promoting women's economic empowerment and more inclusive peace and conflict-related processes. The advisory group members' expertise and broad experience from civil society, academia and international organisations will

be a valuable resource for this work.

The advisory group will meet at least four times during Sweden's term as Chair to discuss current items on the OSCE agenda from a WPS perspective. At the end of the year, the group will also present recommendations to the current and incoming OSCE Chairpersonships on how the OSCE's WPS work can be further strengthened.

Published 26 February 2021



Prime Minister met Svetlana Tikhanovskaya

Prime Minister Stefan Löfven received Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, the exiled leader of the Belarusian opposition, yesterday, 18 November.

“Svetlana Tikhanovskaya is a symbol of the Belarusian people’s struggle and the peaceful opposition’s quest for democracy and human rights. It is a reminder of how valuable democracy is, and why we must stand up for it all over the world,” said Mr Löfven in a comment following the meeting.

Ms Tikhanovskaya received strong public support as a candidate in the presidential election in Belarus. The election was neither free nor fair, and was marked by widespread electoral fraud and political oppression. The Belarusian authorities have met peaceful demonstrations with brutal violence, and a large number of critics of the regime and political opponents have been detained. Ms Tikhanovskaya herself has left the country for her own safety.

A united EU has condemned the actions of the Belarusian authorities and introduced sanctions against Belarus, and will continue to support the Belarusian people’s legitimate demands to be allowed to choose the leader of their country through free and fair elections.

Sweden is one of the largest bilateral donors to Belarus, and Sweden’s long-term support has helped strengthen Belarusian civil society. In light of the very serious developments since the presidential election, Sweden’s support to civil society organisations has been further intensified.

During her visit to Sweden, Ms Tikhanovskaya also met with Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.



Government Offices of Sweden

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Gender Equality attend meeting on international gender equality work in the wake of COVID-19

Some 70 participants from civil society organisations, the social partners and government agencies took part in a digital meeting on 26 August hosted by Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde and Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Lindhagen. Discussions covered the international coalition to work for financial gender equality, of which Sweden is one of the leaders, and international gender equality work in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“All over the world and at all levels, the Swedish Foreign Service has consistently stressed the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on gender equality and human rights and worked to ensure a response and building back that lead to improvements, including in the form of more influence for women and girls,” says Ms Linde.

To support advocacy work, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has developed targeted support for the Foreign Service and ensured that important status reports and impact analyses have been disseminated widely, both within the Foreign Service and among external actors and partners.

“Spring 2020 should have marked the start of a ‘super year’ of anniversaries, mobilisation and progress for global gender equality work. Instead, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the risk of women being subjected to

men's violence and to discrimination and marginalisation, and has led to additional challenges in efforts to advance gender equality," says Ms Lindhagen.

During Wednesday's meeting, the ministers said that two major international gender equality forums had been postponed until 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and that the focus was now on starting work in six global Action Coalitions to advance gender equality.

On 1 July, UN Women announced who would be included in the leadership teams of the Action Coalitions; Sweden is part of the leadership of the Action Coalition working on economic justice and rights, together with four other countries and a number of civil society and multilateral organisations. The next stage of this work is for the Action Coalitions to enter into dialogue and consultation with a view to developing concrete action plans to be launched in 2021.

Published 01 September 2020



What does the OSCE Chair involve?

On 1 January 2021, Sweden will take over the Chair of the OSCE for a period of 12 months. The assignment is a manifestation of Sweden taking responsibility for the OSCE, and also of multilateralism, peace and the upholding of the European security order.

At the OSCE Ministerial Council in Bratislava on 5–6 December 2019, the organisation’s 57 participating States decided that Sweden would take on the Chair of the OSCE in 2021.

“As Chair of the OSCE, Sweden will continue to work to restore respect for the principles upon which the European security order rests. We will give priority to efforts to strengthen democracy, human rights and gender equality in all relevant forums,” said Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde when the decision was taken.

Background on the OSCE

The OSCE brings together 57 participating States in Europe, Central Asia and North America. The organisation’s mission is to strengthen confidence and cooperation between participating States with the aim of preventing conflicts and also working towards conflict resolution when crises arise.

The OSCE is also the guarantor of the European security order, i.e. the right of states to territorial integrity, prohibitions on the use of force and the right of states to make independent foreign policy choices. The OSCE also has a comprehensive approach to security based on the idea that states that respect democracy and human rights also experience greater security within their borders and are at lower risk of entering into conflict with other countries. Monitoring and promoting respect for human rights among participating States is therefore an important part of the OSCE’s activities.

The OSCE's activities are divided into three dimensions of security:

- Politico-military security issues
- Economic and environmental security issues
- The link between human rights and security

The OSCE originates from the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which was started during the Cold War and made up of a series of meetings in which the participating States worked to reach common commitments on increasing security and maintaining peace in Europe. In 1975, the Helsinki Final Act was adopted, which forms the basis of the European security order, followed by the Paris Charter in 1990. The OSCE was developed into its current form in 1994 when the then ongoing CSCE was expanded to become an international organisation following a decision at a summit in Budapest. Sweden last held the OSCE Chair in 1993.

Decisions are taken through consensus by the Permanent Council, which meets on a weekly basis in Vienna, Austria. The OSCE Ministerial Council, which is made up of the foreign ministers of the participating States, meets once a year for political dialogue and decision-making.

Today, the OSCE is an intergovernmental organisation in which the participating States use political dialogue to demand accountability for breaches of the European security order and human rights commitments within the framework of the comprehensive concept of security. The serious tensions between participating States in terms of ongoing conflicts and views of democracy and human rights have a major impact on possibilities to reach consensus decisions.

What does the OSCE Chair involve?

In 2021, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde will be Chairperson-in-Office (CiO). The Chair will run for one year, from 1 January to 31 December. As the OSCE is a chair-driven organisation, this means that the Minister for Foreign Affairs will represent the organisation in international contexts and set the direction for negotiations, as well as give the organisation its political guidance (at the mandate of the participating States).

A large part of activities is set by previous decisions that the Chair needs to take account of, which limits the opportunities for political initiatives. The Minister for Foreign Affairs will be supported by the OSCE Chair Secretariat

in Stockholm and the OSCE Delegation in Vienna, which deals with the day-to-day negotiations.

The OSCE Chair plays an important role in the organisation's conflict prevention work and crisis management, and monitors implementation of the field offices' mandates. The OSCE's flagship mission, the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine, has the key task of monitoring developments in the security situation in the country and reporting breaches of the European security order.

The Chair also appoints a special representative to lead negotiations in the Trilateral Contact Group (Ukraine, Russia and the OSCE), which is discussing a peaceful solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

The role of Chair also entails the responsibility of highlighting and working towards solutions to protracted conflicts in the OSCE region. The organisation plays an important role in confidence-building and mediation in the conflicts affecting Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria and South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia. The Swedish Chair wants to work for increased focus on resolving these conflicts, with the European security order, women's participation and the rule of law as the natural starting points.

Preparations for the Chair

Although the Chair does not formally begin until January 2021, the preparatory work has already begun. Since 1 January 2020, Sweden has been part of the Chair Troika together with the outgoing Slovakian Chair and the current Albanian Chair. Since 1 January, as the incoming Chair, Sweden has also been leading work within the framework of the OSCE Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. This role involves responsibility for organising a ministerial conference in autumn 2020. This autumn, Sweden will also take over as Chair of the OSCE Budget Committee to lead negotiations on the OSCE's budget ahead of 2021.

In Stockholm, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has established a Secretariat to coordinate work prior to and during the OSCE Chair. The Secretariat works in close cooperation with Sweden's OSCE Delegation and involves all parts of the Government Offices affected by the Chair.

In addition to the work of preparing and conducting the Chair within the Government Offices, the Secretariat also coordinates contacts to achieve broad support for the Chair among civil society, thinktanks and the Riksdag

for example, and conducts a dialogue with international partners about the Chair. The Minister for Foreign Affairs has invited civil society to give their input to the priorities ahead of the Chair. Civil society also plays an important role in highlighting the OSCE's principles and joint commitments.

More detailed priorities for Sweden's Chair will be presented in July 2020. The Swedish Chair programme will be presented at the first meeting of the Permanent Council in January 2021.

There are currently eight people working at Sweden's OSCE Delegation. Ahead of 2021, the Delegation will be reinforced with additional staff to be able to deal with the workload the Chair entails.

Ministerial Council meeting

At the beginning of December each year, the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting is held, usually in the country that holds the Chair. The Ministerial Council is the OSCE's central decision-making body, made up of the foreign ministers of the 57 participating States. In connection with the Ministerial Council meeting, a number of side events take place to highlight important issues; the meeting is also an important opportunity for bilateral meetings.

In addition to the comprehensive preparations needed ahead of the meeting, this is also the opportunity to confirm the Chair priorities through decisions negotiated in the organisation's committees during the year.

Day-to-day work

The organisation's day-to-day work is run by the Permanent Council in Vienna, which is normally convened once a week. In the Permanent Council, which is one of the OSCE's two decision-making bodies, the participating States are represented by their OSCE ambassadors.

The Chair of the OSCE is responsible for planning and coordinating these weekly meetings. The role involves setting the agenda, inviting speakers and practical issues, such as providing interpretation to the OSCE's six official working languages and leading and taking the minutes from each meeting.

The Permanent Council is responsible for four committees, one for each dimension of the comprehensive concept of security and a committee for budget and management issues, as well as various contact groups. They prepare various decisions that are taken by the Permanent Council, the participating States' foreign ministers or, on the rare occasions when a

summit is held, by heads of state and government. The frequency of the committees' meetings varies from weekly to monthly. In 2021, it will be Sweden's responsibility to coordinate and lead the work of the committees.

The Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC), the second of the two OSCE decision-making bodies, also meets once a week in Vienna. The FSC Chair rotates every four months. Sweden last held the Chair in autumn 2018. The FSC deals with military issues linked to security and the organisation's mechanisms and instruments for confidence-building and transparency, aimed at strengthening common security. Regular collaboration and coordination take place between the OSCE Chair and the FSC Chairs during the year.

The OSCE's institutions

The OSCE's three autonomous institutions (the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) and the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM)) are important cornerstones of the organisation's activities in areas such as democracy and human rights.

Cooperation with these three institutions is very important for the country holding the OSCE Chair. This can involve cooperation on agendas and invitations to speakers for conferences, appointing staff or coordinating extra-budgetary projects (projects that take place within the framework of the various institutions but that are financed through voluntary contributions from participating States and not through the OSCE's general budget).

The OSCE's headquarters in Vienna

The OSCE's headquarters (Secretariat) is led by the Secretary General and based in Vienna. Thomas Greminger from Switzerland is currently Secretary General of the OSCE. The Secretariat assists the Chair in issues concerning administration of the organisation and also has expert knowledge in a number of areas – not least concerning protracted conflicts and cooperation on economic and environmental issues. Its geographical departments – South-eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia – also support the Chair with their expertise.

The OSCE's field offices

The OSCE has 16 field offices or missions in the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia. The Chair maintains regular contact with the different offices and can provide guidance for activities

within the framework of their mandates. This can involve anything from current events in the region to conferences or recruitment. Once a year, representatives from all of the field offices and missions meet in Vienna for reporting and experience exchange. The OSCE Chair is responsible for planning the meeting's agenda and also leading the meeting.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is based in Copenhagen and comprises 323 parliamentarians from all participating States. The Parliamentary Assembly works on the basis of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security and has divided up its work into three General Committees that reflect the OSCE's three dimensions: Political Affairs and Security; Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment; and Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions. The Assembly draws up resolutions and recommendations aimed at encouraging the political leaders of the participating States to implement their OSCE commitments.

Published 01 June 2020



The fight against COVID-19 and its impact on democracy

How is the fight against COVID-19 affecting global efforts to defend human rights and promote democracy? As part of the Government's Drive for Democracy, Sweden has launched a series of digital meetings to contribute to the global conversation on these issues.

Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde and Minister for International Development Cooperation Peter Eriksson today took part in a digital meeting with representatives of four key intergovernmental organisations:

- Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Eamon Gilmore, EU Special Representative for Human Rights
- Christos Giakoumopoulos, Council of Europe Director General of Human Rights and Rule of Law
- Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

The aim of the meeting was to contribute to the global conversation about the risk of the COVID-19 response leading to – or being used as a pretext for – undue restrictions on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. As a next step, meetings with national and international civil society organisations and other countries are planned. Sweden's strong voice in defence of human rights, democracy and the rule of law is not silenced by a pandemic. The Drive for Democracy continues – but in different circumstances and different conditions.



Drive for Democracy takes shape

Strengthened engagement for democracy was announced in the 2019 Statement of Foreign Policy and in the Swedish Foreign Service's strategic vision for the electoral period. Sweden will stand up for democratic principles and support democracy in all contexts. On 21 November 2019, the Drive for Democracy was presented to the Riksdag Committee on Foreign Affairs by Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde and Minister for International Development Cooperation Peter Eriksson.

In brief, the Drive for Democracy makes it clear that Sweden will stand up for democratic principles in all contexts, work to help strengthen democracy, and voice criticism against democratic deficits or risks of backsliding. Like the feminist foreign policy, the idea is for the democracy perspective to permeate the work of the Swedish Foreign Service and cover all foreign policy and Ministry for Foreign Affairs areas of activity: foreign and security policy; international development cooperation policy and international trade and promotion.

The term 'democracy'

Sweden bases its work on a broad definition of term 'democracy', which means much more than free and fair elections. This definition and its components guide the work on the Drive for Democracy.

Citizen participation: a vibrant civil society, national and local elections.

Representative governance: free and fair elections, universal suffrage, independent political parties.

Rights: access to justice, enjoyment of human rights – not least freedom of expression, social and economic rights, and equality.

Separation of powers: well-functioning parliaments, independence of judicial systems, free and independent media.

Independent institutions: predictable execution of decisions, absence of corruption.

Framework of strategic objectives

A special framework of strategic objectives has been drafted to set out the direction of the Drive for Democracy.

Examples of concrete activities within the framework of the Drive for Democracy include the levelling up democracy assistance, the creation of a new network for enhanced dialogue with other countries and actors on democracy and the development of the feminist foreign policy through activities that contribute to improving women's enjoyment of human rights, and increased influence of women in democracy.

The Drive for Democracy also has a particular focus on engaging young people. As a part of this, missions abroad have been asked to hold local discussions on democracy, called Democracy Talks, with young people throughout the world. The ambition is for the participants' ideas and reflections to be funnelled into a larger Democracy Talks event to be held in Sweden in 2021 in connection with the centenary of Swedish democracy.

Priority areas

The following areas may be seen as starting points and inspiration for how the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and missions abroad are to continue working on the Drive for Democracy:

- Promote and strengthen civil society, including human rights defenders. Trade union organisations also play a crucial role in strengthening people's opportunities to influence their everyday lives and must be supported.

- Strengthen free and independent media and democratic voices (such as cultural workers), including on the internet, to combat disinformation.
- Support democratic processes and election authorities.
- Promote the growth of effective and independent institutions, including the absence of corruption.
- Promote equality.
- Strengthen political systems with competing political parties (including parliaments).
- Support the strengthening of respect for the rule of law.
- Promote and protect the enjoyment of human rights by all.
- Strengthen women's political participation.
- Promote young people's democratic engagement.

Published 27 November 2019



Making the case for democracy

The last thirty years of democratic advances have been eradicated. This means that the global level of democracy is back to where it was before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Development and democracy are interlinked, and we must not take either of them for granted.

The democratic decline constitutes a real threat to sustainable development, global peace and the health of the planet that we share. This threat is reflected in the inaction on the climate crisis, the increasing number of wars, economic downturns, growing inequalities and the pushback on gender equality and human rights.

It's time to make the case for democracy.

New research from the V-Dem Institute, a global independent research institute, shows that democracy outperforms autocracy. We would like to highlight four vital and evidence-based conclusions:

1. The return of democracy as a norm would significantly strengthen global peace and security

- Democracy promotes peace. Democracies do not wage wars against each other.
- Democracy promotes stability. Civil wars are much less likely in democratic countries and, when they do occur, they are less deadly.
- More democracies in the world will lead to fewer wars. Russia's aggression against Ukraine would probably not have happened if the level of democracy in Russia had been higher.

2. Democracy is critical to mitigating the environmental and climate crisis

- Democracies have almost a 20 per cent higher policy commitment to climate change mitigation and adopt stricter national environmental policies than do autocracies.
- Democracies are better equipped to implement the Paris Agreement.

3. Democracy is vital for economic and social development

- Economic growth is generally higher in democracies than in autocracies. Countries that democratised increased their GDP per capita by about 20 per cent in the 25 years following democratisation.
- Democracy provides mechanisms for more equitable growth that reduces poverty.
- Democracies have fewer and less severe financial crises.
- Life expectancy increases when countries democratise. Infant mortality is markedly lower in democracies.
- Democracies provide 23 per cent more safe water access, 35 per cent more child immunisation and up to 40 per cent more electricity access than autocracies.

4. Democracy promotes gender equality

- Democracy increases women's political participation and representation.
- Women's political empowerment and peace are closely linked. The annual risk of civil conflict drops from roughly 30 per cent in the least gender equal country to around 5 per cent in countries where women are fully empowered.
- Gender equality is much more likely to be the norm in democratic countries.

The worrying trend of democratic backsliding around the world erodes democratic norms and institutions; it weakens checks and balances on power and restricts people's ability to enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

We need to take collective action to protect democracy, now.

We will intensify our efforts to make the case for democracy as a global norm. Intergovernmental platforms for cooperation among democracies, such as the Summit for Democracy and International IDEA, are vital. We will seek to build stronger alliances – across regions – and work together for democracy.

We need to make the case for democracy, because democracy delivers – for all of us.

Denmark:

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Jeppe Kofod

Finland:

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Pekka Haavisto

Iceland:

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms Thórdís Kolbrún Reykfjörð Gylfadóttir

Norway:

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ms Anniken Huitfeldt

Sweden:

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms Ann Linde

Published 01 September 2022



Government Offices of Sweden

Joint op-ed by 18 foreign ministers on the fight against impunity for crimes committed in Syria

Published 31 March 2021

Ten years ago, millions of Syrians took to the streets of Dara'a, Aleppo and Damascus, calling for democracy and respect of their fundamental rights and basic freedoms. The brutal response by the regime triggered over the span of a decade one of the most serious criminal enterprises and humanitarian crises since the Second World War resulting in more than 400 000 deaths and in countless violations of human rights.

More than half of the Syrian population have had to leave their homes, and more than 6 million have fled their country to escape the regime's atrocities. Tens of thousands have been forcibly disappeared, their families left without any information as to their fate or whereabouts.

The Syrian regime has used chemical weapons against its own people repeatedly, as the United Nations (UN) and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) have proven beyond doubt. The regime has consistently refused to provide explanations to international investigation teams. But the survivors of its attacks are here to bear witness to what they have seen and suffered.

We will not remain silent in the face of the atrocities that have taken place in Syria, for which the regime and its external supporters bear the main responsibility. Many of these crimes, including the ones committed by Daesh and other armed groups, may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. It is everyone's responsibility to fight impunity and demand accountability for the crimes committed in Syria regardless of the perpetrator.

It is a matter of justice for victims. Given the seriousness of the crimes, we continue to call for the International Criminal Court to be allowed to

investigate crimes alleged to be committed in Syria and prosecute the perpetrators. To thwart the strategy of those blocking Security Council referral to the Court, we are working to ensure the facts are documented, pending examination by the competent judges. We therefore supported the creation of the International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism, which collects and preserves evidence for future proceedings. These efforts are essential. We also support the work of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry, which documents human rights violations in the Syrian conflict.

It is critical that these violations, which have been documented so thoroughly, come to an end immediately. We are also determined to enforce all international norms to protect the rights of all Syrians, as demonstrated by the recent action initiated by the Netherlands to hold Syria to account for breaching the UN Convention Against Torture. National courts, some of which have already opened judicial proceedings, play an important role in this. Prosecutions and final judgements have already been brought against perpetrators in several of our countries. Already in 2016, courts in Sweden started prosecuting grave crimes committed in Syria. Last month, a court in Koblenz, Germany, handed down a historic first judgment against a former member of the Syrian intelligence services for abetting crimes against humanity. Judicial proceedings are also underway in France, and a complaint was recently filed in Paris for the chemical attacks committed by the Syrian regime against its people.

The European Union has adopted targeted sanctions against individuals and entities close to the regime that are behind the repression of the Syrian people. We reject the regime's narrative that these sanctions are to blame for the suffering of the Syrian people. It is the regime's blatant neglect and mismanagement of the economy, which has led to the current economic crisis facing Syrians.

Today, we also need to provide solutions to the tragedy of detainees and more than 100.000 disappeared. It is essential for the United Nations to dedicate all the energy required to achieve tangible results, first and foremost from the Syrian regime.

Fighting impunity is not only a question of principle, it is also a moral and political imperative, and a matter of security for the international community. The use of chemical weapons, in any circumstances, is a threat to international peace and security. In response to chemical attacks, we have mobilized all competent institutions, guardians of the CW prohibition norms.

OPCW teams have carried out fully independent investigations. To complete this considerable work, we launched the International Partnership against Impunity for the Use of Chemical Weapons, bringing together 40 States and the European Union. This initiative has made it possible to condemn those involved in the development or use of chemical weapons. And we will not rest until they have been punished for their crimes.

Lastly, the fight against impunity is a prerequisite for rebuilding lasting peace in Syria. Without a complete and verifiable end to human rights violations and abuses, the people of Syria cannot look forward to a bright future. Without accountability for the crimes committed, Syria will be unable to reconcile with its past.

We commend the heroic efforts of human rights defenders, NGO personnel and civil society who risk their lives to bring to light the truth about the crimes committed in Syria. We offer them protection, where possible, and our legal systems are working actively to prosecute those responsible for serious crimes.

Full light must be shed on this decade of atrocities. Justice for victims is essential to rebuild a stable, peaceful Syria, based on a credible and viable political solution in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

Our countries are committed to ensuring that war criminals and torturers will not go unpunished. Their crimes will not win over the Syrian peoples' aspirations for dignity and for justice.

The article is signed by the foreign ministers of Sweden, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and the Netherlands.

Published 31 March 2021



Human rights and democracy key to leaving no one behind in global fight against COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic threatens to accelerate the global trends of democratic backsliding and weakening respect for human rights. It is intensifying existing inequalities, hitting those who are already marginalised, subjected to discrimination and living in poverty the hardest.

The Nordic governments advocate international cooperation, solidarity, human rights and democracy in fighting the pandemic. Disproportional response measures may have serious and far-reaching repercussions for human rights and democratic principles. We are concerned that some governments are taking advantage of the pandemic by using it as a pretext for violating human rights, shrinking the democratic space and redrawing the global playing field.

Thankfully, we have seen the international community act. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has led the way by calling for a global ceasefire so the world can focus on fighting the pandemic, and by placing human rights at the forefront. The UN human rights system, the UN humanitarian and development system and the World Health Organization have played leading roles in addressing the important challenges of COVID-19.

In support of such efforts, our five governments are striving to make sure that human rights, democracy, the rule of law and gender equality are at the centre of the immediate and long-term global response. We must build back better and greener, and we are ready to show leadership in strengthening international cooperation in the years to come.

To that end, we need to do four things:

We must mobilise internationally. The COVID-19 pandemic is a human crisis that is fast becoming a human rights crisis. Through the Sustainable Development Goals, the international community has committed to leaving

no one behind. We must uphold this commitment and ensure that all measures respect human rights.

We must ensure transparency and access to reliable information. The voices of independent media and civil society, including human rights defenders, must be protected and promoted. Their monitoring and reporting will contribute to holding governments accountable. It is also imperative that we counter disinformation and propaganda, and work closely with the media, tech companies, the private sector and civil society, as well as other stakeholders.

We must ensure a gender transformative perspective in the global response. The pandemic is linked to increased levels of sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices. Also, the full enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) – such as access to modern contraceptives, safe and legal abortion and comprehensive sexuality education – has worsened considerably.

The burden that COVID-19 places on health care systems must not be used as an excuse to restrict sexual and reproductive health and rights services for all women and girls. We stand together to remove structural discrimination and will continue to promote women's economic and political empowerment and their full and equal enjoyment of all human rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Finally, we must remain vigilant to ensure that international standards and principles do not slip. Any action to fight COVID-19 must not undermine international law, democracy or democratic institutions.

Now is the time to mobilise to protect and strengthen the multilateral system and the rules-based international order. The multilateral institutions need political and financial support. And the public's trust in democracy and democratic institutions needs to be reinforced.

Today, we will have a discussion with leading representatives of the United Nations, the European Union, the Council of Europe, UNESCO, the OSCE and civil society. Together, we are backing our words with action, taking the lead in making sure human rights, democracy, the rule of law and gender equality are at the heart of the world's response and recovery.

We are prepared to share the Nordic experience of building trust through combining leadership with transparency, and cooperation between national

and local government institutions as well as with civil society. We are also prepared to use our voice and experience whenever human rights, democracy, the rule of law and gender equality come under pressure.

Responding to the pandemic must not come at the cost of weaker democracies or more human rights violations. On the contrary, an approach based on democracy, gender equality and human rights is key to fighting COVID-19 and realising the 2030 Agenda.

Denmark:

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Jeppe Kofod

Minister for Development Cooperation, Mr Rasmus Prehn

Finland:

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Pekka Haavisto

Minister for Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade, Mr. Ville Skinnari

Iceland:

Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development Cooperation, Mr Gudlaugur Thór Thórdarson

Norway:

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ms Ine Eriksen Søreide

Minister of International Development, Mr Dag-Inge Ulstein

Sweden:

Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms Ann Linde

Minister for International Development Cooperation, Mr Peter Eriksson

Published 11 September 2020



Government Offices of Sweden

Yemen needs international help to escape tragedy

The writer is foreign minister of Sweden. Foreign minister Heiko Maas of Germany and foreign secretary Dominic Raab of the UK co-wrote this article, which was published in Financial Times on 1 July 2020.

After the Arab spring, it seemed that Yemen would follow a path of peaceful, political change. Civil society blossomed, and Yemenis of all affiliations, including women and young people, took part in shaping the country's future. Today, after six years of war, this hope has almost been extinguished. Yemen is on the brink of collapse.

Covid-19 is stretching Yemen's fragile healthcare system to breaking point. According to modelling by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Yemen may have surpassed 1 million Covid-19 cases last week, with the caseload likely to double every four to five days. [LINK?](#)

We have a global responsibility to ease the suffering of the Yemeni people. We — the foreign ministers of Germany, Sweden and the United Kingdom — would like to share how we think the international community can contribute to peace.

First, a nationwide ceasefire and a political settlement remain Yemen's best defence against Covid-19. Following UN Secretary General António Guterres' call for a worldwide ceasefire in response to Covid-19, the Saudi-led coalition announced a unilateral ceasefire in April. Unfortunately, the Houthis have not reciprocated and fighting has continued. The Houthis have launched ballistic missiles towards Saudi Arabia, including at civilian targets, as recently as last week, recklessly endangering civilian lives. There is no time for further delay as civilians continue to suffer and die. The international community must press all actors to accept the UN proposal for a ceasefire. This should be the start of a political process — and the full participation of women must be ensured.

Second, humanitarian assistance needs to be delivered to all Yemenis who need it. To do that the UN now urgently needs more funding. Together, our three countries recently pledged an additional \$365m to support UN humanitarian work in Yemen this year. Other countries must step up and donate generously and quickly. We must also challenge any obstacles that continue to prevent humanitarian agencies from effectively operating in Yemen. This is particularly the case in northern areas of the country controlled by the Houthis. The Covid-19 response can only stand a chance if all Yemeni parties lift their restrictions on aid.

Third, we need to encourage implementation of existing agreements. This includes the Stockholm Agreement, which calls for a mutual withdrawal from the port city of Hodeidah, and the Riyadh Agreement. If properly implemented, the commitments previously agreed by the parties would bolster UN efforts to achieve comprehensive peace.

Fourth, for Yemen to effectively recover from Covid-19, its already fragile economy must be kept alive. The indirect consequences of the coronavirus could be even more severe than the direct impact. In particular, Yemen's partners need to support the government of Yemen to pay public sector salaries - not least for medical staff - and to implement urgent economic reforms.

And lastly, we expect full respect for international law, including humanitarian law and human rights from all actors. All parties have to ensure civilians are protected in this cruel war. This also includes protection for religious minorities, women, children, journalists and political prisoners. We call on the Houthis to implement their announcement to release members of the Baha'i faith. The supply of weapons to the Houthis, including weaponry of Iranian origin, is a violation of the UN arms embargo, as evidenced by the UN Panel of Experts, and only extends the conflict. This must stop.

We are ready to help once an agreement is reached to end the conflict and to reverse the fragmentation of the country. A united international community must stop those who seek to extend the conflict for their personal benefit. We envisage an agreement based on shared power, compromise, and the rule of law. Two of us represent member states of the EU, and we encourage it to step up its role in Yemen.

The Yemen that emerges from a peace agreement needs to play a constructive and active role in the region — contributing to the security of its immediate neighbours, Saudi Arabia and Oman. Our three countries stand

ready to assist Yemen's transition into a positive force for regional security.

Under the cloud of Covid-19, Yemen is facing an enormous tragedy. It is high time the international community unites in support of its people. Yemen could be transformed. Instead of being defined by suffering and as a threat to regional and international security, Yemen could become a model for other fragmented states in conflict and a catalyst for enhanced security in a region of divergent interests. We stand ready to work with and support Yemen to achieve these humanitarian and strategic goals.

Published 03 July 2020



Government Offices of Sweden

Ministers: Global cooperation should be strengthened

Opinion piece by Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde, Minister for International Development Cooperation Peter Eriksson and Minister for Foreign Trade and Nordic Affairs Anna Hallberg. Published in Svenska Dagbladet on 20 April 2020.

The coronavirus crisis is not a time for less cooperation, closed doors or protectionism. Now is the time for more international cooperation, write government ministers Ann Linde, Peter Eriksson and Anna Hallberg.

International cooperation is needed to manage the crisis. The spread and impacts of the coronavirus are posing difficult challenges for all of us. The world is in crisis management mode. Country after country is launching stimulus packages. Borders have been closed and flights have been cancelled. International systems are being challenged. We know that international cooperation is required to beat the pandemic and manage its impacts. International efforts must also be maintained to protect democratic and free societies, and to safeguard trade and jobs in Sweden.

The rapid spread of the coronavirus shows how closely interconnected countries are. It is not strange that the world's countries have initially focused on responding to the emergency at home. It is the primary responsibility of every government to ensure the security and well-being of its citizens. But viruses don't care about national borders. What happens in other countries affects us.

There are forces that want to benefit from the situation. We see a risk of anti-democratic forces filling the vacuum as normal, structured international exchange slows down or is put on hold. Some see an opportunity to weaken international cooperation and redraw the global playing field.

The world is not taking a break. We will push to promote our values and

interests – both during and after the coronavirus crisis. Sweden will continue to push for security, democracy and human rights. We will continue to give one per cent of our GNI to development assistance, and we will be at the forefront of free, fair and sustainable trade. The pandemic brings many issues to a head, exacerbates conflicts and creates additional challenges.

Democracy and women's human rights must be protected. To respond to the crisis, many countries have introduced draconian measures. In certain cases, the fight against the pandemic is being used as a pretext to silence political opposition, journalists, civil society and human rights defenders. This is why our Drive for Democracy is even more important than before. We have taken the initiative to bring together high-level representatives of the UN, the EU, the Council of Europe and the OSCE to contribute to the protection of democratic principles and human rights in this new environment. Our embassies are tasked with monitoring how the pandemic is affecting democracy.

International cooperation is required to combat disinformation. We are working together in the EU to strengthen efforts to counter disinformation, and we have stepped up our efforts to deal with coronavirus-related issues. The Swedish Institute and the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency are working to counter inaccurate information about our response to the pandemic.

The global security situation is impacted by the pandemic. A worldwide ceasefire is needed to enable a focused response to the pandemic. Sweden therefore backs UN Secretary-General António Guterres' appeal for a global ceasefire. We are actively working with the parties to the Yemen conflict, among others, to urge them to heed the UN's call, as now seems to be happening. Security threats during the pandemic must be taken seriously and we are working closely with others to counter increased threats.

The pandemic will hit poor countries and the most vulnerable. Sweden has already contributed SEK 40 million to the WHO Contingency Fund for Emergencies and SEK 100 million to the UN's major humanitarian response plan to support the world's most vulnerable countries. This is crucial for a rapid and coordinated international response to the impacts of the pandemic. In the EU, we have also worked to increase support to our Eastern Partnership neighbours, and for EU coordination of the response to Africa's management of the pandemic. Sweden provides support to Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, to ensure that the whole world will benefit from new vaccines. We are now looking at how Swedish development cooperation can increase

efforts in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

According to an Oxfam report, half a billion people could be pushed into poverty as a result of the pandemic. We must ensure that financial support packages benefit everyone and that we build a more sustainable and equitable economy over the long term. The Government's Global Deal work, international development cooperation and better conditions for trade union activities around the world will be even more important.

Cooperation is needed to help those who are stranded abroad. Many Swedes have managed to return to Sweden on their own, which shows that requiring travellers to take personal responsibility works. However, in some situations this has not been possible, and so far more than 4 900 people have been able to return to Sweden thanks to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' cooperation with other countries, airlines and tour operators. Close cooperation between the Nordic foreign ministers means we are helping each other bring back home our Nordic citizens around the world. We are also working cooperatively in the EU to help each other's citizens return home.

The EU must be a strong global actor. Amid global concern, the EU needs to take a leading role in pushing for global action. Sweden supports the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borell. By acting together and collectively, the EU can make a big difference.

Trade needs to work even in emergency situations. We cannot possibly produce all healthcare products and medicines here in Sweden. To protect health and jobs, Sweden is working hard to ensure that both the EU single market and world trade work effectively even during the coronavirus pandemic. To increase the supply of essential goods, Sweden has pushed through the proposal to suspend EU tariffs on medical equipment.

Nordic cooperation should be enhanced. As each country is now making decisions to protect its population, we are tackling the challenges through close dialogue – and we are helping to minimise the adverse impacts for each other and our citizens living in border regions. Nordic cooperation plays a major role in the emergency we are in, and it will be crucial to our long-term efforts to manage the impacts of the pandemic.

The coronavirus is presenting us with major new challenges. We are experiencing something unprecedented in modern times. Our strong conviction is that Sweden's international engagement is important both for

solving the coronavirus crisis and for contributing to security, sustainability and welfare. This is not a time for less cooperation, closed doors or protectionism. Now is the time for more international cooperation.

Ann Linde (Social Democratic Party)
Minister for Foreign Affairs

Peter Eriksson (Green Party)
Minister for International Development Cooperation

Anna Hallberg (Social Democratic Party)
Minister for Foreign Trade and Nordic Affairs

Published 23 April 2020



Government Offices of Sweden

Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde and Minister for International Development Cooperation Matilda Ernkrans to participate in UN high-level week in New York on 19–23 September

Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde and Minister for International Development Cooperation Matilda Ernkrans will visit New York to participate in the high-level week, known as UNGA Week, in connection with the opening of the UN General Assembly on 19–23 September.

The overriding issue when world leaders meet in New York will be Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the extensive regional and global consequences that the war has brought. Other high-priority issues for the Swedish delegation will include the climate, food security and humanitarian issues, education and health. In addition, Sweden has a clear focus on actively promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law, as well as gender equality in times of backsliding in these areas.

An overall Swedish priority during the week is also, through participation, to stand up for the UN Charter and the rules-based international order, which is particularly important in light of Russia's aggression and at a time of increased geopolitical tensions.

Published 14 September 2022



Sweden participating in two court cases concerning the war in Ukraine

Sweden has chosen to intervene (participate) in two court cases concerning Russia's responsibility for violations of international law. A case between Ukraine and Russia on allegations of genocide is pending before the International Court of Justice in The Hague. At the same time, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg is hearing an inter-state case against Russia concerning serious violations of human rights during the war in Ukraine.

“Accountability for crimes committed in connection with Russia's aggression against Ukraine is a high priority for Sweden. Sweden has therefore chosen to participate in several of the court cases currently pending to hold Russia accountable,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

Sweden is a party to the Genocide Convention and has chosen to participate in the case brought by Ukraine against Russia in the International Court of Justice earlier this year. A declaration of intervention submitted to the Court today sets out Sweden's view on the questions of interpretation raised in the case.

The inter-state case before the European Court concerns widespread and serious violations of human rights during the war in Ukraine. A key question in the case is the extent to which Russia can be held legally responsible under the European Convention on Human Rights for events on Ukrainian territory. Yesterday, the Government decided that Sweden should request leave to intervene in the case as a third party.

In both cases, Sweden will put forward positions that are in line with those of Ukraine. For Sweden, it is of fundamental importance that international law is respected, that accountability for acts of aggression is ensured and that any potential war crimes are investigated. Deliberate attacks on civilians and civilian objects are contrary to the laws of war. Human rights and fundamental freedoms apply even in wartime and must always be protected.

Published 09 September 2022



Government approves SEK 500 million to Ukraine for reconstruction and humanitarian support

The Government has approved another SEK 500 million to support Ukraine in accordance with what the Prime Minister told Ukraine's minister for foreign affairs when he visited Stockholm on 29 August. The funds will be used for the reconstruction of Ukraine, humanitarian procurements and transport of Ukrainian wheat.

“Sweden has supported Ukraine for many years – from the time of its independence to February this year, this support has amounted to approximately SEK 4 billion. Since Russia's full-scale invasion on 24 February, that support has been more than doubled through a number of decisions concerning another SEK 5.2 billion thus far for military support, humanitarian support, financial guarantees, reform support, civilian operations and reconstruction support,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

Following this decision, Sweden will provide increased support for the impending reconstruction process, including sustainable management of destroyed infrastructure. Sweden will also be responsible for coordinating waste management and recycling during the reconstruction of Ukraine – a request made by President Zelenskyy when Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson visited Kyiv in July.

In addition, Sweden will help with procurement funding and the delivery of Ukrainian wheat to countries most at risk of widespread starvation. The initiative aims at supporting the country's economy – and thus its independence – and the implementation of the agreement regarding the

export of Ukrainian grain from ports in the Black Sea. Sweden will cover the costs for the purchase of at least 40 000 tonnes of wheat that will be transported by sea from Ukraine.

“By purchasing 40 000 tonnes of wheat and then shipping it, Sweden is helping to mitigate the already great human suffering that Russia’s aggression has exacerbated for millions of people who suffer from hunger in other parts of the world. This will reduce the acute risk of starvation. It will also strengthen Ukraine’s economy and its independence,” says Minister for Development Cooperation Matilda Ernkrans.

Ukraine was a crucial exporter of grain before Russia’s invasion. Millions of tonnes of grain are currently stuck in Ukraine following the invasion, which has had a serious impact on Ukraine’s economy and the already acute hunger crisis in the world. Fifty million people in 45 countries are already on the brink of starvation. In July, Ukraine and Russia agreed to resume grain exports from ports in the Black Sea.

The purchase and transport of Ukrainian wheat will take place via the UN World Food Programme (WFP) and be delivered to countries that are most at risk of starvation, such as Afghanistan, Ethiopia and Yemen. Since the agreement was made, the WFP has made one delivery of Ukrainian grain on humanitarian grounds. Thanks to this decision, further transports will now be possible.

Published 02 September 2022



Government Offices of Sweden

Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson to receive Ukrainian Minister for Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba

Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson will receive Ukrainian Minister for Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba, who will be visiting Stockholm on 29 August.

During their meeting Ms Andersson and Mr Kuleba will discuss matters such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Swedish support to Ukraine, Ukraine's EU accession process and the country's reconstruction.

Minister for foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba will also meet with Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde and Minister for International Development Cooperation Matilda Ernkrans during the visit.

Media programme

09.15: Photo opportunity when Ms Andersson receives Mr Kuleba at Björnen

08.30–09.00: Admittance and security check for photographers via Kopparporten, Rödbodgatan 6

09.50: Joint press conference with Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde and Minister for Foreign Affairs Dmytro Kuleba. Language: English

09.10–09.30: Admittance and security check for journalists via Kopparporten, Rödbodgatan 6

Advance registration to attend the photo opportunity and press conference is required. Please send an email to Nina Kefi by 07.00 on Monday, 29 August

(see Press contacts below).

Published 28 August 2022



Ann Linde presents new 2022 Statement of Foreign Policy

On 10 June, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde will present a new Statement of Foreign Policy in the Riksdag. A Statement of Foreign Policy was presented on 16 February this year. In light of the new security environment, the Riksdag and the Government decided that a new Statement of Foreign Policy and debate are needed.

“Russia’s war has created a new and more dangerous reality for Europe and Sweden. Continued support to Ukraine and continued sanctions against Russia and Belarus are our most important contributions to bringing an end to this ruthless war” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

Sweden’s foreign policy presented at the foreign policy debate in February this year remains largely unchanged.

“We have a long history of standing up for international law, human rights and gender equality. This will be our future too,” says Ms Linde.

Ms Linde will deliver the Statement of Foreign Policy in the Riksdag at 9.00 on 10 June and she will be available to the media in the Riksdag at 14.00. Please contact Ms Linde’s press secretary for further information.



Sweden re-launches research partnership for increased support to the environment, climate and security

A research partnership was re-launched 18 May for the environment, climate and security. Called the Stockholm Hub on Environment, Climate and Security, it combines the strengths of four world-leading Swedish research institutes in the environment, climate and security area. The hub will receive more funding for its continuing work to promote knowledge development and policy dialogue.

The effects of climate change, in combination with environmental damage and declining biodiversity, have major implications for the planet's natural resources and the human environment. More and more people will have to share fewer and fewer resources. Extreme weather events are putting people's livelihoods at risk. Consequently, the risk of conflicts is increasing, and preventive efforts are becoming more important.

“For years, Sweden has prioritised highlighting the links between the climate and security, and we have contributed to important steps being taken in the UN, OSCE and EU. We need to continue to improve our understanding of the links between these issues to prevent geopolitical competition for natural resources and avoid new conflicts,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

“The countries that are most vulnerable and exposed to climate change and environmental damage are often developing countries, even if we are all affected. This research partnership is one step in providing the best support to the most vulnerable countries through evidence-based analysis and

dialogue,” says Minister for International Development Cooperation Matilda Ernkrans.

“Stockholm has become a hub for research on the challenges facing peace and security in the wake of the environmental and climate crisis. This research partnership is aimed at inspiring and supporting Sweden in our leading role in multilateral efforts to find and win support for sustainable solutions together with our partners,” says Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Chair Jan Eliasson.

The Stockholm Hub on Environment, Climate and Security is a partnership between the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) and the Stockholm Resilience Centre (SRC). Taking part in the re-launch of the partnership were Ms Linde, Ms Ernkrans, Mr Eliasson, the heads of the four institutes, and the heads and high-level representatives of a number of other Swedish ministries, government agencies and institutes, including Sida and the Folke Bernadotte Academy. Ongoing funding will be provided by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Published 19 May 2022



Government Offices of Sweden

Media invitation: Result of security policy discussions to be presented

On 16 March this year, the Government initiated discussion with the parties of the Riksdag concerning the changed security situation following Russia's aggression against Ukraine. The result of these discussions will be presented at a press briefing on Friday 13 May.

The press briefing will be attended by Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde, Minister for Defence Peter Hultqvist, Kenneth G. Forslund (Social Democratic Party), Hans Wallmark (Moderate Party), Pål Jonsson (Moderate Party), Aron Emilsson (Sweden Democrats), Kerstin Lundgren (Centre Party), Håkan Svenneling (Left Party), Mikael Oscarsson (Christian Democrat Party), Allan Widman (Liberal Party) and Maria Ferm (Green Party). The press conference will be held in Swedish.

Published 12 May 2022



Sweden increases support to International Criminal Court war crimes investigations

Russia's violent aggression against Ukraine is the worst in Europe since the Second World War. Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde announced that Sweden will increase its support to the International Criminal Court by SEK 5 million.

The war crimes in Ukraine have dramatically increased demands on the International Criminal Court (ICC). Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde pledged a SEK 5 million increase in Swedish support to the ICC in a meeting on Monday morning with ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan.

- The alarming reports we're receiving of executions, rape and pillaging of civilian property in Bucha and other cities suggest a pattern of systematic violations and abuses, and disregard for the laws of war. International crimes must be investigated and those responsible brought to account. The ICC needs the full support of the international community, says Ms Linde.

Sweden and the EU support the ICC as a pillar of the international architecture that was established to uphold respect for international law and the rules-based international order. Sweden is joined by 40 other States in the decision to refer the situation in Ukraine to the ICC in The Hague. The ICC Prosecutor has opened an investigation into international crimes in Ukraine.

In addition to the SEK 5 million in new support, Sweden had earlier decided on an additional SEK 2 million to the ICC after the outbreak of war. The support goes to a newly established trust fund to respond to the urgent resource needs of the Office of the Prosecutor and make it possible to effectively manage all the situations under investigation or legal proceedings.

Sweden also contributes EUR 2.5 million in support annually to the ICC. Moreover, the Swedish Prosecution Authority and the Swedish Police Authority take active measures to provide the ICC with national experts.

Published 12 April 2022



Sweden hosts UN conference on deteriorating humanitarian crisis in Yemen

Sweden, together with Switzerland and the UN, is hosting an international pledging conference for Yemen on 16 March. The aim is to mobilise continued support to the UN-led humanitarian response in Yemen, which faces growing challenges due to the war in Ukraine. UN Secretary-General António Guterres will open the conference and Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde will represent Sweden. UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will also take part.

Yemen is currently suffering one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. More than 23 million people are in need of help and protection, as the situation has deteriorated due to intensified fighting and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Due to the war in Ukraine, prices for vital foods and fuel are rising, resulting in a dramatic increase in the cost of the humanitarian response. While Sweden and the international community join forces to respond to the acute humanitarian situation in Ukraine, engagement in other humanitarian crises such as the one in Yemen must continue.

“The situation in Yemen is acute. We must do everything we can to alleviate the suffering. Millions of people are on the brink of famine, and many are at risk of dying. A concerted effort is needed to gather resources so that acute life-saving efforts can continue,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

This is the fifth year that Sweden and Switzerland co-host the annual pledging conference. UN Secretary-General António Guterres will lead the conference , together with Ms Linde and President of the Swiss Federation and head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs Ignazio Cassis, and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths. UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie will share her impressions from her travels in Yemen last week.

In conjunction with the pledging conference, Sweden and Switzerland will host a side event on the role of women in the humanitarian response, and Minister for International Development Cooperation Matilda Ernkrans will deliver the opening address. Participants include UNICEF’s Executive Director Catherine Russell and leading women representatives from Yemeni civil society.

“Humanitarian organisations in Yemen are working in a very difficult environment. We want to highlight the particular challenges facing women humanitarian staff and the important work they carry out there,” says Ms Ernkrans.

The pledging conference will be streamed on a live webcast on [UN Web TV](#) on 16 March at 14.30. The side event on the role of Yemeni women will be streamed live on [Youtube](#) on 16 March at 12.45.

[Read more about the conference and side event.](#)

[Press release from OCHA: Donors Meet to Pledge Support for Humanitarian Response in Yemen](#)

Published 16 March 2022



Government Offices of Sweden

Ann Linde to present the 2022 Statement of Foreign Policy

Today, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde will present the Government's Statement of Foreign Policy in the Riksdag. This year's Statement of Foreign Policy is Ms Linde's third as Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The Statement, which summarises the Government's foreign policy priorities for 2022, contains a number of focus areas.

“The security situation has deteriorated. Russia's increasingly confrontational rhetoric and military activities are unacceptable. Standing up for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity is essential for the security of Europe as a whole,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

During Sweden's term as Chair of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe last year, important results were achieved, including through the decision concerning the climate and security.

“The climate is of critical importance to our security. We must take climate-related security threats extremely seriously,” says Ann Linde.

Ms Linde will deliver the Statement of Foreign Policy in the Riksdag at 09.00 on 16 February, and she will be available to the media in the Riksdag at 13.30. Please contact her press secretary for further information.

Published 16 February 2022



Government Offices of Sweden

Sweden joins international Media Freedom Coalition

Sweden has joined the global Media Freedom Coalition (MFC). Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde will represent Sweden at the MFC's Third Global Conference for Media Freedom, which will take place in Tallinn on 9–10 February.

“It is with pleasure that I can announce that Sweden has joined the Media Freedom Coalition. The negative trend in recent years of intimidation and harassment of journalists is a threat to democracy. Sweden has a long tradition of standing up for freedom of expression and freedom of the press internationally,” says Ms Linde.

“As the minister responsible for media and democracy, I see the value in exchanging experiences internationally on issues relating to freedom of the press and freedom of expression. This is a shared concern and I therefore welcome Sweden's membership of the Media Freedom Coalition,” says Minister for Culture Jeanette Gustafsdotter.

The MFC was founded in 2019 at the initiative of the United Kingdom. The MFC currently has 50 members.

Members of the MFC have signed the Global Pledge on Media Freedom, a written commitment to improving media freedom domestically and working together internationally, including by taking action when journalists or other media actors are threatened, and working for accountability when media freedom is curtailed.

Published 10 February 2022



Ann Linde to lead Ministerial Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament

The fifth Ministerial Meeting of the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament will be held on Tuesday 14 December. Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde will chair the meeting together with Germany's Federal Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, who will come to Stockholm for the first time in her new role.

“The risk of nuclear weapons being used is greater than it has been for a long time, and nuclear disarmament is a prerequisite for safeguarding humankind and our common security,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

The Ministerial Meeting on Nuclear Disarmament, which will be held in hybrid format, is an important opportunity for Ms Linde and her colleagues from Argentina, Canada, Ethiopia, Finland, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, South Korea and Switzerland to stress the importance of nuclear disarmament and to discuss the latest developments in the area. The countries participating in the Ministerial Meeting are all part of the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament.

“The Stockholm Initiative plays an important role in putting pressure on nuclear-weapon states to take steps towards disarmament and proposing constructive ways forward. It is particularly important that progress can be made in connection with the upcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which is the most important framework for disarmament and non-proliferation,” says Ms Linde.

Launched by the Swedish Government in 2019, the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament gathers sixteen countries from different parts of the world. Thus far, some 20 additional countries have backed the Stockholm

Initiative's proposals to promote disarmament and to reduce the risk of nuclear weapons being used.

The ambition is that the ministers at the meeting can reaffirm their strong commitment and agree on joint initiatives in the coming weeks.

The media will be welcomed to a press conference with Ms Linde, Ms Baerbock and Norway's Minister of Foreign Affairs Anniken Huitfeldt on Tuesday 14 December at 16.15.

Additional information on the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament is available [here](#).

Published 13 December 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

Change of government, 30 November 2021

Today in the Riksdag, Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson announced the ministers who will serve in the Government. The change of government takes place at a Council of State at the Royal Palace presided over by His Majesty the King. The Council of State begins at 13.00.

Sweden's new Government consists of the Prime Minister and 22 ministers.

Prime Minister's Office

Magdalena Andersson, Prime Minister

Hans Dahlgren, Minister for EU Affairs

Ministry of Employment

Eva Nordmark, Minister for Employment and Gender Equality

Johan Danielsson, Minister for Housing and Deputy Minister for Employment

Ministry of Finance

Mikael Damberg, Minister for Finance

Max Elger, Minister for Financial Markets

Ida Karkiainen, Minister for Public Administration

Ministry of Defence

Peter Hultqvist, Minister for Defence

Ministry of Infrastructure

Tomas Eneroth, Minister for Infrastructure

Khashayar Farmanbar, Minister for Energy and Digital Development

Ministry of Justice

Morgan Johansson, Minister for Justice and Home Affairs

Anders Ygeman, Minister for Integration and Migration

Ministry of Culture

Jeanette Gustafsdotter, Minister for Culture

Ministry of the Environment

Annika Strandhäll, Minister for Climate and the Environment

Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation

Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson, Minister for Business, Industry and Innovation

Anna-Caren Säterberg, Minister for Rural Affairs

Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Lena Hallengren, Minister for Health and Social Affairs

Ardalan Shekarabi, Minister for Social Security

Ministry of Education and Research

Anna Ekström, Minister for Education

Lina Axelsson Kihlblom, Minister for Schools

Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Ann Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Anna Hallberg, Minister for Foreign Trade and Nordic Affairs

Matilda Ernkrans, Minister for International Development Cooperation

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Published 30 November 2021



Minister for Foreign Affairs to host OSCE Ministerial Council in Stockholm

On 2–3 December, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde will host 56 of her foreign minister colleagues in Stockholm at the annual OSCE Ministerial Council.

The Council will be held in Stockholm as Sweden is Chair of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 2021. The participants will include foreign ministers from North America, Europe and Central Asia, including Russia and the United States. The meeting will be held at a time of major security policy challenges.

“Cooperation within the OSCE has an important role to play in identifying sustainable solutions to crises and conflicts that also impact security in Sweden’s neighbourhood. The common principles and commitments of the OSCE participating States are more important than ever in terms of addressing the challenges in our region of the world and preventing new crises and conflicts from arising,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

The OSCE Ministerial Council is an important opportunity for the foreign ministers from the 57 OSCE participating States to meet and discuss a wide range of issues facing the region. The important recurring issues include the political crises and unresolved conflicts in the OSCE region, not least the developments in and around Ukraine, the southern Caucasus and Moldova. As Chair, Sweden is working to make the Council a catalyst to motivate participating States to make stronger commitments on priority issues such as women’s economic empowerment and climate and security.



Government intends to open embassy in Dublin and consulate-general in San Francisco

The Government today decided to strengthen Sweden's presence in Ireland and the US, and intends to open an embassy in Dublin and a consulate-general in San Francisco. The Government has also strengthened Sweden's presence in Ouagadougou and La Paz. As part of a regular review of Sweden's missions abroad, the Government will also close the embassies in Angola and Peru.

Ireland is an important partner for Sweden in the EU, bilaterally and multilaterally. Sweden will therefore strengthen its presence in Ireland for political agency and increased trade and investment exchange.

“A stronger Swedish presence in both Ireland and the US will create new opportunities for Swedish foreign policy and our promotion activities to make an impact. Reopening an Embassy in Dublin has been eagerly awaited – Ireland is an important partner for Sweden, not least in light of the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the EU,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

Establishing a consulate-general in San Francisco will create new opportunities for trade promotion and promotion of Sweden on the US west coast and will support Swedish companies with matchmaking activities in tomorrow's technologies and the cultural and creative industries.

“A consulate-general in San Francisco will strengthen Sweden's presence on the US west coast and improve our opportunities to conduct active trade promotion and promotion of Sweden. The business sector in particular has looked forward to the opening the consulate-general as it will facilitate new

partnerships for Swedish companies in the area of green technologies and new innovations,” says Minister for Foreign Trade and Nordic Affairs Anna Hallberg.

The Government has already upgraded two missions abroad – one in Africa and one in Latin America – to full embassies under the leadership of an ambassador. These are the missions in Ouagadougou and La Paz, whose positions have now been reinforced.

“I am pleased that we have been able to strengthen our diplomatic relations in Africa and Latin America. Our embassies provide us with important tools to help combat poverty and support climate transition, and to push demands on democracy, human rights and women’s rights,” says Minister for International Development Cooperation Per Olsson Fridh.

The changes are one step in the continuous adaptation made by the organisation abroad in relation to changes around the world, altered requirements and needs, and the budgetary situation, to create the best possible conditions to implement Sweden’s foreign policy and promote Swedish interests abroad. This is a constant process of change in which Sweden sometimes opens or closes embassies and consulates.

Sweden has good bilateral relations with both Angola and Peru, which include close cooperation in areas such as trade. These relations will continue to be safeguarded, preserved and developed. In the future, this will take place in other forms, as the embassies themselves will be closed.

The missions abroad affected by today’s decision may open or close at different times, depending on the situation of each mission. All changes are planned to take place in the second half of 2022.

Published 03 November 2021



NATO Secretary General to visit Sweden and Finland

On 25–27 October, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the NAC – NATO’s principal political decision-making body – will visit Sweden and Finland which are partners to NATO.

The North Atlantic Council (NAC), the principal political decision-making body within NATO, where every member country is represented by an ambassador, conducts a number of international visits every year. The NAC is chaired by Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. NAC visits are made to member countries of the Alliance and to partner countries. A NAC visit to Sweden and Finland will take place on 25–27 October. The visit will begin in Finland on 25 October and continue in Sweden on 26–27 October.

The programme includes discussions on security developments in Finland’s and Sweden’s neighbourhood and on the countries’ close partnership with NATO. The visit will also highlight the close security cooperation between Finland and Sweden, not least in the defence area. It will also offer an insight into Sweden’s efforts to enhance its military and civil defence within the total defence framework.

“I am delighted that I will have the opportunity next week to welcome NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the NATO countries’ ambassadors to Sweden. Our partnership is an important part of Sweden’s security and defence policy, and the visit is a natural part of this partnership. The visit gives Sweden and Finland an opportunity to share our views on the situation in our neighbourhood, our close bilateral cooperation and security developments more broadly,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde, who will host the visit to Sweden.

“The security situation in our part of Europe has deteriorated over time. This is why we have shifted from international operations to national defence. Sweden’s defence policy rests on two pillars: increased national military

capabilities and deepened military cooperation with other countries and organisations. Our cooperation with Finland and Sweden's and Finland's partnership with NATO contribute to stability, predictability and increased security," says Minister for Defence Peter Hultqvist.

The programme also includes meetings with HM The King, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven, the Riksdag, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Minister for Defence and the Minister for Home Affairs. The Delegation will also visit SWENEX – the Swedish naval exercise, which Finland is participating in and is an example of the enhanced cooperation between Sweden and Finland. Finnish Minister of Defence Antti Kaikkonen will take part in this segment of the programme.

A number of media activities will take place in connection with the visit. A press invitation to these activities will be issued on Monday 25 October.

Published 20 October 2021



Ministry for Foreign Affairs lifts pandemic-related advice against travel

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs' advice against non-essential travel to every country in the world was introduced on 14 March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was the first time a decision on advice against travel had applied to the whole world. As the situation has improved, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has successively lifted the advice against travel to a number of countries, primarily in Europe. With today's decision, the pandemic-related advice against travel to the rest of the world will be lifted as of 1 October.

“The advice against travel to every country in the world was an extraordinary measure in a difficult and unpredictable time. The ambition has always been to lift the advice against travel as soon as possible and our assessment is that we have reached that point. However, it is important to remember that the pandemic is far from over, which will still affect travel,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs decided to lift the advice against travel because the global pandemic situation has improved, and many countries have lifted their restrictions. Sweden has a high vaccination rate, and travellers and the travel industry have adapted to the new situation.

“Travellers still have a major responsibility to find out for themselves what applies at their travel destination and follow the rules and recommendations that are in place,” says Ms Linde.

Even without broad pandemic-related advice against travel in place, many countries still have restrictions that can affect travel, such as requiring a mask or the presentation of a negative PCR test or vaccination certificate. Some countries still have an entry ban in place for foreign travellers. In general, it is easier to travel if you are fully vaccinated against COVID-19. The Public Health Agency of Sweden recommends that unvaccinated international travellers get tested when they return to Sweden.

Embassy travel information for each country is available on swedenabroad.se and in the UD Resklar app. This includes information on any conditions? for entry or reference to where this information can be found.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs remains prepared to reintroduce pandemic-related advice against travel to countries or regions if the situation deteriorates significantly. The Ministry's decisions on advice against travel for reasons other than the pandemic are not affected by today's decision and remain in effect. You can find the countries and regions to which the Ministry for Foreign Affairs advises against travel for security reasons via the link under Shortcuts.

Published 24 September 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde to attend UN General Assembly

Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde are travelling to New York for the opening of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on 21 September 2021.

In connection with UNGA, Mr Löfven will take part in meetings on the climate crisis, work to address the global pandemic, child labour and youth issues. Mr Löfven will also meet representatives from Jewish organisations ahead of the Malmö Forum, discuss the green transition with representatives from the business sector, meet with civil society representatives and have bilateral meetings with the UN Secretary-General and other heads of state and government who are present in New York.

Ms Linde's participation will focus on Sweden's role in conflicts and crises, such as those in Yemen and Afghanistan, as well as disarmament and humanitarian issues. Ms Linde will take part in or host meetings on the women, peace and security agenda, Sweden's feminist foreign policy, democracy and gender equality/HBTQI issues. She will also have bilateral meetings with her visiting counterparts and UN representatives.

Mr Löfven and Ms Linde will also honour the victims of the terror attack on 11 September 2001.

Published 20 September 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

Yemen's Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Ahmed Awad Bin Mubarak visiting Stockholm

Yemen's Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Ahmed Awad Bin Mubarak is visiting Stockholm on 9–10 September for talks on the situation in Yemen and Sweden's support to the international peace efforts.

“The situation in Yemen is extremely serious. The visit of Dr Bin Mubarak is an important opportunity to discuss the crisis and how Sweden and other countries can contribute to a positive change in the conflict. The visit follows on from my trip to Yemen earlier this year and is a continuation of Sweden's strong engagement in the peace efforts,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

During the visit, the ministers will discuss UN efforts for new talks between the parties to end the conflict, as well as the need of more international support to the Yemeni people. On 5 September, Swedish diplomat Hans Grundberg took office as UN Special Envoy for Yemen and is now leading UN efforts for a political solution to the conflict.

During the visit, Dr Bin Mubarak will also meet with Minister for International Development Cooperation Per Olsson Fridh, State Secretary Karin Wallensteen, the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, Sida and the Folke Bernadotte Academy. It is the first visit of a Yemeni minister to Sweden since 2018, when Sweden hosted the UN-led talks between the parties which resulted in the ‘Stockholm Agreement’.

The Yemeni conflict has caused the world's largest humanitarian crisis in which two thirds of the population – 21 million people – depend on humanitarian assistance. More international financing for the UN's humanitarian efforts in Yemen is needed during the year. This will be discussed at the meeting with Mr Fridh.

“We are seeing a growing risk of widespread starvation in the country. More countries need to do more to keep the UN’s life-saving measures in place. Sweden and Switzerland co-hosted the UN’s pledging event for Yemen in March, during which USD 1.7 billion was pledged for the UN’s humanitarian activities, but more is needed. We will also discuss how a combination of humanitarian aid, development initiatives and diplomatic support can pave the way for peace,” says Mr Fridh.

Published 09 September 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

Sweden's new Government

Today in the Riksdag, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven announced the ministers who will serve in the Government. The change of government will take place at a Council of State at the Royal Palace presided over by His Majesty The King. The Council of State will begin at 14.15.

Sweden's new Government consists of the Prime Minister and 21 ministers.

Prime Minister's Office

Prime Minister

Stefan Löfven

Minister for EU Affairs

Hans Dahlgren

Ministry of Employment

Minister for Employment

Eva Nordmark

Minister for Gender Equality and Housing, with responsibility for urban development, anti-segregation and anti-discrimination

Märta Stenevi

Ministry of Finance

Minister for Finance

Magdalena Andersson

Minister for Public Administration

Lena Micko

Minister for Financial Markets and Deputy Minister for Finance

Åsa Lindhagen

Ministry of Defence

Minister for Defence

Peter Hultqvist

Ministry of Infrastructure

Minister for Infrastructure

Tomas Eneroth

Minister for Energy and Digital Development

Anders Ygeman

Ministry of Justice

Minister for Justice and Migration

Morgan Johansson

Minister for Home Affairs

Mikael Damberg

Ministry of Culture

Minister for Culture and Democracy, with responsibility for sport

Amanda Lind

Ministry of the Environment

Minister for Environment and Climate, and Deputy Prime Minister

Per Bolund

Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation

Minister for Business, Industry and Innovation

Ibrahim Baylan

Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Minister for Health and Social Affairs

Lena Hallengren

Minister for Social Security

Ardalan Shekarabi

Ministry of Education and Research

Minister for Education

Anna Ekström

Minister for Higher Education and Research

Matilda Ernkrans

Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ann Linde

Minister for International Development Cooperation

Per Olsson Fridh

Minister for Foreign Trade and Nordic Affairs

Anna Hallberg

Published 09 July 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

Ann Linde presented the 2021 Statement of Foreign Policy

Today, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde presented the Government's Statement of Foreign Policy in the Riksdag. This year's Statement of Foreign Policy was Ms Linde's second as Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The Statement, which summarises the Government's foreign policy priorities for 2021, contained a number focus areas.

“The focus of this year's Statement of Foreign Policy is on the Swedish OSCE Chairpersonship and delivering and developing the initiatives that have already been launched. We are deepening the Drive for Democracy, while the work on the feminist foreign policy and the fight against organised crime continues,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

Naturally, the Statement was also shaped by the current pandemic.

The Statement of Foreign Policy was presented in the Riksdag at 09.00 on 24 February.

Published 24 February 2021



Ministry for Foreign Affairs extends advice against travel

Today, 26 January, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs decided to extend its advice against all non-essential travel to all countries outside the EU/EEA/Schengen area. The decision remains in effect until 15 April 2021.

On 14 March 2020, the MFA decided to advise against non-essential travel to all countries due to the extensive spread of the COVID-19 virus and its impact on the conditions for international travel. Since then, the MFA has lifted this advice for a number of countries in the EU/EEA/Schengen area.

The MFA today decided to extend its advice against non-essential travel to countries outside the EU/EEA/Schengen area. The decision remains in effect until 15 April 2021.

It is important to carefully consider whether now is the right time to travel. Many countries still have closed borders or far-reaching entry and exit restrictions, quarantine provisions and curfews. There is great uncertainty and in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences, it is not possible to predict when it will be possible to travel safely and freely around the world.

All Swedes who nonetheless decide to travel abroad should follow these three guidelines: read up when planning the trip, follow local regulations at the destination and plan for the journey home. This is now also clarified further on our travel app UD Resklar and [swedenabroad.se](https://www.swedenabroad.se)



Government Offices of Sweden

Chairperson-in-Office Ann Linde presented Sweden's 2021 priorities to Permanent Council

Over the coming year, the Swedish Chairpersonship will do its part to ensure that the OSCE can make a real difference on the ground and defend the principles on which the Organization was founded, said OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden Ann Linde in her virtual address to the Permanent Council today.

“In a situation where multilateral co-operation and international law are increasingly being challenged, and our agreements and instruments to strengthen security are being questioned, we need to remind ourselves why we designed them in the first place,” said Linde. “Sweden is convinced that multilateral co-operation is the best way to address our common challenges. Sweden has shown that we are ready to shoulder our responsibility for the multilateral system.”

Elaborating on the Chairpersonship's priorities, she said they will focus on the principles and commitments shared by all 57 participating States, defending the European security order and upholding the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security. Political and economic security, human rights, democracy, the rule of law and equality are interrelated and interconnected, she added.

“Through the shared commitments on which the OSCE was founded, the link between security and respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law is crystal clear,” said Linde. “Together we have declared all OSCE principles and commitments to be matters of immediate and legitimate concern to all participating States.”

“By holding each other accountable, we make sure that our commitments remain relevant. By honouring our commitments, we make sure that our region is safe. This is where the unique value of our organization lies.”

Conflict resolution efforts in the region is a high priority, Linde said, noting the ongoing conflicts and crises in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Belarus.

“Threats to international peace and security, as well as the suffering caused by conflicts, are simply unacceptable,” Linde said. “We therefore need to keep the resolution of the conflicts in our region at the top of our agenda.”

She said that the Chair will call for respect for international law in all conflicts and will back measures to mitigate the humanitarian consequences and advocate an inclusive approach. The Chair remains ready to engage directly with stakeholders and offers OSCE’s good offices to facilitate solutions, Linde added.

She underscored that the OSCE “is only as effective as we, the participating States, allow it to be” and called on participating States to “engage constructively” on the OSCE Unified Budget. She said the Chair stands “ready to do our part in leading negotiations.”

She stressed that achieving comprehensive security throughout the region requires meaningful inclusion and empowerment of women. Linde emphasized that as Chairperson-in-Office, she would place special emphasis on strengthening gender equality in all aspects of the Organization’s work. She also raised the strong and

Published 15 January 2021



Changes to Sweden's presence in Cambodia

The Government decided today that the Embassy of Sweden in Phnom Penh will be closed by the end of 2021. Sweden has good relations with Cambodia. These will now continue in new ways.

The intention is to concurrently accredit the Ambassador in Bangkok to Cambodia, and the activities of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) will be transferred to the Embassy in Bangkok. The MFA will no longer have any staff stationed in Cambodia when the Embassy has been closed. Development cooperation will continue to be carried out by Sida.

These changes are part of the MFA's continuous adaptation of its organisation abroad to external changes and new monitoring and service requirements. This is a constant process of change, and involves Sweden sometimes opening or closing embassies and consulates.

Published 26 November 2020



Nordic Foreign Ministers receive report on Nordic cooperation on foreign and security policy

On 30 October 2019, the foreign ministers of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden decided to task Mr. Björn Bjarnason of Iceland to prepare an independent report with non-binding proposals on how to further develop Nordic cooperation on foreign and security policy. This tasking marked ten years since Mr Thorvald Stoltenberg of Norway drafted a similar report presenting a range of recommendations of which a large share have already been implemented.

In the mandate, delivered to Mr. Bjarnason on 2 December 2019, he was requested to specifically focus on the scope for cooperation in addressing global climate change, addressing hybrid threats and cyber issues, and strengthening and reforming multilateralism and the rule-based international order. The mandate moreover stipulated that the report and the proposals should be ready by mid-year 2020. In his work he enjoyed the support of a reference group of experts and analysts from each of the five Nordic countries.

The Nordic Foreign Ministers express their appreciation to Mr. Bjarnason for his important work and look forward to studying the report's recommendations. They will formally discuss the concrete proposals at their meeting in Copenhagen in September during Denmark's presidency of the N5 cooperation.

The report is published online and can be [downloaded here](#).



Ann Linde and Åsa Lindhagen to participate in Global Pride

The virtual Global Pride festival kicks off on 27 June. Artists, politicians and activists from around the world will take part in the 26-hour livestream event.

- States and governments all have the same responsibility to respect and safeguard our human rights. And yet people around the world continue to be subjected to violence and discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

Ms Linde and Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Lindhagen have both contributed to the Global Pride programme via pre-recorded video greetings.

- This is a day to celebrate diversity and the right of every person to be proud of who they are, define their own identity and love whoever they like. Sweden remains a strong voice for human rights regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, says Ms Linde.

In her video greeting, Ms Lindhagen says:

- As authoritarian forces try to suppress human rights that have already been won, we must instead strengthen respect for human rights even further. Far too many LGBTI people are forced to hide who they are. As a bisexual person, I myself know how it feels, and my own country, Sweden, still has a great deal left to do. We will not rest until every LGBTI person in the world can live their life in freedom, says Ms Lindhagen.

LGBTI associations in more than 90 countries have contributed films to the virtual festival. These will be shown over a 26-hour period, interspersed with a number of major stage shows. Former US Vice President Joe Biden and Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau are among those taking part. As well as politicians, there will be appearances by musicians, drag queens and activists.

Ms Linde's and Ms Lindhagen's greetings will be available on government.se following the event.

Published 26 June 2020



The MFA has extended the advice against travel to countries outside the EU, the EEA and the Schengen area until 31 August, and will remove the advice against travel to a number of countries in the EU, the EEA and the Schengen area as of 30 June

There have been developments recently in the EU, the EEA and the Schengen area that have led to the easing of restrictions that had previously represented obstacles and risks to Swedish travellers. Therefore, as of 30 June, the MFA will remove the advice against non-essential travel to the following countries: Belgium, Croatia, France, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Portugal, Spain and Switzerland.

The reason that the advice against travel is being removed for these countries is that they have decided to open up for travellers from Sweden and the rest of the EU, which means that the uncertainty factors for Swedes are minimised. The decision to remove the advice against travel to these countries will apply as of 30 June 2020 until further notice.

For other countries in the EU, the EEA and the Schengen area, the advice against travel remains in place until 15 July.

The great uncertainty concerning global travel remains. Closed borders or far-reaching restrictions on possibilities to enter and leave countries, quarantine provisions and curfews remain a reality in large parts of the world. The disruption of international passenger traffic continues.

For travel to countries outside the EU, the EEA and the Schengen area, the advice against non-essential travel is therefore being extended to 31 August 2020.

In good time before this date, the MFA will provide information about whether the advice against travel will be changed, extended or removed.

The fact that the advice against travel is now being removed for certain European countries does not mean that the situation is back to normal. The situation remains uncertain and changeable, even in Europe. Individuals carry a great level of responsibility.

Every traveller should carefully consider their journey, prepare thoroughly, stay informed and follow the advice and instructions of local authorities when abroad.

In the same way as applies for travellers in Sweden, you should not travel if you have symptoms. Furthermore, travellers should be aware that there are a large number of local restrictions and rules and that they can quickly change. This could involve monitoring of people's temperatures upon entry, face mask requirements and social distancing rules, for example at restaurants, shopping centres and beaches.

For those opting to travel, it is important to point out that neither the MFA nor the Swedish authorities will be able to assist with transport to Sweden for people experiencing difficulties returning home as a consequence of the current situation.

Travellers are urged to maintain close contact with their travel operators and review their insurance cover. They should also download the MFA's Resklar app and continuously stay informed of the relevant embassy's travel information on the Sweden Abroad website.



Government Offices of Sweden

Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde presents Royal Order of the Polar Star to woman peacebuilder in Cyprus

To mark ten years of successful peacebuilding work in Cyprus, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde today held a virtual dialogue and meeting with Cyprus's religious leaders.

“They have shown that religion can bring people together instead of forcing them apart, and that Cyprus as a whole has to reflect both the Christian and Muslim presence,” says Ms Linde.

Cooperation between Muslim and Christian leaders broke down when the Cyprus conflict intensified in 1963. Contact was non-existent until the religious dialogue, supported by Sweden, was initiated ten years ago. By working together and supporting each other, Cyprus's religious leaders have been able to improve freedom of religion, which was neglected in the conflict, and demonstrate the importance of cooperation for making progress in the deadlocked conflict.

In connection with the dialogue, Ms Linde presented the Royal Order of the Polar Star (first class) to Salpy Eskidjian Weiderud, Executive Director of the Religious Track of the Cyprus Peace Process (RTCYPP). Ms Eskidjian Weiderud was awarded the Order for having given Sweden a political role and visibility in the Cyprus peace process and having promoted Sweden and Swedish culture.

“Salpy Eskidjian Weiderud is a unique peace mediator. For ten years she has been working intensively and tirelessly for peace and reconciliation. She is a very concrete example of the importance of women for peace processes. Her

work for dialogue, human rights and gender equality is nothing less than pioneering,” says Ms Linde.

The RTCYPP was initiated in 2010. It brings together religious leaders on the island with the aim of strengthening human rights, peace and reconciliation. The initiative is primarily funded by the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and Sweden participates through its Embassy in Nicosia.

Published 16 June 2020



Government Offices of Sweden

WikiGap makes internet more gender equal

In connection with International Women's Day on 8 March, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is conducting a worldwide campaign for the third year in a row to make the internet more equal. In parallel, edit-a-thons aimed at increasing the number of women on Wikipedia will be held in almost 30 countries. In Sweden, a WikiGap edit-a-thon will be held at the University of Gothenburg.

Wikipedia is the world's largest online and user-generated encyclopaedia. Its content influences and shapes readers' view of the world. But Wikipedia has a significant gender imbalance. Ninety per cent of the content is created by men, and there are four times as many articles about men as there are about women.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Wikimedia Sweden initiated WikiGap with the goal of making Wikipedia a more accurate reflection of our world. Since the initiative began in 2018, edit-a-thons have been held in more than 60 countries, resulting in more than 35 000 new and expanded Wikipedia articles about women actors, experts and role models in various fields.

“When women's contributions are not seen, it affects our gender equality and our democracy. Concrete efforts are needed to rectify the imbalances that exist, both in the real world and in the digital world,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

Sweden's feminist foreign policy is based on the ambition to strengthen women's and girls' rights, representation and resources. The WikiGap initiative is part of this policy and aims to improve the representation of women on Wikipedia.

The WikiGap event in Gothenburg on 6 March is being organised in

cooperation with Wikimedia Sweden and the University of Gothenburg. The theme is 'Historic women'.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Sweden's embassies will co-host WikiGap events with Wikimedia and local partners. WikiGap aims to provide a platform for volunteers who want to contribute to a more gender-equal internet. The theme is chosen by the organisers, but the participants are responsible for the texts they produce. During the event, the articles will not be written or edited by the missions abroad or the Ministry for Foreign Affairs; instead, this will be done by the those taking part in the edit-a-thons.

Read more about WikiGap at www.swemfa.se/wikigap

More information about WikiGap Gothenburg is available here: <https://hum.gu.se/om-fakulteten/oppna-evenemang/wikigap-humanisten>

Published 03 March 2020



Petra Lärke appointed head of the Task Force for Swedish Chair of the OSCE

The Government has today decided to appoint Petra Lärke as head of the Task Force that is to lead and plan Sweden's Chairmanship of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2021. She will take up her post on 2 March 2020.

The OSCE is a security policy cooperation body with 57 participating States. All European States plus the United States, Canada and central Asian countries participate in the OSCE on equal terms. The OSCE's activities are based on a broadly defined view of security that includes military arms control, human rights, rule of law and democracy. Sweden has been appointed to chair the OSCE in 2021.

“As Chair of the OSCE, Sweden will continue to work to restore respect for the principles upon which the European security order rests. Ms Lärke will have a key role in the prioritised work of strengthening democracy, human rights and gender equality during the Chairmanship,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

From 2 March, Ms Lärke will be responsible for initiating the Stockholm-based operations, while Ulrika Funered will continue to lead Sweden's Permanent Delegation to the OSCE in Vienna.

“I am pleased to have been entrusted with leading the preparations for and work during Sweden's Chairmanship of the OSCE. Sweden's Chairmanship is coming at a time of difficult challenges to the principles and commitments on which the OSCE is based. It will be an important, but probably challenging task,” says Ms Lärke.

Ms Lärke was most recently deputy head of the Department for European

Security Policy at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. She has previously been head of the Eastern Europe Group at the Department for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and worked at the Prime Minister's Office and in Brussels.

Published 27 February 2020



Government Offices of Sweden

Ann Linde presents the 2020 Statement of Foreign Policy

Today, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde is presenting the Government's Statement of Foreign Policy to the Riksdag. The Statement, which summarises the Government's foreign policy priorities for 2020, includes a new announcement on strengthened efforts to combat organised crime. Also notable in the Statement is a stronger focus on security in Europe ahead of Sweden assuming the role of Chair of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in 2021.

“My principal duty is to work for security in Sweden. International developments affect us, regardless of whether they involve security in our neighbourhood, climate change or the pushback against democracy. Organised crime is a good example of this, because it has clear international links,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

Another new announcement is that the Government is strengthening its focus on trade union rights abroad as part of its Drive for Democracy, launched last year in the Statement of Foreign Policy.

The Statement of Foreign Policy will be delivered in the Riksdag on 12 February at 9.00.

Published 12 February 2020



Government Offices of Sweden

Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde to attend ministerial meeting on shooting down of Flight PS752 over Iran

On Thursday 16 January, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde will travel to London to attend the International Coordination and Response Group for the families of the victims of Flight PS752. The meeting will bring together foreign ministers from the countries that lost residents in the aircraft crash in Iran on 8 January.

The meeting was called at the initiative of Canada and aims to coordinate measures for the countries affected by the shooting down of Flight PS752. In addition to Sweden and Canada, Afghanistan, the United Kingdom and Ukraine will also participate. The Dutch foreign minister will also participate to share the experience of the Netherlands following the shooting down of Flight MH17 over Ukraine.

“We will emphasise the importance of a full and transparent investigation into the shooting down of the aircraft and we expect the cooperation of Iranian authorities. We will also discuss support and compensation to relatives and the identification and repatriation of remains,” says Ms Linde.

Published 15 January 2020



Government Offices of Sweden

Robert Rydberg new State Secretary for Foreign Affairs – Annika Söder leaving to work in peace promotion

Today, the Government appointed Robert Rydberg, currently Sweden's Ambassador to Rome, as new State Secretary for Foreign Affairs at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Annika Söder, who has held the position for the past five years, is leaving to work in peace promotion and conflict resolution.

“I welcome Robert Rydberg to an eminent position at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and look forward to working closely with him. He is a clear leader with solid diplomatic experience from virtually every complex area that our foreign policy covers. Together, we will continue Sweden's successful work for democracy and peace, and continue to promote the benefits of equitable and gender-equal societies,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

Robert Rydberg is also Sweden's Ambassador to San Marino, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the UN World Food Programme and the UN International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

“I look forward to contributing the experience I have gained from my multifaceted service to enhance our Foreign Service. It is a top-class foreign service, and this is what we need in a world where interests and principles that are essential for us are coming under increasing pressure. It is particularly important that we safeguard strong European cooperation,” says Mr Rydberg.

Mr Rydberg has a law degree and an extensive career in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, where he was employed in 1984. His previous posts include

Ambassador to Israel and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and head of the Middle East and North Africa Department at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. He has worked at the Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations in New York and with the UN Security Council, in areas including European security policy and disarmament, and has been Chair of the EU Committee for Civilian Aspects of Crisis Management.

Former State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Annika Söder has been appointed President of the Board of the European Institute of Peace.

“I am looking forward to being able to engage fully and devote more time to this role. Work to promote conflict resolution, reconciliation, security and peacebuilding is more important than ever before,” says Ms Söder.

Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde has valued Ms Söder’s work highly.

“There is nothing dramatic about this. We decided in September with the change of foreign minister that she would remain during the transitional period. I would like to thank her most sincerely for her five years as State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and for sharing her invaluable experience,” says Ms Linde.

Published 11 December 2019



Government Offices of Sweden

Sweden appointed Chair of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2021

Sweden was today appointed Chair of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2021. The decision was taken unanimously by the OSCE's 57 participating States at the organisation's Ministerial Council in Bratislava, Slovakia, on Thursday.

Sweden was today appointed Chair of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2021. The decision was taken unanimously by the OSCE's 57 participating States at the organisation's Ministerial Council in Bratislava, Slovakia, on Thursday.

“I am honoured that Sweden has been entrusted to assume the role of Chair of the OSCE in 2021. The OSCE offers a unique platform for dialogue on peace and security in Europe. It is also an organisation that deals with issues that have a direct bearing on security in our region,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

The OSCE is a security policy cooperation body with 57 participating States. All European States plus the United States, Canada and central Asian countries participate in the OSCE on equal terms. The OSCE's activities are based on a broadly defined view of security that includes military arms control, human rights, legal certainty and democracy.

“As Chair, Sweden will continue to work to restore respect for the principles upon which the European security order rests. We will give priority to efforts to strengthen democracy, human rights and gender equality in all relevant forums,” says Ms Linde.

Slovakia, which currently holds the Chairmanship of the OSCE, will hand over the role to Albania on 1 January 2020. Sweden will in turn assume the Chairmanship in 2021.

Published 05 December 2019



New UN Ambassador

The Government today appointed Ambassador Anna Karin Eneström as new Head of the Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations (UN) in New York.

Ms Eneström is currently Deputy Head of the Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations. She has previously held the position of Director-General for Political Affairs at the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and has been Deputy Chef de Cabinet of the Office of the President of the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York. In addition, Ms Eneström has served at the Permanent Representation of Sweden to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, the Swedish Embassy in Nairobi and the Permanent Mission of Sweden to the United Nations in New York. She has also been Sweden's Ambassador in Islamabad and Kabul, and served as Sweden's representative to the Political and Security Committee (PSC) at the Permanent Representation of Sweden to the EU in Brussels.



Government Offices of Sweden

State Visit to India

The King and Queen of Sweden will pay a State Visit to India on 2–6 December 2019 at the invitation of President Ram Nath Kovind.

The Swedish Government will be represented by Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde, Minister for Business, Industry and Innovation Ibrahim Baylan and State Secretary at the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs Maja Fjaestad.

Some 50 Swedish companies – encompassing both large, well-established companies and start-ups – will take part, along with representatives of Swedish government agencies and universities, through the business delegation arranged by Business Sweden.

The aim of the State Visit is to further strengthen the good relations between Sweden and India, and to promote Swedish-Indian cooperation, including within the frameworks of the Joint Action Plan, the Innovation Partnership and existing memorandums of understanding. The visit affirms Sweden's willingness to be a key partner for India in its rapid development, and in efforts to tackle common social challenges in areas such as the climate/environment, infrastructure, research and health. The visit aims to enable increased trade and investment for Swedish and Indian companies in both directions.

The State Visit will last for five days and encompass New Delhi, Mumbai and the state of Uttarakhand.

The programme in brief

Sunday 1 December

The King and Queen arrive in New Delhi.

Monday 2 December

President Ram Nath Kovind and Ms Savita Kovind welcome the King and Queen at an official ceremony, followed by the laying of a wreath at Raj

Ghat, the memorial of Mahatma Gandhi's cremation. Meetings with President Kovind, Prime Minister Modi and External Affairs Minister Jaishankar will take place during the day. The King and Queen will also take part in a high-level dialogue on innovation with Swedish and Indian representatives from companies, government agencies and academia. They will also visit the Jama Masjid mosque and the Red Fort World Heritage site. The day will conclude with a state banquet at the President's official residence.

Tuesday 3 December

Climate and environmental issues and business issues will be discussed during the second day of the State Visit. The day will begin with the India-Sweden Business Summit, arranged by Business Sweden and the Confederation of Indian Industry. The Summit will offer Indian private and public actors the opportunity to meet Swedish companies and discuss business opportunities and cooperation. The King will then take part in a round-table discussion about Swedish and Indian efforts to reduce emissions and air pollution. In parallel, the Queen will visit the All India Institute for Medical Science (AIIMS) to discuss geriatric and dementia care in India. The Queen will later visit the UN office in India to learn about efforts to combat trafficking in human beings. The King and Queen will meet Indian alumni at a lunch hosted by the Swedish Institute. During the afternoon, the King and Queen will take part in the inauguration of the India-Sweden Business Leaders Roundtable. In the evening, the King and Queen will be the guests of honour at a major reception at the Embassy of Sweden.

Wednesday 4 December

On Wednesday the programme will continue in Mumbai, with the King and Queen arriving there in the morning. The King and Queen will take part in the world's largest beach clean-up project on Versova beach with the project's initiator and volunteers. In the afternoon, the King and Queen will visit the Door Step School, which gives marginalised children free schooling and homework support. This will be followed by an international Tekla workshop that aims to inspire young girls to explore technology. In the evening, the King will hold talks with senior Swedish and Indian business leaders. The evening will conclude with a reception hosted by the Swedish Consulate-General at the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya museum.

Thursday 5 December

The fourth day of the State Visit will continue in the state of Uttarakhand, with a visit to Rishikesh on the banks of the Ganges. There the King and

Queen will have the opportunity to talk to young environment and climate activists, along with the head of the Centre for Science and Environment, an NGO. This will be followed by a traditional ceremony by the holy river Ganges. The King and Queen will then take part, alongside the Indian Minister of Jal Shakti, responsible for water issues, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, in the inauguration of a sewage treatment plant in Haridwar. The plant is part of the national project to clean the river Ganges. In the afternoon and evening, the King and Queen will meet experts on nature conservation and sustainable forest management.

Friday 6 December

On Friday morning, the King and Queen will continue their meetings on nature conservation and biodiversity. They will also visit a Van Gujjar village to discuss and learn about the community's traditional farming and animal husbandry methods.

Ms Linde, Mr Baylan and Ms Fjaestad will take part in large parts of the programme. They will also engage in bilateral meetings and activities with representatives of the Indian Government.

Published 26 November 2019



Government Offices of Sweden

#GirlsTakeover – a global initiative to promote girls’ rights and highlight their agency

Within the context of Sweden’s feminist foreign policy, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs is taking part in the global #GirlsTakeover campaign. Through this campaign – an initiative of Plan International – girls all over the world will step into a leadership role on 11 October in connection with International Day of the Girl Child.

In 21 countries, Swedish missions abroad have invited girls from the local community to take part in their work for one day. At the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Stockholm, a girl will work alongside Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde on 11 October. On the same day in Stockholm, an international conference on girls’ rights organised by Plan International will also highlight the campaign.

- “As a group in society, girls are often doubly discriminated against – on the basis of both sex and age. We must break the pattern and focus on girls’ agency and leadership to ensure their rights and create democratic and sustainable societies,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

Despite discrimination, girls around the world are standing up against outdated traditions, norms and laws. Sweden wants to support them and increase their visibility.

In 2014, Sweden became the first country in the world to launch a feminist foreign policy. The aim is to strengthen rights, representation and resources for all women and girls. This policy is needed. No country has achieved full gender equality, advances are being challenged, and women and girls are still systematically subordinated in every part of the world. Sweden wants to see

an end to the injustices, ensure the full enjoyment of human rights for all women and girls, and make girls' agency and leadership visible. Follow the work on #GirlsTakeover.

Published 10 October 2019



Government Offices of Sweden

Joint Press Statement on the EU Arctic Forum

The European Union's long standing commitment to enhance sustainable international cooperation in the Arctic

Today, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden Ann Linde, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission Federica Mogherini and European Commissioner Karmenu Vella released the following statement on the EU Arctic Forum held in Umeå (Sweden):

In view of the challenges facing the Arctic due to global warming, the EU is strongly committed to helping the region adapt to climate change, protecting the environment and developing its economy in a sustainable way. We are delivering on this commitment in three practical ways: by investing in research and development, by protecting local ecosystems and biodiversity, and where appropriate, by building better infrastructure to connect the region to the mainland, including broadband connection.

The EU recognizes the need to work closely with national, regional and local authorities in the European Arctic in this regard. The EU emphasizes its commitment to facilitate Arctic stakeholder engagement in the European Arctic region.

With three EU Member States and two European Economic Area members being Arctic states, the EU has a strategic role and interest in the Arctic remaining a “low-tension–high cooperation” area. The EU promotes sustainable economic development in the Arctic region, based on the best available science and taking into account the impact on fragile ecosystems as well as the living conditions of local populations, in particular the indigenous peoples.

The EU is directly affected by climatic and environmental changes in the

Arctic, which profoundly alters living conditions in the Arctic and globally. Last week's Special Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) on oceans and the cryosphere has strongly reinforced the message that we need to limit global warming to 1.5°C. The EU is committed to reducing global greenhouse gas emissions and becoming a carbon-neutral economy by 2050.

The EU will continue to contribute to international and regional cooperation in the Arctic through enhanced work on climate action and environmental research, sustainable development, as well as concrete cooperation with Arctic states, institutions, indigenous peoples and local communities.

About the event

On 3-4 October, the Government of Sweden and the European Union are co-hosting the EU Arctic Forum in Umeå, Sweden. This two-day event gathers Ministers and other high-level representatives from Arctic countries and EU member states, senior officials from the European Commission and the European External Action Service, international organisations, business, science and local stakeholders to discuss developments in the Arctic. Part of the programme is the annual Arctic Indigenous Peoples' Dialogue. More than 600 participants from over 30 countries are attending the event. The 2019 EU Arctic Forum will mainly discuss international cooperation, the climate-environment-ocean nexus, sustainable investments, and connectivity. It will inform the EU's policy direction on Arctic issues post-2020.

The broad and senior level participation from Arctic stakeholders underscores the shared and longstanding commitment of the European Union and Sweden to the EU Arctic Policy.

[Event website](#)
[Programme](#)

Published 03 October 2019



Government Offices of Sweden

The Government to take part in opening of UN General Assembly 17–30 September

Next week, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven, Minister for Environment and Climate, and Deputy Prime Minister, Isabella Lövin, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde and Minister for International Development Cooperation Peter Eriksson will travel to New York for the opening of the UN General Assembly.

Sweden's priorities during the week are to stand up for international cooperation with focus on the UN, work to tackle the challenge of climate change, intensify implementation of the 2030 Agenda and contribute to finding solutions to conflicts and humanitarian crises, such as those in Yemen, Venezuela and Syria. The week is also an opportunity to highlight democracy and gender equality issues, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, and to continue work on disarmament and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Prime Minister Löfven will attend the opening of the General Assembly, take part in the Climate Action Summit where Sweden is co-chair of the industry track, and take part in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit. He will also attend an event celebrating the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In addition, Mr Löfven will take part in a roundtable discussion with US business executives and a conference entitled 'The Future of Work'.

Ms Lövin will take part in the Climate Action Summit, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit and the high-level meeting on universal health coverage. Ms Lövin will be in New York on 20–25 September.

Ms Linde will take part in the opening of the General Assembly, a high-level

event on climate and security and a high-level meeting on the elimination of nuclear weapons (Article IV, Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty). Ms Linde will also co-host a meeting on the situation in Yemen. In addition, she will host a meeting on women, peace and leadership and, together with South Korea, co-organise the annual dinner for female foreign ministers. Ms Linde will deliver Sweden's address in the General Assembly. Ms Linde will be in New York on 22–28 September.

Mr Eriksson will take part in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Summit, the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development and the High-level Review of the SAMOA Pathway, as well as meetings on Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria. In addition, his programme will focus on humanitarian issues, climate financing, women's rights, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Mr Eriksson will be in New York on 23–27 September.

All the ministers will also take part in a number of bilateral meetings with counterparts from other countries and UN representatives.

For more information and detailed programmes, please contact the relevant minister's press secretary.

Published 20 September 2019



Government Offices of Sweden

Statement delivered by Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde at the 10th NPT Review Conference General Debate United Nations New York

Check against delivery.

Mr President, dear colleagues,

Sweden associates itself with the statements of the European Union and Denmark on behalf of the Nordic countries. My remarks are made in a national capacity.

We meet here in New York against the backdrop of a severely deteriorated security environment. Sweden condemns in the strongest terms Russia's brutal and unprovoked aggression against Ukraine and reaffirms its unwavering support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. Russia's aggression and its threats to use nuclear weapons – which risks lowering the threshold of such use - are flagrant violations of international law, including the UN Charter. These actions stand in sharp contrast to the 3 January 2022 declaration by the leaders of the five Nuclear Weapon States reaffirming the central principle that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.

Mr President,

Russia's actions, the continuing expansion and modernization of nuclear arsenals, challenges to well-established norms and principles, the lack of transparency and restraint all give cause for great concern. In addition, Sweden remains deeply worried about regional proliferation challenges, in particular Iran's proliferation-sensitive nuclear activities and lacking cooperation with the IAEA, and the DPRK's nuclear and ballistic missiles

program.

Multilateralism remains our best chance to address these challenges and realize the objectives of the NPT, including our common goal of a world free from nuclear weapons.

As negotiations get underway we must bear in mind that Treaty obligations and commitments remain valid and should be fully implemented. There can be no backtracking.

Mr President,

While nuclear weapon states bear a special responsibility, all states can help drive progress for nuclear disarmament.

The Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament was launched by Sweden together with fifteen other Non-Nuclear Weapon States in 2019 to mobilize political support for concrete progress on disarmament.

The Stockholm Initiative has since developed 22 disarmament-related proposals - “stepping stones”. These include steps to reduce nuclear arsenals, reduce the role of nuclear weapons in doctrines and policies, proceed with negotiations on a treaty prohibiting fissile material production for nuclear weapons, support efforts to develop multilateral nuclear disarmament verification capacities and strengthen negative security assurances. Another crucial step would be the long overdue entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

In the current security context, efforts to reduce the risk of nuclear weapons use are more urgent than ever. While no substitute for disarmament, risk reduction can decrease tensions, increase trust and dispel misconceptions. The Nuclear Risk Reduction Package presented by the Stockholm Initiative puts forward concrete measures and a process for addressing risk reduction within the NPT framework.

If implemented, our proposals can contribute to make a real difference. They are ambitious in scope, yet realistic in nature. I am proud to report that 24 state parties have aligned themselves with our working papers and I invite you to support our proposals.

Mr President,

The IAEA plays an indispensable role in the service of the NPT. We owe it

to the Agency to provide it with the best possible inspection tools, including by universally applying the Additional Protocol, an integral part of the IAEA safeguards system under the NPT. Sweden supports the Agency's broad technical cooperation with the Member States, including through the Peaceful Uses Initiative.

Diversity is crucial for disarmament and non-proliferation to work. As a Government with a Feminist Foreign Policy and as a "Champion" for gender equality within the UN Secretary General's Disarmament Agenda, Sweden believes that full and effective participation of women and a further integration of gender perspectives in all aspects of disarmament and non-proliferation decision-making processes is key, as is engaging the younger generation.

Mr President,

This conference should result in the strengthening of the NPT and the global disarmament and non-proliferation regime, from which we all benefit. It is my hope that we can find consensus and agree on a forward-looking agenda on some of the most pressing issues, with a view to adopting a final document of the conference. This is the time to show political leadership. We owe this to ourselves and to future generations.

Thank you!

Published 01 August 2022



Statement of Foreign Policy

On 10 June, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde presented a new 2022 Statement of Foreign Policy in the Riksdag. Check against delivery.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

A dark new chapter has begun in the history of Europe. On 24 February, Russia launched an unprovoked, illegal and unjustifiable war against its neighbour – the democratic state of Ukraine.

The Russian threat to the European security order will persist for a long time to come.

We have all seen the images of the brutal atrocities committed by Russian forces.

Civilians murdered and entire cities bombed. Missiles targeting children fleeing. Mothers with newborn babies hiding in cellars, seeking safety from the shelling.

During my visit to the Korczowa refugee reception centre in Poland, I was told about the Russian atrocities; about the mass graves, torture, attacks on children at a railway station, and about sexual abuse.

This invasion shows how far Russia is prepared to go. Russia's war has created a new and more dangerous reality for Europe and Sweden. It is in our security interest that Russia's war does not result in political gains, for reasons including preventing further aggression in the future.

At the same time, a number of global challenges we faced before Russia's invasion of Ukraine still need to be tackled: the climate crisis, growing geopolitical competition, the threat of famine, democratic backsliding and repeated human rights abuses.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Sweden's political, humanitarian, economic and military support to Ukraine is of historic proportions. Not since Stalin's war against Finland in 1939 has Sweden provided weapons during an ongoing conflict in our neighbourhood.

Last week, the Government presented its fourth support package to Ukraine amounting to SEK 1 billion. Ukraine's legal right to self-defence is, in practice, the defence of the territory of all countries. And that includes Sweden.

The EU sanctions were adopted unanimously and at an unprecedented speed and scale. The EU's sixth sanctions package, which our Government has been pushing for, means that 90 per cent of Russian oil imports to the EU will be phased out by the end of the year. Transatlantic cooperation has been crucial regarding support to Ukraine and the sanctions adopted against Russia.

Continued support to Ukraine and continued sanctions against Russia and Belarus are our most important contributions to bringing an end to this ruthless war.

Sweden's national defence capabilities will continue to be strengthened. We will reach two per cent of GDP as soon as practicable and by 2028 at the latest. The re-establishment of regiments, reinforcements on Gotland, reactivation of national military service, defence equipment procurements, and enhanced cyber defence and intelligence capabilities have been necessary. The significant deterioration of the security environment has also highlighted the importance of continuing to deepen Sweden's defence and security cooperation. This will strengthen Sweden's security both now and in the future.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

On 13 May, the Government presented a security policy report after two months of deliberations involving all the parties of the Riksdag. It is a strength for Sweden that all parties have supported the report's analysis sections, especially on Russia.

Russia's war of aggression has led to a fundamental deterioration of the security environment in our neighbourhood. NATO's response to the war has also brought to the fore that Article 5 of the NATO treaty, the collective defence clause, applies to NATO members only.

It is the Government's assessment that the best way for Sweden to protect its security is for Sweden to join NATO. With Sweden and Finland as NATO members, the security of all NATO countries would be strengthened.

As a member of NATO, Sweden would commit to the Washington Treaty in its entirety, including NATO doctrines. NATO membership may also change the conditions for the export of defence equipment in our national regulatory framework.

We have taken the step to apply for NATO membership hand in hand with Finland, our closest partner. The crisis we are now experiencing has shown how close our two countries are and how interdependent our security is.

Consensus within NATO is required to proceed with Sweden and Finland's applications. Our applications have received broad support from NATO members.

Sweden will contribute to the security of NATO as a whole, including Turkey, in the spirit of solidarity. Our ambition is to make constructive progress on the issues that Turkey has raised.

Sweden condemns terrorism in the strongest possible terms. A new and tougher Terrorist Offences Act enters into force on 1 July and the Government is preparing further tightening of terrorist legislation.

There should be no doubt that Sweden will continue to stand firm alongside other like-minded countries in the fight against terrorism.

Our vulnerability to external threats and attempts to influence will increase until the Accession Agreement enters into force.

In response to this uncertainty, several NATO countries – including the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Spain, Norway and Denmark – have offered the Swedish Government clear assurances of support during the application period. The EU's mutual defence clause, Article 42.7, also plays a significant role in Sweden's security.

The bilateral declaration of solidarity signed by the Prime Minister of Sweden and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom also aims to enhance security in northern Europe.

Sweden's security policy is based on cooperation with NATO, the EU, the UN and through the strong transatlantic link.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Sweden will not lose its global voice if it joins NATO. We have a long history of standing up for international law, solidarity, disarmament, democracy and gender equality. This will be our future too.

We will continue to promote greater respect for human rights, a rules-based world order and global security, with mediation as a tool and against terrorism.

This is also part of building a safer and more secure Sweden. Diplomacy will remain our first line of defence and national defence capabilities are of fundamental importance.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

We have a number of security policy tools we can use to respond to the deteriorating security situation in Europe. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is one of them.

When Sweden chaired the OSCE last year, we saw accelerating negative developments in Russia and Belarus regarding their willingness to live up to fundamental commitments.

We worked to strengthen the OSCE's role as a platform for dialogue and accountability. One result of this was the Ministerial Council meeting in Stockholm, where 48 foreign ministers held political discussions and made decisions. Sweden will continue to assist the OSCE as part of the Troika until the end of 2022.

The conditions for dialogue and conflict resolution have changed profoundly since 24 February, but the need for dialogue remains. And the OSCE is an important forum for this when circumstances allow.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

We are in the midst of an accelerating climate and environmental crisis. Sweden will lead the climate transition. But the global level of ambition is far from sufficient. Climate change and environmental degradation contribute to increased tensions and conflicts. The climate is of critical importance to our security. We must take climate-related security threats extremely seriously and have therefore appointed an ambassador for climate and security.

Intensive negotiations are currently under way in the EU on the

comprehensive package of legislative proposals called 'Fit for 55'. In this context, the Government is pushing for ambitious solutions to reduce the EU's net emissions by at least 55 per cent by 2030 in comparison with 1990 levels.

Last week, Sweden hosted Stockholm+50, the international UN meeting on the environment, climate change and sustainable development. The meeting highlighted concrete solutions and financing models to speed up adaptation and transition, including in developing countries. Politicians from all around the world agreed to move from words to action.

During our term as Chair, the OSCE took a landmark decision concerning the challenges posed by climate change. The OSCE now has a mandate to work on this crucial security issue. Sweden is also helping to strengthen the OSCE Secretariat to enable a greater focus on these issues.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

The EU is Sweden's most important foreign and security policy arena. In uncertain times, the Member States stand stronger together. We will continue to build increasingly closer cooperation within the EU and with our Nordic and Baltic neighbours. Efforts to realise the vision of the Nordic region as the world's most sustainable and integrated region continue.

Next year, Sweden will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for the third time, and at a time of fundamental challenges to Europe's security.

As the Minister for EU Affairs outlined for this chamber, our agenda is ambitious. The Government wants to see an EU that can assume greater responsibility for its own security. Work on the Strategic Compass will continue with the aim of deepening security and defence cooperation. At the same time, it is important for the EU to deepen its cooperation with strategic partners outside the EU and that the transatlantic link be safeguarded.

We need to continue to deal with the consequences of the war, deepen our support to Ukraine and work to gradually integrate Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia into the EU. The EU's ability to manage its own neighbourhood is critical to its credibility as a global actor.

The EU's fundamental values must also be upheld. Europe is currently experiencing the greatest refugee crisis since the Second World War. This

situation demonstrates how important it is that EU Member States act with solidarity and shared responsibility for refugees.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Feminist foreign policy is needed. Sweden was first. And it is gratifying that a growing number of countries are now following our lead – most recently Germany, Chile and the Netherlands which, like Canada, France, Luxembourg, Spain and Mexico, are also pursuing feminist foreign policy.

Our efforts must be intensified, not least given the backlash against gender equality that we have seen in the wake of the pandemic. Violence against women and girls has increased all over the world.

The pandemic, the climate crisis and the shrinking democratic space are putting us at risk of a global gender equality recession. Feminist foreign policy is needed now more than ever.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

For the fifth consecutive year, we are seeing more countries moving in an authoritarian direction than in a democratic direction. Not only is Russia's aggression against Ukraine a flagrant violation of international law, it is also a clear example of an authoritarian state's attack on a democratic state.

The Government's Drive for Democracy therefore continues with full force. More attention must be paid to the lack of democracy and respect for human rights in the world of work globally.

This year, Sweden holds the Presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, where we will continue to promote Holocaust remembrance and do our utmost to combat antisemitism and antigypsyism.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

The nuclear threat is an increasingly worrying reality. Sweden will remain a strong voice for disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control even as a future NATO member. The common goal is a world free of nuclear weapons.

Within the Stockholm Initiative, Sweden and 15 other countries have proposed 22 concrete and constructive steps for nuclear disarmament and a package of measures to reduce the risk of nuclear weapons use – an area of growing importance.

An increasing number of countries back our proposals. Russia's aggression against Ukraine has made our work more difficult, but all the more important.

We have also directly appealed to the five nuclear-weapons states. A number of the initiative's proposals for steps forward have been accepted. In a joint statement in January, the five affirmed that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought". Russia's threat to use nuclear weapons is unacceptable and in glaring contrast to this statement.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Humanitarian needs in the world are increasing dramatically. The pandemic has pushed more than 100 million people back into extreme poverty. Inequality and global gaps are growing.

More than 300 million people need humanitarian aid to survive. Almost 50 million women, men and children are on the verge of starvation. Roughly 100 million people have now been forcibly displaced.

Sweden's development assistance policy is world-leading in terms of both scale and quality. Setting aside funds for people in need of protection in Sweden due to war on our continent does not change this. Sweden's development assistance will continue to be equivalent to one per cent of our gross national income.

Sweden will step up its climate and environmental action. The target of doubling climate aid remains unchanged.

When anti-democratic forces gain ground, Sweden's development assistance will, with unwavering ambition, remain a counterweight. More democratic societies make the world a better place – and increase security in Sweden.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Sweden's foreign policy continues to be global, multilateral and based on international law. The European security order that we defend rests on the United Nations Charter and its principles.

This is also part of building security with others. A solidary world view goes hand in hand with the understanding that Sweden's security is furthered by a more secure and prosperous world.

Sweden continues to invest politically and financially in the multilateral

system with the UN at the core. This means support for peacebuilding and conciliation, deep commitment to human rights, democracy and the rule of law, gender equality and broad environmental and climate action.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Russia's aggression also cast the world into a deep food crisis that is hitting those who were already most vulnerable the hardest. Sweden is part of the global response to alleviate its effects. We are a large donor to the World Food Programme and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, which together save lives and improve livelihoods.

Russia must immediately cease blocking Ukrainian grain exports. This blockade is a major cause of the rising global food prices.

The EU is accelerating its initiatives for global food security. Free trade must be protected, and the root causes of hunger and starvation must be addressed. Sweden's efforts for sustainable development and peacebuilding are also critical in this context.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

The COVID-19 pandemic has hindered implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Some of the global progress achieved in recent years, such as improvements in maternal and child health and gender equality, has been undone.

Global hunger and extreme poverty are on the rise for the first time in 20 years. The 2030 Agenda is our roadmap for reversing this trend.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Global challenges require global solutions. The pandemic, the climate transition and harsh sanctions against Russia require more trade, sustainable value chains, new sources of key raw materials, new output markets and strategic partnerships.

It is more important than ever to stand up for free, fair and sustainable trade and its significance for welfare in Sweden and Europe. This is needed at the same time as historically severe sanctions are imposed on Russia.

EU trade agreements with partners around the globe enable us to diversify trade and strengthen resilience ahead of future crises. The multilateral trade system, based on the World Trade Organization, is fundamental to growth

and welfare.

Innovation capacity and expertise is prevalent throughout Sweden, building the future's sustainable goods and services for the global market. By giving the green transition an export boost, we contribute to reducing climate impact globally. We also create the jobs of the future here in Sweden – thereby strengthening Sweden and Europe's competitiveness.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

A war is raging in Europe, and many feel a deep sense of global gloom. Yet, I want to say this: our joint efforts are important.

It may feel like an endless undertaking, but there is hope: through hard work and a clear direction, change is possible. We must not lose hope for peace and a better future. Or as a 14-year-old Ukrainian girl, Daria Chebotariova, wrote in a poem:

“We still believe in a happy future,
Where we will live in harmony and peace.
We'll not forget those who have fallen,
That's why we need to hurry up.”

Published 10 June 2022



Statement of Foreign Policy

On 16 February, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde presented the 2022 Statement of Foreign Policy in the Riksdag. Check against delivery.

Mr Speaker,

Our security situation is serious. Russia's increasingly confrontational rhetoric and military activities, both visible and covert, are unacceptable. The heightened Russian military presence at Ukraine's borders and Russian demands for security guarantees threaten the core of the European security order.

The European security order is not negotiable. Standing up for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity is essential for the security of Europe as a whole.

Ukraine, like Sweden, has the right to make its own security policy choices. It is not Russia's place to dictate these through threats and violence. The rules of international law on state sovereignty and political independence are part of the European security order.

The way forward in terms of reducing tensions is continued dialogue and diplomacy, but at the same time we must prepare for the possibility of Russia choosing a different path.

Mr Speaker,

The right to make our own security policy choices is central to our security. The Government does not intend to apply for NATO membership. Our security policy remains firmly in place. Our non-participation in military alliances serves us well and contributes to stability and security in northern Europe.

We combine this with a defence policy that rests on two pillars: strengthened national capability and deepened international defence cooperation. Our

cooperation with Finland has a special status in this. Since 2014 we have built up a functioning defence and security network, and have concluded more than 30 agreements and around 20 cooperation agreements, not least with our Nordic and Baltic neighbours. We are building up our military capability both bilaterally and with NATO. And we are building up credible national defence capability through the largest investment in Swedish defence since the 1950s.

Sweden will not remain passive if another EU Member State or Nordic country suffers a disaster or an attack. We expect these countries to act in the same way if Sweden is affected. An armed attack against Sweden cannot be ruled out. We must therefore be able to both give and receive support, civilian as well as military. But we alone decide with whom we cooperate and in what forms – in times of peace, crisis and war.

Sweden's foreign and security policy builds on cohesion in the EU and increased cooperation on a broad front: in the Nordic region, in the Baltic Sea region, through the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and through deepened partnership with NATO. The UN and international law remain cornerstones of Swedish foreign policy. A strong transatlantic link is vital for Europe's security.

Mr Speaker,

We have a number of security policy tools with which to address the deteriorating security situation in Europe. The OSCE is one important tool. Sweden recently concluded its term as Chair of the OSCE, during which we made an impact that will endure.

We strengthened the platform for dialogue. The need for dialogue is greater now than at any time since the end of the Cold War. This was exemplified during the Council of Ministers in Stockholm, where some 50 foreign ministers held important political discussions and made decisions.

We also strengthened the platform for conflict resolution. As Chair, we focused on conflict resolution in Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and the South Caucasus.

Meetings with civil society are always a priority, and Sweden's term as OSCE Chair was no exception. In Russia, the human rights situation has progressively deteriorated. An increasingly repressive society has made it impossible for human rights defenders to carry out their important work. The

closure of the human rights group Memorial is one of many alarming examples of this.

In Belarus, we have seen how the regime has cynically exploited migrants for political objectives. Belarus must release all political prisoners and hold democratic elections.

As Chair, Sweden also worked to ensure that Russia's aggression against Ukraine and Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea have remained high on the OSCE agenda. Eight years will have soon passed since the situation arose, and more than 14 000 people have lost their lives. But the passing of time does not make these violations of international law more acceptable. We now carry this work forward as a member of the OSCE Troika.

Mr Speaker,

We are living in the midst of an accelerating climate and environmental crisis. Sweden will take the lead in the climate transition. But the global level of ambition is far from adequate. Climate change and environmental degradation contribute to increased tensions and conflicts. The climate is of critical importance to our security. We must take climate-related security threats extremely seriously.

During our term as Chair, the OSCE took a decision to address the challenges brought about by climate change. Thanks to Sweden's catalytic role, the OSCE now has a mandate to take preventive action against the effects of climate change on security in the region.

We will appoint an ambassador for climate and security. We will incorporate new expertise into our international crisis management operations, peacebuilding, international development cooperation and climate diplomacy. We will continue to strengthen the Swedish-initiated UN mechanism for climate and security. In just a few years, this mechanism has become a mainstay in countries and regions affected by climate-related conflicts.

In June, Sweden will host Stockholm+50, an international UN meeting aimed at advancing an equitable and global green transition.

Mr Speaker,

The COVID-19 pandemic has hindered implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Some of the global progress that was achieved in recent years, such as

improvements in maternal and child health and gender equality, has been undone. Global hunger and extreme poverty are on the rise for the first time in 20 years.

The 2030 Agenda is our roadmap for reversing this trend.

Mr Speaker,

The need for a better global health system and the realisation that the pandemic's consequences have hit women and children the hardest are painful lessons.

The Government pursued the issue of more equitable COVID-19 vaccine distribution from an early stage. The COVAX global vaccine initiative has now delivered 1 billion vaccine doses to 144 countries around the world. Sweden is the world's largest per capita donor to COVAX and the fifth largest donor overall.

Efforts to strengthen global health security, not least efforts to combat antibiotic resistance and to develop a robust new global pandemic treaty, are a priority. The Government will therefore appoint an ambassador at the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs to work on global health security.

Mr Speaker,

The EU is Sweden's most important foreign and security policy arena. In uncertain times, the Member States stand stronger together. We will continue to strengthen our close ties with our partners within the EU and with our Nordic and Baltic neighbours. Efforts to realise the vision of the Nordic region as the world's most sustainable, integrated and digitally advanced region will be intensified.

The Government wants to see a strong EU that can take greater responsibility for its own security, but we also stress that this is not incompatible with openness to developing partnerships or a strong transatlantic link.

Next year, Sweden will hold the Presidency of the Council of the EU for the third time. The Minister for EU Affairs recently outlined how work on the Government's priorities will be pursued at EU level. It is an ambitious agenda.

The situation of refugees and migrants demands our continued attention. The

EU must establish a common asylum system that provides legal certainty and is humane and sustainable, in which everyone takes their share of responsibility.

We continue to maintain close cooperation with the United Kingdom, not least on security and defence policy, trade, and education and research.

The United States is once again a constructive partner in the global arena. This is encouraging for continued and enhanced cooperation, not least in the areas of climate change, democracy and gender equality. Cooperation with the US is central to security and defence policy, trade and technology.

Mr Speaker,

Feminist foreign policy continues to grow. Sweden was first. And it is gratifying that Germany is now following that lead, like Canada, France, Luxembourg, Spain and Mexico, who are also pursuing feminist foreign policies.

Our efforts must be intensified, not least given the backlash against gender equality that we have seen in the wake of the pandemic. Violence against women and girls has increased all over the world. The pandemic, the climate crisis and shrinking democratic space are putting us at risk of a global gender equality recession. Feminist foreign policy is needed more than ever.

In 2022, we will produce a new national action plan for women, peace and security, and we will also produce a new global strategy for gender equality in aid. Sweden is leading the action for women's economic empowerment within the UN Generation Equality Forum.

Mr Speaker,

For the fifth consecutive year, we are seeing more countries moving in an authoritarian direction than in a democratic direction. Military coups in Myanmar, Sudan, Mali and Burkina Faso, the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, a deterioration in the situation in Belarus and the conflict in Ethiopia are dramatic examples of democratic backsliding.

At the Summit for Democracy hosted by US President Joe Biden, Sweden was an active partner in several activities in which both the Prime Minister and I took part. Sweden's message was that the rise of right-wing populism and nationalism undermines democracy, and that human rights, the rule of law and women's political and economic participation are crucial to

democracy. LGBTIQ people's rights must be fully respected internationally.

This year, Sweden holds the Presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, where we will continue to promote Holocaust remembrance and do our utmost to combat antisemitism and antigypsyism.

More attention must be directed at the lack of democracy and human rights in working life globally. Workers are harassed, lose their jobs and are even killed for their trade union activities. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs will continue its efforts in these areas, including within the Global Deal.

Mr Speaker,

The nuclear threat is a reality, and we must continue our disarmament efforts. The aim is a world free of nuclear weapons. Within the framework of the Stockholm Initiative, we have proposed 22 specific steps that provide a constructive and pragmatic approach to nuclear disarmament. An increasing number of countries now back Sweden's proposals.

We have actively addressed the five nuclear-weapon states. Gratifyingly, the Stockholm Initiative's message on the need for progress has been heard. On 3 January, the five affirmed in a joint statement that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought".

Mr Speaker,

Humanitarian needs in the world are increasing dramatically. Inequality is growing. Almost 275 million people need humanitarian aid to survive. Some 45 million women, men and children in 43 countries are on the verge of famine.

Sweden's aid policy will maintain a high level of ambition in terms of both scale and quality. Sweden's official development assistance will continue to be equivalent to one per cent of gross national income. And it will be used to reduce poverty and injustice around the world. It is a matter of solidarity – and also of the conviction that a better world makes for a more secure Sweden.

Sweden will step up its efforts to prevent climate change and its effects on food security and the environment, and promote sustainable living conditions. In 2022, we will increase climate aid by a further SEK 1 billion.

When anti-democratic forces gain ground, Sweden's aid will, with

unwavering ambition, remain a counterweight. More democratic societies make the world a better place – and increase security in Sweden.

Mr Speaker,

My visit to Israel was the first by a Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs in ten years. It is important that the Government has improved our relations with Israel. At the same time, we continue to recognise Palestine. Sweden continues to act for a two-state solution based on international law.

Terrorist groups have dramatically increased their activities in Mali. It is unacceptable that the Malian junta has postponed democratic elections and engaged in cooperation with Russian mercenaries. Sweden's military and civilian engagement in Mali aims to promote security, counteract terrorism and build sustainable development with respect for human rights.

The war in Yemen is now in its eighth year. It is one of the world's greatest humanitarian disasters. Sweden will continue to emphasise the need for peace talks in the UN. The inclusion of women in these talks is a prerequisite for a lasting peace.

Syria is a deeply ravaged country. The conflict is in its twelfth year. Millions of people are living in acute humanitarian need. Sweden is and will remain one of the largest humanitarian donors.

The conflict and humanitarian crisis in Ethiopia undermine stability throughout the Horn of Africa. Ethiopia is heading towards famine. Thousands have been killed in the conflict, including 24 UN aid workers. We will continue to work through the EU and the UN for an immediate ceasefire.

Mr Speaker,

As the Prime Minister has said: "We will leave no stone unturned in breaking segregation and cracking down on gangs." The underlying criminal structures are almost always transnational. The digital transformation of our societies brings an increase in international cybercrime. Shootings and explosions, often using smuggled weapons, remain a considerable security challenge. Far too often, the young men involved are tools used by more heavyweight international criminal actors.

Eighteen months ago, I appointed a special envoy on organised crime to identify how the Swedish Foreign Service can best support law enforcement authorities. A number of embassies have received special assignments to

work to combat organised crime. In the next stage, several embassies will be equipped to contribute more effectively to crime prevention. Cooperation between law enforcement authorities and embassies will be strengthened.

Mr Speaker,

We must stand up for free trade, particularly at a time when the winds of protectionism are blowing stronger. The multilateral trade system, based on the World Trade Organization, is fundamental to growth and welfare. A threat to the rules-based trade system is a threat to Sweden's economy and our trade relations. While cooperation is important, not least in trade, we will take action against any security-threatening activity directed at Sweden and Swedish companies.

Sweden and the EU need to work even more closely with likeminded partners to safeguard and develop global trade, focusing on the green transition to a fossil-free society. Our trade policy will contribute to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda.

Through Sweden's participation in Expo 2020, we are showcasing how Swedish solutions enable a transition in a green and sustainable direction.

China's international significance also affects Sweden and Swedish interests, not least in trade. We engage in a frank and open dialogue with China in which human rights and freedom of expression are key. Sweden and the EU see global challenges that we can only address together with China – such as climate change, health and a functioning and fair free trade order.

Mr Speaker,

Last year, Sweden evacuated around 2 000 people from Afghanistan. In August, the situation at Kabul airport was at times chaotic and very difficult. Swedish Armed Forces personnel were just seconds away when a bomb exploded close to the airport.

On behalf of the Government, I would like to reiterate our thanks to everyone in the Swedish Foreign Service, government agencies and municipalities who worked day and night on the evacuations. I am proud of the collective operation that Sweden implemented.

Despite the grave sense of global darkness that many are undoubtedly feeling right now, and although the need for our joint efforts may seem never-ending, I would like to conclude by saying that there is hope that,

through hard work and clear lines, change is possible. Or as Archbishop Desmond Tutu said: “Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.”

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Government Offices of Sweden

Speech by Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde at the 2022 Folk och Försvar (Society and Defence) Annual National Conference

Speech by Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde at The Folk och Försvar Annual National Conference 2022

Check against delivery.

Your Majesty,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have been to Ukraine many times. The last three times I have visited different areas along the ‘line of contact’, the border between government-controlled area and non-government-controlled areas. There, you experience up close how the conflict impacts people’s daily lives. Children have learnt that when they play outside they have to watch out for Russian mines, missiles and hand grenades. Very young children, who have yet to learn to tell the difference between a toy and a mine, can lose their lives or sustain life-changing injuries when a mine explodes in their hands. Every building calls to mind the thousands of shots that have been fired. The hospital I visited was falling apart. Schools were bombed to pieces. Roughly two million Ukrainians have fled the region, but not everyone has been able to. I met a family that has seen its entire village and family torn apart. It’s easy for us to forget that this conflict has already claimed almost 14 000 lives since 2014. That this is happening in a neighbouring country, just a three-

hour flight from Sweden, is hard to comprehend.

I have condemned, in numerous contexts, Russia's continuing military build-up along its border with Ukraine. Let me be crystal clear: the Swedish Government does not consider that Russia – or any other country – has the right to impede another State's sovereign right to make its own security and foreign policy choices. The rules-based world order, underpinned by international law and multilateralism, is something we must protect and must not take for granted.

* * *

We have just concluded a successful year as Chair of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

From time to time, the question arises as to what Sweden's term as OSCE Chair has really meant for Sweden's and Europe's security. I can say that it has meant a great deal. Let me give you some concrete examples.

- The European security order and the concept of comprehensive security need to be protected. This is especially clear in light of the past month's open questioning of this.
- The need for a platform for dialogue based on our common commitments is greater today than at any time since the end of the Cold War. The OSCE's relevance as a forum for such dialogue was evident at the Ministerial Council in Stockholm in December. Around 50 foreign ministers were there and engaged in open and important discussions. In addition to the plenary sessions, roughly 200 bilateral meetings were held. We also adopted a decision that links the climate threat and conflicts. This decision means that the OSCE has a mandate to work on climate change and security, and identify where climate change can lead to conflicts.
- The OSCE's role as a platform for conflict resolution has been extremely important, particularly for our efforts in relation to the conflicts in Ukraine, Transnistria and the South Caucasus, just as it was when hostilities broke out on the border between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, although this received less attention. When the hostilities escalated, I initiated talks with the foreign ministers of the two countries concerned – before both Russia and Turkey did – to call for de-escalation and a diplomatic solution.
- As Chairperson-in-Office, it was important for me to visit all the field

missions and meet with civil society organisations on every visit. I always highlighted their important perspectives. This has helped us shine a light on the OSCE's high added value through its presence on the ground.

- As Chair, Sweden has worked to ensure that Russia's aggression against Ukraine and Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea have remained high on the OSCE agenda. Nearly eight years have passed since Russia illegally annexed the Crimean peninsula. But the passing of time does not make this violation of international law any more acceptable. We have emphasised the importance of the OSCE being able to operate in accordance with its mandate throughout Ukraine. The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine sees the challenges associated with this every day. For example, Russia has both disrupted the OSCE's surveillance drones and sent interference signals to maritime traffic in the Port of Mariupol. All of this is of course unacceptable.

Sweden's term as Chair has definitely made an impact that will endure.

Let me now look ahead and highlight some of our foreign and security policy priorities for the year ahead.

The link between climate change and security has become clearer and more tangible. The climate threat is also a serious security issue and will be one of my main focus areas. Climate security is about issues such as water scarcity that leads to conflicts over resources, about places on earth where people are not able to live, forcing them to flee. It is about extreme weather conditions that contribute to increased risks in society. In the Arctic, the ice is melting faster and faster. Interest in natural resources and new trade routes in the Arctic is growing at the same time as more and more military capabilities are being established. Foreign and security policy must take climate-related security threats extremely seriously. Those who turn a blind eye to this are making a huge mistake.

The European security order must continue to be protected. Russia's express desire to deny other countries the indisputable right to make their own security policy choices and its attempts to recreate spheres of interest are unacceptable. There is complete agreement on this in the EU. And as far as Sweden is concerned, we are very clear: talks on the European security order affect our security and should therefore also include us. This is a standpoint that Sweden and Finland share.

Globally, Sweden stands up for human rights and civil society. Sweden has

consistently draw attention to the increasingly serious situation for Russian civil society and stood up for human rights. Our two-track policy – which combines our principled approach to upholding international law and the European security order with our pursuit of cooperation in areas where we have an interest, and support to Russian civil society – is of great importance.

Sweden will always stand up for civil society. As everyone has seen, the situation in Kazakhstan is now deteriorating rapidly. The deadly and violent response to the demonstrations is cause for great concern. The underlying cause of the protests is genuine popular anger over deep-rooted corruption and the State's inability to improve the life of its citizens.

Organised crime poses a growing threat to our societies. The underlying criminal structures are almost always transnational. The digital transformation of our societies brings an increase in cyber crime. That's why, eighteen months ago, I appointed a special envoy on organised crime. A number of ambassadors are specifically tasked with working actively to combat organised crime. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs is thus an active participant in the fight against organised crime.

International terrorism, violent extremism and radicalisation are other areas requiring close international cooperation. Hybrid threats are occurring here and now. The list is long and includes cyber attacks, disinformation campaigns, investments in strategic infrastructure and attempts to instrumentalise migrants for political purposes.

China's growing ambitions are among the greatest global challenges since the fall of the Berlin Wall. China's rise presents Sweden and the EU with both challenges and opportunities. The Government's approach to China is a holistic one – based on the Government Communication entitled 'Sweden's approach to matters relating to China', unanimously adopted by the Riksdag – where the benefit to Sweden's security must be the focal point and the benefit to Swedish society must be safeguarded.

The pandemic has also taught us many painful lessons: the importance of a better global health system, where access to vaccines unfortunately became a foreign policy instrument. Rich countries initially ordered more vaccines than they needed, which had a negative impact on global supply.

But the pandemic is also an 'infodemic', with disinformation being spread daily. Different regions of the world have been challenged by a whole gamut

of false information. Over a six-month period in 2020, a UN study identified more than 250,000 messages with disinformation narratives related to COVID-19 in Ukrainian media and social networks. The ‘infodemic’ has directly affected the ability of Ukraine, and many other nations, to effectively protect human life and health.

The good news is that we have several tools we can use to manage the security challenges we face.

For Sweden, an EU that acts resolutely, stands together and acts on the basis of our shared values is indispensable. The EU is our most important foreign and security policy platform. The EU’s measures against Lukashenko’s instrumentalisation of migrants for political purposes are an example of such concerted action, in close cooperation with our partners. In twelve months’ time, Sweden’s will take over the Presidency of the EU, and we will be well prepared.

A strong transatlantic link is, and will remain, vital to European security. Sweden welcomes that steps are being taken to further strengthen cooperation between the EU and NATO. In October last year, the Government was able to welcome NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the North Atlantic Council to Sweden. The visit testified to our close partnership and further deepened our security dialogue.

The UN will also remain a cornerstone of Sweden’s foreign and security policy. The United States’ renewed commitment to the multilateral system significantly improves conditions. Participating in the military operations in Mali under the leadership of the UN and France is also a way of contributing to our security in Europe.

Sweden’s feminist foreign policy has gained considerable traction internationally. I am proud of that, not least because the women, peace and security agenda is important. It should go without saying that women must be included in all parts of a conflict cycle. But, unfortunately, there is still a huge need to affirm women’s and girls’ rights to security and to live free from violence, both in conflicts and in general.

In the current security situation, initiatives that lead to speculation about division and a changed security policy are not in Sweden’s interest. Let me be as clear about Sweden’s security policy as I was earlier: our security policy remains firmly in place. Sweden is not a member of any military alliance. An armed attack against Sweden cannot be ruled out. Sweden

builds security together with others, while reinforcing our total defence. The Government's deepened defence cooperation is an important part of this. Our close contacts with the US administration also reaffirm the value of a continued strong transatlantic link.

I visited Washington last week and met with Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman. She is now leading the US delegation at the talks with Russia, both bilaterally and with NATO. We spoke about this week's meetings and I was clear about Sweden's red lines when it comes to Russia's proposals. In other words, Sweden's security policy is decided by Sweden. This means, for example, that whether we choose to be militarily non-aligned or not is always our decision and not Russia's. Furthermore, all proposals that entail restrictions on, for example, exercise activities – in terms of where, how and with whom we carry them out – are unacceptable. Sherman confirmed that the European security order is not negotiable and she emphasised the importance of the good and close cooperation between Sweden and the United States. She also thanked me for Sweden's clarity regarding its priorities and for our work during our term as OSCE Chair. I also had talks with White House Deputy National Security Adviser Jonathan Finer on the same subject, and we discussed various scenarios that may become relevant.

Every nation must be able to make its security and foreign policy choices without outside pressure. Sovereignty is a cornerstone of a rules-based world order, and the Swedish Government will continue to protect it – both in our neighbourhood and globally.

Thank you.

Published 17 January 2022



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech by Chairperson-in-Office Ann Linde at the opening session of the OSCE Ministerial Council

Check against delivery

Distinguished colleagues,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to Stockholm and the 28th Ministerial Conference of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

I am truly delighted to see all of you in person. I thank you for coming together despite the difficulties and constraints of the pandemic.

It is a clear sign of the importance that we all attach to this organization.

We have gathered here in Stockholm at a time of turbulence and multiple crises across our region, many of which feature high on the OSCE's agenda.

To respond to this situation, we need common solutions.

This is the opportunity that our meeting here in Stockholm is presented with: to rebuild trust and cooperation amongst ourselves, the OSCE participating States. To confirm our support for the institutions and structures of the OSCE.

I hope we can approach our discussions in this spirit.

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues,

Sweden's year as OSCE Chair, like the year before, has been marred by a crisis without precedent in our lifetimes.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed our vulnerabilities.

It has brought devastating human costs, new strains on international cooperation, vast disruption to daily life and increased inequality around the world. It has exacerbated democratic backsliding.

It has added pressure to an already fragile security situation, in Europe and elsewhere.

Polarisation is growing, between countries and within societies.

It is fuelled by international rivalry and public discontent.

By a decline of trust.

And like the COVID-19 virus itself, distrust is infectious and hard to contain.

We all know that a climate of resentment can turn into a climate of confrontation.

We need to reverse this trend.

Because almost eight years after the outbreak of conflict regarding Ukraine, the European security crisis is widening.

The tension that is currently building between Belarus and neighbouring countries sends us a warning. If we let this crisis in the heart of Europe escalate, the human and international ramifications could be severe.

Colleagues,

I fear that we – the countries and citizens of the OSCE region – are running low on trust just when we need it the most.

Because we are faced with challenges that can only be resolved through resilience and collective action.

Challenges that cut across borders, from climate change and pandemics to new and dangerous security threats.

We all experience this crisis of trust in the day-to-day work of the OSCE.

The breach of unanimously agreed principles and commitments, the abuse of the need for consensus as a weapon in negotiations, confrontation over dialogue.

This, sadly, is one part of our reality.

Yet the OSCE is based on the ideas of pluralism and trust, on the notion that even seemingly irreconcilable agendas can be brought together without confrontation.

That is what the OSCE can achieve in its best moments.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Sweden assumed the OSCE Chairpersonship with this mindset – to go back to basics. Back to the spirit and ideas that laid the foundation of the OSCE.

First, to the fundamental norms, principles and successful policies on which the OSCE was founded and which still form the bedrock of the European security order.

Because these commonly established rules – underpinned by the UN Charter and international law – are as righteous and powerful today as they were when the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter were signed.

Second, to the comprehensive concept of security that is at the heart of the OSCE.

Because meeting our citizens' legitimate aspirations for rights and freedom is as essential for peace and stability as military security.

And third, to conflict resolution based on international law and commonly agreed norms and principles.

Because accountability and predictability are preconditions for building trust. And distrust is a powerful promoter of instability and conflict.

This is why Sweden's Chairpersonship places emphasis on international law, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

On the pursuit of gender equality, women's economic empowerment and implementation of the women, peace and security agenda.

And on dialogue with all relevant stakeholders, including civil society and youth.

We will continue to do so even after our Chairpersonship has come to an

end.

Colleagues,

The success of our common efforts is measured by our ability to improve the lives and well-being of people in the most vulnerable situations.

As Chairperson-in-Office, I have met with all OSCE field operations and met with civil society in each of the countries I have visited.

Many of these meetings included first hand accounts of how conflict and human rights abuses affect people in countries afflicted by conflict.

But I also witnessed the positive difference the OSCE makes in those situations. If proof of the OSCE's vitality was ever needed, it is provided every day in the field.

I thank the dedicated women and men who take part in OSCE field operations.

And I commend my personal and special representatives for their tireless efforts to seek solutions through dialogue.

You make a real contribution to peace, justice and dignity across our region.

Colleagues,

No conflict has a more polarising effect on European security than the one regarding Ukraine, including the Crimea. A top priority for Sweden's Chairpersonship, it remains a fundamental challenge to the European security order and continues to claim casualties and cause suffering among the populations on both sides of the line of conflict.

The heightened tensions in and around Ukraine that we have seen during this year are a cause of grave concern. And I am disheartened by the lack of progress towards a sustainable political solution with full respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and within its internationally recognised borders.

On my two visits to Ukraine, I witnessed first hand how the conflict is taking its toll on the population.

Humanitarian needs must prevail over political considerations, crossing

points should be opened on both sides of the contact line to ensure that civilians have access to their rights wherever they reside in Ukraine. International law, including international humanitarian law, must be respected.

The Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine remains an essential factor of stability. I commend the brave women and men in this mission. They must be granted unrestricted and unconditional access throughout Ukraine to impartially monitor the situation.

My two trips to Moldova made clear the central importance that the talks in the 5+2 format and the ‘Berlin-plus’ package have for regional security. We need to continue the confidence-building measures to improve the lives of people living on both banks.

When our Chairpersonship began, I pledged that we would play an active role in the Geneva International Discussions and the related Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism regarding Georgia.

Together with the EU and the UN, we have revitalised the discussions and helped the participants refocus on an issue-based agenda. This was necessary because the status quo – both political and humanitarian – is not acceptable.

Unresolved issues also remain in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict context, underlined by the renewed violence last month in the region. The OSCE has a vital role to play here, and we all need to lend our full support to the Minsk Group Co-Chairs and the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office at this Ministerial Council and beyond.

I am also convinced of the merits of regional cooperation between Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The OSCE is ready to facilitate this, and my Special Representative for South Caucasus has prepared the ground should the three countries decide to take steps in that direction.

Colleagues,

The OSCE arms control regime, meant to be a guarantor of security and stability, is running short on predictability and trust.

The Vienna Document and the Treaty on Open Skies remain at the heart of Europe’s security architecture. But the lack of compliance that we have seen over the years is undermining the very trust these instruments were designed

to create.

I deeply regret that the deficit of trust has grown so strong that key countries have decided to leave the Treaty on Open Skies. I hope that they will reverse their decisions.

Because we need to find a path back to making arms control and confidence- and security building measures an effective part of our mutual security toolbox.

A first step should be taken by all participating States fully implementing the Vienna Document. And we need to renew efforts to adjust the document to make it relevant for today's security situation with different force structures.

Colleagues,

Trust is created when we live up to our commitments and work together to meet our common threats and challenges.

I have mentioned conflict resolution and confidence building. These are core areas where we need to ensure that the OSCE is equipped to do its job.

Let me point to three other areas that demand our increased attention.

First, we see a worrying trend of democratic backsliding and violations of human rights in our region, despite our strong commitments.

The Human Dimension Implementation Meeting – the largest and most inclusive annual European manifestation of human rights – should have been held this year.

The fact that it was not is one of my more painful experiences at the helm of the OSCE.

But there are also encouraging developments.

The Stockholm Conference on Media Freedom provided important input, and I am confident that it reinforces the essential work of the OSCE in this field.

The Human Dimension Seminar was held for the first time in four years. We also came together to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, together with a broad spectrum

of civil society organisations.

The meeting on combating antisemitism in the OSCE region gave impetus to coalition-building, including with civil society, to fight intolerance and discrimination.

And I am impressed by the dedication and effectiveness shown by the new leaders of the autonomous institutions when assuming their duties.

Let me call on all of you, the participating States, to give your full support to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the High Commissioner on National Minorities and the Representative on Freedom of the Media.

These important institutions are there for us. They must be able to fully exercise their mandates.

Second, we need to do more to improve women's empowerment.

At the OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum in September, we took an important step forward to follow up on the Vilnius decision from 2011 on promoting equal opportunities for women in the economic sphere.

And I trust that our work to mainstream the women, peace and security agenda will gain further momentum and continue after we have passed the baton on to Poland and successive OSCE Chairs.

Because we also need to keep an eye on the longer term.

When we stimulate the recovery of our societies and economies after the pandemic, we need to build for gender equality.

And we need to do it in ways that have positive and lasting effects on the autonomy, resilience and opportunities of women and girls. This will also lead to more resilient, secure and prosperous societies.

Finally, we need to make better use of the OSCE to counter new threats and challenges.

Recent developments in Afghanistan remind us of our interdependence and the indivisibility of our security.

Some of the challenges – from climate change to cyber – even have the

potential to transform the way we live, work and cooperate.

The OSCE does not have an all-inclusive response. But it can make important contributions to our broader efforts.

For instance, through its convening power.

As Chair, we put a text on climate change and security on the negotiation table for this Ministerial Council.

Why not make more use of the OSCE's convening power to inspire and share expertise on issues like climate-related security risks?

The OSCE provides us with an opportunity to explore these and other common challenges together.

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues,

A quote from Swedish statesman Olof Palme captures the basic spirit of the OSCE.

When the Helsinki Final Act was signed, Giscard d'Estaing stated: "Now we can all agree". And Olof Palme replied: "No, now we can begin to disagree."

What Palme had in mind is that Helsinki established the rules of the game.

A framework to manage our differences without resorting to confrontation.

An inclusive space for dealing with the issues that divide us.

And, of course, for seeking compromise.

The OSCE is not a perfect instrument, but it is precious.

I hope that during our two days together here in Stockholm we will engage in real dialogue and seek common ground.

And, wherever possible, find common ways forward.

Thank you.

Published 13 December 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech by Chairperson-in-Office Ann Linde at the closing session of the OSCE Ministerial Council

Check against delivery

Excellencies, dear colleagues, friends,

The 2021 Ministerial Council is drawing to its close.

I am grateful to all 57 participating States and all the other participants for the frank discussions we have had on the security challenges facing our region.

This year, the high-level participation matched or even surpassed many previous Ministerial Councils – a clear sign of the importance we all attach to this organisation.

What makes the OSCE Ministerial Council unique is that discussions taking place here are not only reflections of today's political leader's priorities. They are guided by strong commitments that bind us all together in a community of comprehensive security.

As you know, Sweden has pursued three main priorities during our time as chair. We have sought to:

- Defend the European security order.
- Uphold the concept of comprehensive security, with focus on the respect for fundamental rights and freedoms, including gender equality.
- And we have sought to contribute to conflict resolution in line with our commitments and principles and international law.

We also knew that we needed to be prepared to manage crises that could not be foreseen beforehand, of which there have been several this year.

During the year I have visited around 20 participating States and met with all OSCE field presences to support these priorities.

I have seen first-hand the essential contribution that our organisation makes to improve the lives of the people affected by conflict in our region, for instance in supporting the freedom of movement for people in the non-government controlled areas in Ukraine.

In all my visits, I have prioritised meeting representatives of civil society to support their work for democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights and to get the grass root perspective of the questions dealt with by our organization.

My Special representatives – on the conflicts as well as on thematic issues – have worked tirelessly on my behalf to fulfil the role of the OSCE in the face of today's challenges. I want to extend particular thanks to all of them.

Excellencies,

Our priorities were chosen as these are the areas where the biggest challenges to European security lie.

Over the course of this year, we have seen how violations of our commitments have continued to challenge the foundation on which the OSCE is built. As Chair we have worked to ensure respect for the commitments and accountability when they are breached.

The fundamental ingredient of trust that I mentioned in my opening address of this meeting, has continued to be eroded.

This is especially clear when it comes to the conflicts in our region. The notion of some that they are “frozen” is clearly wrong. The OSCE's engagement is needed more than ever.

This holds true in eastern Ukraine where civilians continue to fall victim of the armed violence at the contact line, a line which continues to separate hundreds of thousands from their friends and families [and limits their access to basic services].

In the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, the ceasefire remains fragile and recent incidents demonstrate the need to address outstanding issues.

It is also true for Georgia and Moldova where the unresolved conflicts continue to violate fundamental principles and affect the lives of people.

The crisis in Belarus after the fraudulent presidential elections in 2020 is another example. As you all know, the OSCE stands ready to support Belarus in living up to its commitments, should it be invited to do so.

We have also seen how ODIHR has been hindered in performing its role to support participating States living up to commitments on democracy and human rights, due to limitations imposed by authorities on election observation. This is deeply problematic and in violation with our common commitments.

The rapid developments in Afghanistan this summer and the far reaching and acute challenge they poses to security also in the OSCE region provide new challenges for this organisation.

Excellencies,

Although these examples show the continued relevance and need for the OSCE, it must also be restated that our organisation can only be as effective as we, the participating States, allow it to be.

During the year, I have repeatedly seen how the consensus principle – originally the source of strength of our organisation – has been misused. Individual participating States have put their national agendas before our organisation.

The unified budget, the Annual Security Review Conference, and HDIM have all been severely affected by this during the year. As Chairperson, this is something that I deeply regret.

Next year, each and every one of us has a responsibility to ensure that the HDIM can be held.

Excellencies,

Given these severe challenges it would be easy to lose hope. But where urgent challenges have arisen, the OSCE has also been able to respond and live up to its potential:

- The SMM continues to play an important part in conflict management by monitoring the security situation and facilitating the functioning of

critical civilian infrastructure in eastern Ukraine. Without its contribution I am certain that the civilian suffering would have been even worse.

- The instruments of the OSCE have been used to counter the negative development in the human dimension, where the Moscow and Vienna mechanisms have been activated in accordance with our agreements. The Human Dimension Seminar could be held for the first time in four years, and for the very first time on the topic of Preventing and combatting violence against women.
- The work of the OSCE on combatting intolerance and discrimination has been strong this year. It was an honour to start this year with a seminar on fighting antisemitism with Rabbi Baker. I am also grateful to the Special Representatives Polak and Pacaci for their stalwart work.
- In political and military dimension, the Vienna Document was activated to seek clarity on Russian troop movements in and around Ukraine.
- Throughout the year, we have pushed hard to ensure that gender equality is part of all OSCE's activities, by asking the field presences and special and personal representatives to act and report specifically on the issue. Our efforts have ensured that gender equality will remain central to the OSCE also for the years to come.
- An advisory group on the agenda for Women, Peace and Security has been launched to support the Chair. And I am happy to say that we have taken steps as an organization towards implementing UNSC resolution 1325 better.
- Regarding Afghanistan, we have been able to come together to launch a framework and a financing mechanism to assist participating States in managing the challenges that developments in Afghanistan mean for the OSCE region.
- And although consensus is hard to achieve, this meeting has been able to decide on the chairpersonship in 2025 and these results show the continued relevance of the OSCE and how political engagement can contribute to resolution of our most difficult challenges. The key is trust – trust built on adherence and accountability towards our common commitments.

None of this would have been possible without the fantastic support of the OSCE Secretariat under the strong leadership of our Secretary-General Helga Schmid. My warm thanks to you and your team, Helga, for all your commitment, hard work, and your assistance to the Chair.

Excellencies,

By our consistent focus on our priorities, I am proud to have contributed to security in our region and to the work of coming Chairs.

I am happy to hand over the chairpersonship baton to my dear colleague Zbigniew [Rau] at the end of the year. I know that the OSCE will be in safe hands given our shared views on many of the challenges that our region face.

As member of the troika, Sweden will support the Polish efforts for a more secure Europe – built on the foundation of our common commitments.

A final word of thanks goes to all those who have made this Ministerial possible – Ambassador Funered and her team in Vienna, Ambassador Lärke and the Task force and broader Swedish team in Stockholm and in your capitals. Here at XPO to our interpreters. And to all those behind the scenes without whom our meeting could not have taken place.

Thank you!

Published 13 December 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

Opening statement by CiO Linde at ODIHR anniversary

Opening statement by the Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, Ann Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs Sweden, at the 30-year anniversary for the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in Warsaw on 14 October 2021.

Check against delivery.

Your excellencies, Ambassadors, representatives from civil society, ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be here today, and to see that so many of us are able to attend this meeting in person here in Warsaw. I would like to start by thanking you for coming here, in commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights - ODIHR. I thank you Director Mecacci and your staff for planning this event, and Poland and Minister Rau for hosting us. I believe those of us who are here in person today understand how important it is. But I would also like to thank all of you who are attending this meeting virtually. We can look forward to two intense days of engaging discussions and active participation.

Today and tomorrow, we are celebrating three decades of ODIHR achievements throughout the OSCE region thanks to this institution's crucial work. The OSCE participating States have unanimously agreed that democracy, human rights and the rule of law are central to the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security. The different strands of work within ODIHR's mandate all contribute to a free and democratic society where the human rights of all individuals are respected. This, in turn, contributes to a more secure OSCE region.

Initially established as the Office for Free Elections in 1991, the focus of this institution was on elections. With this focus and the mandate of the

participating States, ODIHR developed the gold standard in election observation, which is also widely used outside of the OSCE space.

ODIHR's unique election observation methodology recognises that a genuinely democratic election takes place long before and after the actual polling day. This is crucial to monitoring the welfare and state of democracy, where fully democratic elections are but one critical component. In 2006, at the Brussels Ministerial Council, the OSCE participating States formally recognised ODIHR's election observation methodology and encouraged its continued development. It has undergone constant improvement ever since. As a centre of excellence, ODIHR remains at the vanguard of election observation, advising and assisting States.

We have all committed to follow up promptly on ODIHR's election assessment and recommendations. Sweden benefited from ODIHR's election observation most recently in our election in 2018. The recommendations from ODIHR led to the initiation of an all-party commission of inquiry to examine the need to amend the election legislation to explicitly provide for the presence of observers. This to ensure full compliance with Paragraph 8 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document. We continue to improve our democracy, and ODIHR offers excellent support in this endeavour.

Over time, ODIHR's work has broadened. Expertise and support capacity have been bolstered with innovative and cutting-edge tools in many areas. These include human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law, promoting gender equality, tolerance and non-discrimination, Roma and Sinti Issues, and combatting trafficking in human beings, to name a few.

I travelled here from the Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism. There I had the opportunity to highlight the important work by ODIHR in supporting participating States' work to combat racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance. As the discussions in Malmö showed – there is no alternative to tireless work to combat these phenomena, which threaten the very fabric of our societies.

ODIHR's assistance over the last three decades has made a major impact throughout the OSCE region. Elections have been observed and made more democratic, democratic institutions have been strengthened and civil society has been heard and included. During my visits as CiO, I have seen the impact of the work of ODIHR and the other two autonomous institutions throughout the region. This has been mentioned by both participating States

and by civil society representatives with whom I have met on these visits. ODIHR has been invaluable in the shared commitment to becoming a more democratic and secure region. That being said, the responsibility to implement these commitments rests solely with the participating States themselves.

As important as ODIHR is for governments, it is equally important for civil society. I am very happy to see so many representatives from civil society – from all parts of the OSCE region – attending this event physically and virtually. Civil society's unique role in the OSCE has been reiterated time and again, including in Astana 2010. ODIHR's important work is amplified through effective partnerships, close contact and exchanges with civil society.

As many of you are aware, ODIHR traditionally hosts the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting around this time of year. This mandated conference is of paramount importance not only to the participating States, but also to civil society. It is very disappointing that the HDIM could not take place as planned between 27 September and 8 October this year due to the failure to reach a consensus among the participating States. This is a loss for the OSCE, for the participating States and for civil society. We, the participating States, must continue to hold each other accountable for how we implement our commitments, and civil society must be able to hold us to account. The HDIM must continue to provide this opportunity, as our heads of state and government agreed in Helsinki in 1992.

When the Swedish Chairpersonship began in January, I highlighted the importance of the autonomous institutions in supporting participating States in living up to our joint commitments. ODIHR, the Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the High Commissioner on National Minorities each have clear and strong mandates. They are the bedrock of this organisation. The work of our Chairpersonship is carried out in support of, and complementary to, the work of these institutions. Against the background of continuing democratic backsliding in parts of the OSCE space, the need to continue to safeguard the mandate of ODIHR and the other two autonomous institutions is obvious.

ODIHR has played a significant role over the past 30 years, and will continue to do so. Major gaps between the strong and clear commitments that participating States have agreed to in the human dimension, and their actual implementation, regrettably remain. We continue to witness harassment and arbitrary detentions of ordinary citizens for voicing their

opinions. We continue to see human rights defenders and journalists being threatened for carrying out their important work. The failure to follow through on our commitments is a threat to the security of the OSCE region and beyond. All participating States will continue to need the support of ODIHR and the other two autonomous institutions in implementing their commitments and in protecting and promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law. This we owe to all individuals of this region.

Thank you.

Published 18 October 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

Statement by the Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, Ann Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs Sweden, at the hearing with the U.S. Helsinki Commission on 11 June 2021

Check against delivery.

Thank you very much, Mr Chairman.

Members of the United States Helsinki Commission, Senators and Members of Congress, ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honour for me to address you today.

When Sweden decided to take on the role of Chair of the OSCE, we did so well aware that the organisation was going through a difficult period, unlikely to improve soon. Old rivalries continue to pose challenges to international peace and security. New conflicts, crises and threats demand our attention – from the security impact of climate change to cyber security. Democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law are continuously being challenged.

We decided to take on the role of Chair because of the important part that the organisation plays regarding security, stability, democracy, human rights and the rule of law – both in our own neighbourhood and in the wider OSCE region. A well-functioning OSCE is in our own interest, but we firmly believe that it is also in the interest of all 57 participating States that make up the OSCE. We value multilateralism and international law because the problems of our time call for more – not less – common solutions. And the transatlantic cooperation is key in this regard.

The guiding principle of the Swedish Chairpersonship is to go ‘back to basics’: to return to the fundamental norms and principles on which the OSCE was founded, to which all participating States have committed and re-committed – in Helsinki in 1975, Paris in 1990, Istanbul in 1999 and Astana in 2010. Underpinning these are, of course, the UN Charter and international law.

Safeguarding these commitments, on which the European security order rests, is my first priority as Chairperson-in-Office. But it is our common task to ensure that principles such as respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, the duty to refrain from the threat or use of force, and every country’s right to choose its own security arrangements, are respected.

My second priority is to safeguard and promote the organisation’s unique concept of comprehensive security, with human rights, democracy and the rule of law at its core. There is a clear link between freedom within States and security between States.

My third priority is to seek continued and strong engagement at the highest levels for sustainable solutions to crises and conflicts in the region. I want us to make use of our extensive toolbox, ranging from OSCE field presences to the autonomous institutions.

At the outset of our Chairpersonship, I made a commitment to personally travel to all countries that have an OSCE field presence. I have now visited most of them. It has given me first-hand input from people in the region, including those affected by conflicts, human rights violations and abuses.

I have met civil society organisations on every visit. I have done this to ensure that their contributions inform all aspects of our efforts. I am committed to safeguarding the unique role and participation of civil society organisations in OSCE meetings.

These meetings have reinforced my conviction that there can be no security without respect for human rights. This is also why the Women, Peace and Security agenda and gender equality are guiding themes of our Chairpersonship.

No part of the OSCE region, including mature democracies, are immune to the global trend of democratic backsliding and the decline in respect for human rights and the rule of law. Inclusive democratic processes, freedom of expression and media freedom are key priorities in the human dimension.

Last month, we held a conference on media freedom in the OSCE region, together with the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media. Democracy and peace can only thrive when a plurality of views, opinions and voices are heard.

We must also continue to counter all forms of intolerance and discrimination. Our first event as Chair was to organise a meeting on combating anti-Semitism in the OSCE region. I have asked Rabbi Andrew Baker, who is my Personal Representative on Combating Anti-Semitism, to report to the Malmö Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism, which the Swedish Prime Minister is convening in October.

Let me briefly touch upon some country-specific developments in the region.

Ukraine remains the most serious challenge to the European security order, and an obvious example of violations of our common commitments and of international law in our region. The heated rhetoric, the continuous violations of the ceasefire and the Russian military build-up in April display the fragility of the situation in and around Ukraine. This is why, on my first trip as OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, I visited both Kyiv and the contact line in Donbass. This is also why I will return there in a few days' time.

My priority as Chair is to work for a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE commitments and principles respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine, within its internationally recognised borders. Militarisation and human rights abuses in Crimea are also serious and demand our continuous attention.

As Chair, I have put strong emphasis on relieving the humanitarian consequences of the conflict. I have worked actively for the opening of two new checkpoints on the contact line so that the people on both sides are able to gain access to their social benefits and see their relatives. Steps like these are important to help produce the climate necessary to achieve a politically sustainable solution to the conflict.

The renewed outbreak of hostilities in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict in the South Caucasus last year resulted in thousands of casualties and immense suffering. The recent tensions along the border between Armenia and Azerbaijan demonstrate that the outstanding issues remain a serious challenge to international peace and security. The need for de-escalation and dialogue, for both sides to recommit to talks on a sustainable political solution in accordance with international law, and to address humanitarian

needs as well as the human rights situation is urgent.

It is essential to get the parties engaged in a diplomatic solution to remaining challenges and to renew efforts towards a lasting peace agreement. I have clearly expressed my belief that the process led by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs, including the United States, is the best vehicle to resolve these issues. I fully support the efforts of the Co-Chairs and my Personal Representative to the conflict.

I am convinced that the OSCE's role is crucial for the regional development of the whole of the South Caucasus, including for Georgia. Both Georgia and Moldova are clear examples of the ongoing challenges to the European security order in the OSCE area. No efforts should be spared in finding sustainable solutions to these conflicts.

I am extremely concerned by developments in Belarus. Most recently I was appalled by the Belarusian authorities' reckless and dangerous diversion of a civilian plane for the purpose of arresting a journalist. I have called for the immediate and unconditional release of Raman Pratasevich and Sofia Sapega, along with all others who have been arbitrarily detained. As Chairperson of the OSCE, I continue to call on Belarus to respect its OSCE commitments and obligations under international law. I am also supporting efforts to follow up on the recommendations of the Moscow Mechanism report on Belarus presented to the OSCE Permanent Council last year. We are in contact with representatives of the Belarusian opposition and civil society.

Confidence and security building measures like the Vienna Document and the Treaty on Open Skies are important elements of the European security architecture and play a crucial role in providing transparency and predictability. We have worked hard in Vienna to resolve the issues related to implementation of the Open Skies Treaty and we had hoped that the United States would choose to re-join it. The US was an important party to the treaty, and I regretted to see you leave. Russia has now signalled that it, too, will withdraw from the treaty. Our conviction is that the OSCE region gains from more confidence and security building, not less.

I know that you share the importance that we as the Swedish Chairpersonship attach to holding the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting this year. Rest assured that we are sparing no efforts to convening the HDIM, with its unique civil society participation. Together with ODIHR and Poland, we are working on a format that would allow for maximum

physical attendance while respecting COVID-19 restrictions.

I would also like to highlight the important role played by the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and to all of you personally as members. Parliamentarians do so much to bring the reality of OSCE cooperation home to each participating State. Through your participation in election observation missions, you strengthen the connection between our organisation and the more than 1 billion citizens across our 57 participating States. You also contribute to the role of the OSCE when it comes to democracy and the rule of law. Thank you for your commitment and your contributions.

In the Swedish Parliament we had an OSCE debate last Wednesday. We had members from all eight political parties who were taking the floor and argued in favour of different kinds of OSCE achievements and activities. They also witnessed from their participation in election observation missions, including the one to the United States.

As Chairperson-in-Office, I will do my part to defend the commitments on which the OSCE rests. When we summarize our Chairpersonship at the Ministerial Council meeting in Stockholm in early December, I am confident that I will be able to state that our efforts made a contribution to increased dialogue, understanding and peace among the OSCE participating States.

Thank you.

Published 11 June 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

Ann Linde speech to to the Council of Europe

28 April 2021 Check against delivery.

Dear Chair,

Dear Secretary-General,

Distinguished members of the Committee of Ministers,

It is an honour for me to address the Council of Europe today as Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. With mandates and memberships that partly overlap, our two organizations mirror some of the finest human aspirations and achievements: human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

These ideas - the need to respect human rights and the rule of law and to promote peace, democracy and human equality - are at the heart of Sweden's OSCE Chairpersonship priorities.

I commend the German presidency of the Council of Europe for putting such strong emphasis on these issues, including the rights of those who are suffering the most under the pandemic. And I look forward to engaging with youth representatives of both our organizations this afternoon on these and other important topics.

Excellencies,

We have a situation in our part of the world that calls for more, not less, common solutions. The vision of “a new era of democracy, peace and unity in Europe” is under pressure. Old rivalries continue to fuel conflicts and pose challenges to international peace and security. And new conflicts, crises and threats demand our attention – from climate change to cyber security.

We are in the midst of a pandemic which has brought devastating human costs, new strains on open society, and disruption to economic activity

around the world. Our vulnerabilities have been exposed. Democracy, respect for human rights and economic development have suffered during the pandemic, in Europe and elsewhere.

Sweden's task as OSCE Chair is to seek a common response to these and other challenges before us. Our general approach is to "go back to basics", to the fundamental norms and principles on which the OSCE was founded and on which the European security order rests.

In the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 and the Charter of Paris in 1991, the OSCE participating states committed to fundamental principles which still form the basis of the European security order, such as the respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Underpinning them are, of course the UN Charter and international law. Safeguarding these principles is my first priority as Chairperson-in-Office. Our common task is to implement them.

My second priority is to strengthen the OSCE's capacity for conflict resolution and crisis management, based on the concept of comprehensive security and the organization's principles and commitments. In the human dimension, the work of the OSCE and the Council of Europe is mutually reinforcing. The European Convention of Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights remain the most impressive system of international justice anywhere in the world.

My third priority is to seek continued engagement at the highest levels towards sustainable solutions to crises and conflicts in the region, in line with international law and with full respect for the OSCE principles and commitments.

As Chair, it is important for me to visit countries struggling with conflict throughout the OSCE region, to gain first-hand input from people affected by these conflicts and by human rights violations and abuses. And to learn from the people who work there.

Those meetings have reinforced my conviction that there can be no security without human rights. We know that societies where human rights are fully enjoyed by all are more secure and with better prospects for sustainable, resilient and prosperous development. This is why the Women, Peace and Security agenda and gender equality are guiding themes of our chairpersonship. Our efforts will be measured by how we improve the lives and well-being of people in the most vulnerable situations.

Excellencies,

The last few weeks have again displayed the fragility of the situation in and around Ukraine. This remains the most serious challenge to the European security order, one which requires us to use the conflict-related toolbox at the disposal of the OSCE. This is why, on my first trip as OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in January, I visited both Kyiv and the contact line in Donbass. Seven years into the crisis, we now see new tensions building up. In my contacts with Kyiv and Moscow, I have underlined the need to deescalate the situation, consolidate the ceasefire and intensify efforts towards a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE commitments and principles respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders. Recent developments with regards to restrictions of access to parts of the Black Sea must be resolved in accordance with international law.

In February, I visited Georgia and met with President Zourabichvili and then-Prime Minister Gakharia to reiterate the OSCE's full support for the Geneva International Discussions and related Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism formats.

In my talks with President Sandu and other leaders in Moldova, the prospects to move forward with talks in the 5+2 format and to continue building on the "Berlin plus" package were discussed. I also confirmed our readiness to hold 5+2 talks in Stockholm during the year. This message was reiterated in my discussions with the representative from Transdniestria and was generally well received. Although we remain realistic, I hope it will be possible to make progress on the Settlement Process during the year. But to make progress – the full support of all parties to the conflict is needed.

The unresolved conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan remains a serious challenge to international peace and security. Last autumn, we witnessed a renewed outbreak of the Nagorno-Karabach conflict, resulting in thousands of casualties and immense suffering. The cease-fire achieved in November with the assistance of Russia brought about a necessary stop to hostilities. The challenge now is to renew efforts towards lasting peace. The OSCE has been given the international mandate to lead this process, under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs. As Chairperson-in-Office, I visited Baku and Yerevan in March and expressed my expectation that the sides recommit to talks on a sustainable political solution and to address humanitarian needs.

In situations where trust between States has eroded, confidence and security building measures play an important role to support transparency and predictability. The Vienna Document and the Treaty on Open Skies enable measures that are at the heart of confidence building in our region. These measures must be kept up to date and fully complied with and comprise as many States as possible to ensure their continued functioning and relevance. This is essential also in the context of current developments in and around Ukraine.

When crises erupt despite our efforts to prevent them, we remain ready to engage directly with the stakeholders involved to offer the OSCE's good offices to facilitate solutions. In line with this, the offer that Albania's Prime Minister Rama and I extended last year to facilitate a genuine dialogue between the government and opposition in Belarus still stands.

Excellencies,

This is a crucial time to ensure that the norms and principles that are fundamental to the Council of Europe and OSCE are respected. The global trend of democratic backsliding and decline in the respect for human rights and the rule of law is seen also in our part of the world. It has been exacerbated during the Covid-19 pandemic.

We will continue to emphasize the importance of respecting and protecting human rights also in times of crisis. This includes the right to the freedom of expression and media freedom. We should mobilize around these issues in the period ahead. The virtual Stockholm conference on media freedom in the OSCE Region in May and the Council of Europe's high-level conference on artificial intelligence, media and democracy in June provide two such opportunities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected the full enjoyment of human rights of persons belonging to minority groups. It has a negative impact on the rights of women and girls. Gender-based violence has increased during the pandemic and women's economic situation has suffered.

The Swedish OSCE Chairpersonship will follow-up on the OSCE Vilnius decision from 2011 on promoting equal opportunity for women in the economic sphere. And the Council of Europe conference in Berlin in May will mark the tenth anniversary of the Istanbul Convention: it provides an important occasion to address the issue of men's violence against women

and girls.

As OSCE Chair, our efforts are carried out in support of, and complementary to, the work done by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the High Commissioner on National Minorities. These autonomous institutions all have clear and strong mandates. Together with them, we will do what we can to ensure that the OSCE can prevent conflicts and safeguard human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

The Council of Europe is a key partner to us on all aspects of this agenda. And we have an excellent basis for cooperation through the 2005 Warsaw Joint Declaration. The mechanisms for day-to-day collaboration are in place, driven by contacts between the secretariats. You can also count on Sweden's OSCE Chairpersonship to take concrete steps on the issues that have been identified as common priorities for the OSCE and the Council on Europe. Activities such as the OSCE expert meeting in February on "Combating anti-Semitism in the OSCE region" and the annual OSCE conference on counterterrorism last week provide input also to our cooperation with the Council of Europe.

Excellencies,

I welcome the efforts of the German presidency to bring the Council of Europe close to the people. This is in line with what Sweden seeks to achieve in the OSCE context.

As OSCE Chair, I have met with civil society organisations from across the OSCE region, including from countries affected by unresolved conflicts, to ensure that their contributions inform all aspects of our efforts. I strongly believe in supporting these networks. It is through them that the ideals embodied in the OSCE are maintained and advanced also on the people-to-people level.

I have also appointed an advisory group of experts on the women, peace and security agenda. With their support, I hope that our work to mainstream the agenda will gain further momentum and continue long after we have passed the baton to Poland and successive OSCE Chairs.

Because we also need to keep an eye on the longer term. When we seek to lift our societies and economies after the pandemic, we need to build back better for a more equal and gender equal society. And we need to do it in

ways that have positive and lasting effects on the autonomy, resilience, and opportunities of women and girls.

And I fully share the German presidency's view that we need to engage young people in our work. We can only build a sustainable future if all generations are included. Inspiring and involving our young people is an investment in our common future.

I speak from personal experience. One of the things that inspired me as a young person was my participation here, in Strasbourg, as a member of the steering group of both the European Youth Foundation and the European Youth Centre. When I then started as a civil servant in the Government Offices, I continued my engagement in the Council of Europe, but changed my hat to representative of the Swedish Government.

Excellencies,

The Council of Europe was born from the ruins of World War II. The OSCE in the Cold War. Europe has come a long way since then, but important challenges remain. The pandemic reminds us that progress on security, prosperity, democracy and human rights cannot be taken for granted. It must be cultivated and maintained.

Here, we can learn from the men and women who had the courage and vision to seek common ground at those previous historical junctures. We owe it to them, to our citizens and to future generations to defend and nurture the ideals and values embodied in these two organizations.

Earlier this morning, I had the opportunity to discuss these issues with the Council of Europe Secretary-General. I thank her for her leadership and commitment.

As Chairperson-in-Office, I will do my part to defend the commitments on which the OSCE rests. When we reach the end of this year, I hope we can say that our efforts made a contribution to dialogue, understanding and peace among the OSCE nations. And to the justice and dignity of the people of our region.

Thank you.

Published 28 April 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

Nationellt anförande om Syrien vid Brysselkonferensen

30 March 2021 (check against delivery)

Excellencies,

I would like to thank our hosts: the European Union and the UN.

We need to turn the coming decade for the Syrian people into a decade of peace, hope, and healing. Sweden stands ready to contribute, as we have done these last ten years. But for peace, refugee returns and reconstruction to be sustainable, there needs to be a political solution. We urge all parties to act responsibly and use their influence to this end. We fully support the efforts of Special Envoy Pedersen, including to ensure the full and effective participation of women.

Over the coming three years, we will increase Sweden's financial contribution through our regional aid strategy for the Syria crisis by more than thirty percent. We will continue to strengthen the resilience of the Syrian people and their host communities, in Syria and in the region. This includes supporting the neighbouring countries, which continue to show great generosity in hosting millions of refugees. We will also continue our substantial humanitarian efforts.

In total, Sweden pledges an initial 97 million US dollars to the Syria crisis response for 2021. In addition, we are one of the largest donors of core funding to the concerned UN agencies.

We will also strengthen our efforts to achieve accountability for the horrific crimes that have been, and continue to be committed, not least by the Syrian regime and Daesh. Fighting impunity and achieving justice for victims is fundamental in moving Syria towards sustainable peace and reconciliation.

Lastly, I urge the UN Security Council to assume its responsibility, renew the humanitarian cross-border mandate and reinstate former border crossings,

including to northeast Syria. Millions of lives depend on it.

Thank you.

Published 30 March 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

Briefing by H.E. Ms. Ann Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden and OSCE Chairperson- in-Office to the United Nations Security Council

10 March 2021 (check against delivery).

Madam President,

Distinguished Members of the Security Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to brief the Council about the Swedish chairpersonship of the OSCE. As the world's largest regional security organisation under chapter VIII of the UN Charter, the OSCE plays an important role in many of the challenges on the Council's agenda. Our 57 members span three continents – North America, Asia and Europe: a diverse group of countries bound together by joint commitments dating back to the Helsinki Final Act of 1975.

Close collaboration between the UN and the OSCE remains essential, an example of the partnerships which the UN@75 declaration called on us all to strengthen. The Secretary General's vision for “networked multilateralism” gives new impetus to our partnership and provides a framework for how we can work together.

We have a security situation in the OSCE region that calls for more, not less, common solutions. Old rivalries continue to fuel conflicts and pose challenges to international peace and security. And new conflicts, crises and threats call for our increased attention – from climate change to cyber security.

We are in the midst of a historic and devastating pandemic which will have

long-term effects on the world.

As Chairperson-in-Office, I will do my part to ensure that the OSCE can make a real difference on the ground and to defend the principles on which the organisation rests. Ultimately, our efforts aim to contribute to resolving the conflicts and improving the lives of people in our region.

My first priority is to focus on the basic commitments and principles on which the OSCE was founded - the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris for a New Europe of 1990. These documents clearly state the sanctity of sovereignty, territorial integrity, the freedom from threat or use of force and the right of all states to choose their own security policy path.

Underpinning these documents are, of course, international law and the Charter of the United Nations. They are relevant not only to Europe, but globally. The participating States of the OSCE made commitments which constitute the foundation of the European security order and which remain valid and relevant to this day. Our task is to implement these commitments.

We will also seek to strengthen the OSCE's unique comprehensive concept of security, which makes a clear link between security and the respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. This is a link well-known to the United Nations. Through this concept we will contribute to conflict resolution in our region in accordance with international law. We know that societies where human rights are fully enjoyed by all are more secure and with better prospects for sustainable, resilient and prosperous development. This is why the Women, Peace and Security agenda is a guiding theme of our chairpersonship.

Excellencies,

One of my main priorities as Chairperson-in-Office will be to seek continued engagement at the highest levels towards sustainable solutions to crises and conflicts in the region, in line with international law and with full respect for the OSCE principles and commitments

The crisis in and around Ukraine remains the most serious challenge to the European security order. It was therefore important for me to visit both Kyiv and the contact line in Donbass during my first trip as Chairperson.in Office in January.

Seven years into the crisis, it is clear that efforts towards conflict resolution need to intensify. As Chairperson-in-Office, I fully support the work of the

Normandy format and the Trilateral Contact Group to achieve a full implementation of the Minsk agreements and will seek to contribute to a sustainable political solution in line with OSCE commitments and principles respecting the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders.

During my visit to the contact line, I saw first-hand the dedication and courage by which the women and men of the Special Monitoring Mission carried out their tasks on the ground. Their work is essential to the peace effort and must remain unimpeded throughout Ukraine.

The conflict also has dire humanitarian consequences and the cease-fire in force since July of last year should now pave the way for further steps to ease the burden on civilians. Recent violations of the cease-fire are deeply worrying. Respect for international law, including international humanitarian law is, of course, essential. As long as crossing points of the contact line remain closed, communities and families are separated, elderly struggle to receive care and access to government services is restricted for many citizens. I hereby reiterate my call to fully open the two new crossing points in Luhansk region on both sides of the contact line, as well as to re-open the existing ones. These were also some of my key messages during my recent visits to Kyiv and Moscow.

During my visit to Georgia in February I had the opportunity to meet President Zourabichvili and then-Prime Minister Gakharia and to reiterate the OSCE's full support for the Geneva International Discussions and related Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism formats. This dialogue process, co-chaired by the OSCE, UN, and EU, is another important example of UN-OSCE cooperation in conflict resolution.

In addition to meeting with leaders in both government and civil society, I also visited one of Georgia's administrative boundary lines in its conflict context, where I saw first-hand the need for increased contacts and communication between local communities. Together with the European Union, the UN and the OSCE should seek to step up our joint efforts to build the confidence necessary to bring the conflict closer to its resolution.

In my talks with President Sandu and other leaders in Moldova the prospects to move forward with talks in the 5+2 format and to continue building on the "Berlin plus" package were discussed. I also confirmed our readiness to hold 5+2 talks in Stockholm during the year.

This message was reiterated in my discussions with the representative from Transdnistria and was generally well received. Although I remain realistic, there may be some cause for cautious optimism to make progress on the Settlement Process during the year. But to make progress – full support of all parties to the conflict is needed.

The unresolved Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remains a serious challenge to international peace and security. Last autumn, we witnessed a renewed outbreak of the armed conflict, resulting in thousands of casualties and immense suffering, including among civilians.

The cease-fire achieved in November with the assistance of Russia brought about a welcome stop to hostilities. Now we must seize this moment to renew efforts towards a lasting peace agreement. The OSCE has been given the international mandate to lead this process, under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs. As Chairperson-in-Office, I fully support their continued engagement in the peace process and I will use my visits to Baku and Yerevan next week to express my expectation that the sides recommit to talks on a sustainable political solution. We must also address a number of humanitarian needs, reminding us all of the need for implementation of international humanitarian law in this as in other conflicts.

Excellencies,

In situations where trust between States has eroded, confidence and security building measures play an important role to support transparency and predictability. As Chair, I call on all participating states of the OSCE to comply with the measures that are at the heart of confidence and security building in our region, including the Vienna Document and the Open Skies Treaty. These measures must be kept up to date and fully complied with and comprise as many States as possible to ensure their continued functioning and relevance.

When crises erupt despite our efforts to prevent them, I remain ready to engage directly with the stakeholders involved to offer the OSCE's good offices to facilitate solutions. In line with this, the offer that Albania's Prime Minister Rama as Chairperson-in-Office and I extended last year to facilitate a genuine dialogue between the government and opposition in Belarus still stands.

Secretary General Guterres' call for a global cease-fire during the pandemic is much needed. The adoption of resolution 2352 on the 1st of July 2020 and

the recent resolution 2565 on vaccine access in conflict areas shows the importance that this Council attaches to combatting the pandemic and resolving conflicts. It is my strong wish to see these resolutions implemented to support peace efforts in the OSCE region.

Unfortunately, the pandemic has added another layer of challenges by putting strains on open society. During this last year, we have seen a backsliding of democracy and respect for human rights in the OSCE region, as we have seen elsewhere. The Swedish Chairpersonship will emphasize the right to the freedom of expression and the freedom of media as well as other democratic rights which our states have committed to respect. As Chair, our efforts will be carried out in support of, and be complementary to, the important work done by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the Representative on Freedom of the Media, and the High Commissioner for National Minorities.

Excellencies,

As Chair, we will draw on the expertise of civil society to ensure that their contributions inform all aspects of security. Before this meeting, I met with civil society organisations from across the OSCE region, including from countries affected by unresolved conflicts, to exchange views on the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Key takeaways were that impunity for sexual and gender-based violence prevails, and that the pandemic's negative effects on women's economic and social rights are especially hard felt for those in already vulnerable situations. The meeting reconfirmed my conviction of the need to involve civil society organisations in conflict resolution and peace building; to engage women in all parts of peace processes; and to address threats to civil society actors. Here, close cooperation between the UN and the OSCE in the field can make a difference.

Our strong focus on advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda will continue in the same spirit as during our tenure in this Council in 2017-2018. On this agenda we also plan to work together with UN Women, including on how to promote women's economic empowerment in our region. I have appointed an advisory group of experts on these issues, which held its first meeting at the end of February. Through their support, I hope that our work to mainstream the agenda will gain further momentum and continue long after we have passed the baton to Poland and successive OSCE Chairs.

Excellencies,

In the period ahead, I plan to visit OSCE field presences across our region from Southeastern Europe to Central Asia. I will continue to highlight the priorities outlined here today, while seeking common solutions to the challenges facing our region. We will continue to work for enhanced collaboration between the UN and the OSCE. Throughout the year, you can count on our commitment and efforts to defend and advance the OSCE agenda of peace, prosperity and respect for human rights.

Thank you very much.

Published 10 March 2021



Statement of Foreign Policy

On 24 February, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde presented the 2021 Statement of Foreign Policy in the Riksdag. Check against delivery.

Mr Speaker,

I want to begin this year's Statement of Foreign Policy by saying something that is obvious to us all.

Politics matters.

This year marks 100 years since women were first able to exercise their right to vote in a parliamentary election. This was the milestone that made Sweden a democracy. Democracy is something we take for granted, but it is still denied to the majority of the world's population.

The Government is working for an international order based on international law, with rules and agreements rather than 'might is right'. With our clear security policy line, solidarity-based aid, climate and environment investments, feminist foreign policy and strong trade policy, we not only safeguard our own country, but also contribute to peace, security and development, and democracy globally.

Mr Speaker,

The COVID-19 pandemic has claimed more than two million lives worldwide.

Sweden has pushed for global equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines. Through the EU, we are part of the COVAX global vaccine cooperation initiative. The EU has mobilised EUR 853 million for COVAX, making it the largest donor. Sweden has contributed SEK 200 million and is participating in the efforts to strengthen COVAX's access to vaccine supplies.

To secure vaccine supplies for the European Economic Area countries,

Sweden has undertaken to sell vaccines on to Norway, Iceland and Switzerland.

Mr Speaker,

As Chair of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) in 2021, Sweden is standing up for the European security order based on international law and the UN Charter. We want to highlight the relationship that the OSCE identifies between respect for democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and security within and between states.

The unresolved conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Ukraine, Georgia and Transnistria are examples of the consequences of disregarding the European security order. These challenges also affect Sweden.

Mr Speaker,

The EU is Sweden's most important foreign and security policy arena. In an uncertain world, the EU must be a strong voice for peace, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

A well-functioning EU is a prerequisite for Sweden's welfare. The majority of our trade is with other EU Member States, and at EU level we can strengthen the green transition and safeguard jobs.

The EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement lays the foundations for an important future partnership. The Government intends to deepen Sweden's and the EU's relations with the UK, including in the area of foreign and security policy.

Nordic cooperation is important, but is facing severe trials during the COVID-19 pandemic. Cooperation with the Baltic States is also of great importance to our region and our common security. The Government has presented a new strategy for the Arctic region.

The countries of the Western Balkans are an important part of the EU's neighbourhood.

Turkey plays a key role for the EU. We will support the democratic forces in Turkey and be clear in our criticism of human rights violations in the country and Turkey's actions in its neighbourhood.

The UN remains a cornerstone of Swedish foreign policy, and we remain an

influential voice in the UN.

In the follow-up to the declaration commemorating the 75th anniversary of the UN – which was adopted following negotiations led by Sweden and Qatar – we showed that it is possible to agree on an ambitious way forward to strengthen the UN.

The value of the UN's actions to alleviate suffering and prevent hunger cannot be overestimated. As one of the world's largest donors, Sweden supports the UN's work in a number of humanitarian crises. Last year's Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the World Food Programme – proof that the UN's work makes a difference.

Mr Speaker,

Sweden's foreign and security policy builds on cohesion in the EU and cooperation on a broad front: in the Nordic and Baltic Sea regions, in the UN and the OSCE, and with NATO. A strong transatlantic link is important for the security of Europe and the United States.

Sweden will not remain passive if another EU Member State or a Nordic country suffers a disaster or an attack. We expect these countries to act in the same way if Sweden is affected. We must therefore be able to both give and receive support, civilian as well as military.

Sweden's security policy remains firmly in place. Our non-participation in military alliances serves us well and contributes to stability and security in northern Europe. It requires an active, broad and responsible foreign and security policy combined with enhanced defence cooperation – particularly with Finland – and credible national defence capabilities. We will contribute to long-term stability and security in our part of Europe.

The security situation in Sweden's neighbourhood and in Europe has deteriorated over time. In response to this trend, a historic investment in total defence is under way, and we are continuing to reinforce our international defence and security policy cooperation.

Through our participation in civilian and military operations in countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali and Ukraine, Sweden is contributing to security, preventing conflicts and creating the conditions for sustainable development. This engagement is an important part of our solidarity-based security policy and contributes to common security.

Mr Speaker,

It is currently more important than it has been for some time to pursue a feminist foreign policy to promote women's and girls' rights. Several countries have now followed Sweden's example.

The Government has given additional support totalling more than SEK 260 million globally to counteract the effects of the pandemic on activities linked to sexual and reproductive health and rights, for example.

Sweden has taken on a leading role in the global Action Coalition on Economic Justice and Rights. Sweden will work for women's and girls' economic empowerment, including through the introduction of social and economic reforms and gender equality in the labour market.

The women, peace and security agenda is an important priority of Sweden's term as Chair of the OSCE.

Mr Speaker,

The ongoing pandemic affects our consular work. In the spring of 2020, the consular efforts of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs helped bring around 9 000 stranded Swedes home on 400 transports.

The Swedish Foreign Service works constantly and intensively on the most difficult consular cases. We always have the best interests of the individual in mind, and we will never give up our efforts.

Mr Speaker,

The United States has elected a new president, and his statements on cooperation with allies and partners are important for us in Sweden and the EU.

There are many areas in which we can renew and deepen our cooperation, including security policy and multilateralism, trade, the green transition and new technologies, democracy, and gender equality, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The Government plans to adopt new strategies for development cooperation in Latin America in the first half of 2021.

The Government is monitoring the consequences of the demonstrations in

Chile and the work to draw up a new constitution.

Sweden is working, through both the EU and the UN, to support a negotiated political solution in Venezuela.

Mr Speaker,

The Government supports Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and every country's right to choose its security policy path. Russia's aggression against Ukraine and its illegal annexation of Crimea are unacceptable. These violations of international law undermine the European security order and are grounds for continued sanctions against Russia.

Where we have common interests we can and should cooperate with Russia. One example of this is the Council of the Baltic Sea States, in which cooperation with Russia works well. At the same time, we are concerned at the negative trends in terms of human rights and civil society space in Russia, and we condemn violations of international law and poisonings.

The fraudulent election and the brutal abuses committed by the regime in Belarus are unacceptable. Along with the other EU Member States, we have introduced targeted sanctions against those responsible.

The challenges that have marked the EU's eastern neighbourhood over the last year make EU engagement in the region through the Eastern Partnership more important than it has been for some time.

Mr Speaker,

A year ago, I visited Yemen. It was clear how much Sweden's engagement is appreciated. Sweden continues to provide comprehensive humanitarian aid to Yemen's long-suffering population and support to the UN-led peace process.

The conflict in Syria remains one of the world's most serious crises. The only way to achieve peace in Syria is through a political solution.

The Government values relations with both Israel and Palestine. Sweden is working with the EU for the resumption of meaningful negotiations between Israel and Palestine and a resolution based on international law in which two states can coexist in peace and security.

Preserving the nuclear deal with Iran is essential to non-proliferation and the

security situation in the Middle East. Iran must resume full compliance and the United States must rejoin. We also underscore the serious human rights situation in Iran.

Sweden has a comprehensive and longstanding commitment to peace, democracy and development in Africa. In Ethiopia, the conflict in Tigray threatens to undermine the country's democratic development, with far-reaching regional consequences. In Sudan, the political transition continues under a civilian-led transitional government after 30 years of authoritarian rule.

The security situation in the Sahel is cause for great concern. In August, a military coup took place in Mali. A transitional government is now in place and general elections are due to be held in 2022. Sweden contributes to security and development in the Sahel.

Mr Speaker,

Asia's growing importance means opportunities for trade and investment, green technology and innovation. The Government is developing its cooperation with countries such as India, Japan and South Korea. Sweden also has a role to play in conflict resolution and disarmament on the Korean Peninsula. The coup in Myanmar is unacceptable and the Government condemns it.

China's international significance affects Sweden and Swedish interests to a growing extent. Sweden and the EU see global challenges that we can only address together with China – such as climate change, health and a functioning and fair free trade order. While cooperation is important, we will take action against security-threatening activity directed at Sweden and Swedish companies. We engage in a frank and open dialogue with China in which human rights and freedom of expression are key aspects.

The Government is particularly concerned about the shrinking democratic space in Hong Kong. Hong Kong residents' human rights must be respected.

Sweden must increase its knowledge of China. The national knowledge centre on China began its activities in January this year.

The Government looks positively on increased trade cooperation with China and welcomes the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment.

Mr Speaker,

It is concerning that democracy is being challenged in many parts of the world. Growing authoritarian forces are often linked to economic and social disparities.

Through the Drive for Democracy initiative, 600 activities have reached 1.7 million people. We have held 70 Democracy Talks, providing a platform for civil society, trade union members, LGBTIQ people and women's rights activists. Swedish democracy assistance has increased in recent years.

The internet has opened up new possibilities to participate in democracy, but it has also lowered thresholds for those seeking to curtail democracy and freedom of expression. For this reason, the Government will initiate a dialogue with platform providers to discuss how they can work with civil society to combat threats and hate, strengthen democracy and protect human rights on the internet.

Antisemitism on social media is one of several important themes that will be covered at the Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism.

To address the shrinking space for trade union organisations, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs intends to implement continuing professional development initiatives in this area. The Swedish Global Deal initiative promotes good labour market relations.

Organised crime is a major challenge for our society. The violence expressed in shootings and explosions is only one aspect of organised crime. This type of crime often has clear international connections.

Work is now under way to determine how our missions abroad can assist law enforcement authorities. Five embassies have been specially tasked with developing the capacity of the Swedish Foreign Service.

Mr Speaker,

The threat of nuclear weapons is a critical issue. The Stockholm Initiative is one of the leading political initiatives for nuclear disarmament.

The decision of the United States and Russia to extend the New START disarmament treaty is especially welcome. The world cannot afford another nuclear arms race.

Just over a month ago, the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear

Weapons entered into force. I have written to the UN to reaffirm Sweden's intention to participate as an observer.

Sweden's disarmament policy should continue to be informed by a strong knowledge base in the future. For this reason, a national knowledge centre for research on nuclear disarmament is now being established at Uppsala University at the Government's initiative.

A future scenario of lethal autonomous weapons systems (LAWS) that do not comply with international law must be avoided. With the objective of an effective international ban, Sweden is actively participating in the important work within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

Sweden will take the lead in implementing the 2030 Agenda. It is our roadmap towards a stronger, more resilient and sustainable world. The Government is continuing its efforts to promote international corporate social responsibility.

Sweden's development assistance is effective and world-class, and the Government remains committed to the target of one per cent of GNI.

Mr Speaker,

The climate crisis, loss of biodiversity, and depletion and pollution of the world's oceans are global and cross-border issues that affect us all. They threaten to irreversibly alter the conditions for humankind, exacerbate famine and increase the number of conflicts and pandemics around the world.

Next year, Sweden will host the global high-level meeting Stockholm+50.

We will continue to lead the way through our own transition to a fossil-free society and via our climate diplomacy.

The Government has tasked the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) with enhancing efforts to promote the sustainable use of biodiversity.

Mr Speaker,

The Government is strengthening the promotion of strategic investment in Sweden to improve our competitiveness. Sweden should work for a stronger

link between the Paris Agreement and trade. Sweden's trade policy should contribute to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement, and to sustainable development and the green transition. The Government wants to see more ambitious sustainability chapters in EU free trade agreements.

With their worldwide presence, Swedish companies have not only great opportunities, but also a responsibility to strengthen respect for human rights. We will highlight ways in which international regulatory frameworks for export credits should contribute to achieving the global sustainable development goals and the Paris Agreement.

A key factor in responding to the pandemic has been to secure access to staff, equipment and medicines. For this reason, a well-functioning single market with freedom of movement and free trade is critical.

Mr Speaker,

I began this year's Statement of Foreign Policy by looking to the past, so let me conclude by looking to the future. We face a decade of possibilities.

Technological advances are apparent in the green transition and in vaccines being developed at record speed. Social progress has resulted in a global increase in prosperity in which millions of people have been lifted out of poverty. What must now follow is political transformation, because without politics and without democracy and freedom for people, technological advances and social progress are to no avail.

Let me therefore conclude with a passage from American poet Amanda Gorman's reading at Joe Biden's presidential inauguration in the United States.

“But while democracy can be periodically delayed, it can never be permanently defeated. In this truth, in this faith, we trust, for while we have our eyes on the future, history has its eyes on us.”

Published 24 February 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

Presentation by Chairperson-in-Office and Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde on Sweden's Chairpersonship programme and priorities for the OSCE to its Permanent Council

Vienna, 14 January 2021 (check against delivery)

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Dear Colleagues.

It is an honour to officially launch the Swedish Chairpersonship of the OSCE, 28 years after we last held this role. The situation in Europe today is very different from that faced by our region in the 1990s. New conflicts, crises and threats have emerged – from climate change to cyber security and pandemics. The importance of our organisation and our commitments does, however, remain intact.

In a situation where multilateral cooperation and international law are increasingly being challenged, and our agreements and instruments to strengthen security are being questioned, we need to remind ourselves why we designed them in the first place.

Sweden is convinced that multilateral cooperation is the best way to address our common challenges. Sweden has shown that we are ready to shoulder our responsibility for the multilateral system before.

The experiences from our time on the UN Security Council show that, through dedicated diplomacy, it is possible to make a difference. It is with this mindset and experience that we take on the task of leading the OSCE for the coming year.

Through the shared commitments on which the OSCE was founded, the link between security and respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law is crystal clear. Together we have declared all OSCE principles and commitments to be matters of immediate and legitimate concern to all participating States. By holding each other accountable, we make sure that our commitments remain relevant. By honouring our commitments, we make sure that our region is safe. This is where the unique value of our organisation lies.

During the coming year, I will do my part to ensure that the OSCE can make a real difference on the ground and to defend the principles on which our organisation was founded. I will do this as an honest broker, representing all participating States. I will work to support discussions and measures that can lead to sustainable conflict resolution. But being an honest broker also means that I will not shy away from pointing out violations of our commonly agreed principles.

Ultimately, our priorities aim to contribute to resolving the conflicts in our region. Threats to international peace and security, as well as the suffering caused by conflicts, are simply unacceptable. We therefore need to keep the resolution of the conflicts in our region at the top of our agenda.

Excellencies,

My first priority as Chairperson-in-Office will be to focus on our common principles and joint commitments. The Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris For a New Europe constitute the foundation of the European security order. They contain the elements we need to resolve conflicts and avoid future crises. Upholding these commitments is our shared responsibility and should be in the interests of all OSCE participating States. Underpinning the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter are, of course, international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

As Chairperson-in-Office, I will also prioritise upholding the OSCE concept of comprehensive security. Political and economic security, human rights, democracy, the rule of law and equality are interrelated and interconnected. The notion that security depends on issues that are broader than ‘hard security’ is as powerful as it is simple.

We know that states that implement human rights commitments and respect democratic principles are more secure and able to provide better economic prospects and living conditions for their citizens.

The OSCE has unique instruments to support participating States in living up to our commitments. The autonomous institutions – the office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, the representative on Freedom of the Media and the High Commissioner on National Minorities – each have clear and strong mandates. I am grateful to the Albanian Chair for successfully managing the process of appointing new executive leaderships for these institutions. I would like to point out that our work as Chair will be carried out in support of, and complementary to, the work of these institutions.

The conflict cycle, devised and decided by all of us ten years ago, remains as relevant as ever and we will seek to utilise it in our efforts to resolve and prevent conflicts and crises. The important Confidence and Security Building Measures linked to the OSCE are under increasing pressure. We will support the FSC chairs to ensure their continued functioning and relevance.

When crises erupt despite our efforts to prevent them, I will remain ready to engage directly with the stakeholders involved to offer the OSCE's good offices to facilitate solutions. I will also make good use of the troika format, to ensure political continuity. In line with this, the offer extended by Prime Minister Rama as CiO and I extend last year to facilitate a genuine dialogue between the government and opposition in Belarus last year still stands, should the conditions for such talks materialise.

Excellencies,

Comprehensive security can only be achieved if everyone in our populations is included. As CiO, I will also focus on strengthening gender equality in all aspects of the organisation's work. In line with this, we will seek to strengthen women's economic empowerment. If this can be achieved, we will not only see stronger economic development across our region, but women will increasingly enjoy full human rights. The economic empowerment of women is a key aspect of viable societies, just as the meaningful inclusion of women in conflict-resolution efforts strengthens the prospects for sustainable peace. This is fully in line with UN Security Council resolution 1325 and the agenda for women, peace and security, which will also be important priorities of our term as Chair.

Democracy needs to be defended consistently. As I recalled in response to events in Washington last week, we all need to stand up for our democratic principles.

Our joint commitment to civil society participation in the OSCE is strong and unique. Safeguarding this will be a priority for me as Chairperson-in-Office. The voices of civil society are beneficial to participating States and to the organisation as they help us implement our joint commitments. The perspectives and contributions of civil society are valuable in the work of all three dimensions and bring added value to exchanges within the OSCE.

The OSCE's presence on the ground through field missions is another crucial way it contributes to conflict resolution and improving security and democratic conditions for the people in our region. As CiO, I plan to visit as many of the field offices and missions as possible, the pandemic permitting. I will want to follow up their work to strengthen gender equality and the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda, increasing women's meaningful participation in conflict resolution efforts.

Excellencies,

Contributing to and supporting conflict resolution is a strong priority for the Swedish term as Chair. Last year's outbreak of armed conflict in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, its heavy death toll and human suffering made abundantly clear the risks inherent when conflicts remain unresolved. In this case, the OSCE has a vital role to play in conflict settlement, including on the ground. The Minsk Group Co-Chairs and the Personal Representative of the Chairperson-in-Office have our full support.

The most blatant example of violations of our common commitments and of international law remains the crisis in and around Ukraine. As Chair, Sweden recognises the vital importance of the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine and will seek to contribute to the ongoing efforts in the Normandy Format and the Trilateral Contact Group to find a sustainable political solution to the conflict. This must be done in line with OSCE principles and commitments, in full respect of the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and independence of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders, including the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.

We will continue to reaffirm strongly that the SMM is mandated to have safe and secure access without restrictions throughout Ukraine and recall that the SMM must be provided with the conditions necessary for the implementation of its mandate. Already next week, I will travel to Ukraine to meet with Ukrainian officials as well as with Special Representative Grau, the SMM and the PCU to assess the situation and support the efforts for sustainable conflict resolution.

As with Ukraine, we will play an active role in the Geneva International Discussions and the related Incident Prevention and Response Mechanism regarding Georgia. We will also act in support of the Transdniestrian Settlement Process. Here too, the Special Representative will play a key role, as will the OSCE Mission to Moldova. Unfortunately, an OSCE field presence has not been possible in Georgia for over ten years.

In all conflicts, we will call for respect for international law, including international humanitarian law. We will back measures to mitigate the humanitarian consequences and advocate an inclusive approach.

Excellencies,

We have lived through an extraordinarily difficult year, with the COVID-19 pandemic affecting all our countries as well as international cooperation, in general. Although vaccines are now being distributed and there is light at the end of the tunnel, we are still facing a challenging time over the coming months.

I am grateful to Albania for its leadership in finding solutions to keeping the fundamental tasks of the OSCE functional, even during this situation. We will build on their efforts to ensure that the OSCE continues to deliver both political accountability – through the work of our delegations, the secretariat and the institutions – and assistance to participating States through the crucial role of the OSCE field missions and autonomous institutions.

I hope that activities will be able to gradually return to normal during the year. In December, I look forward to welcoming your ministers to the Ministerial Council in Stockholm. As was shown by the successful Ministerial Council meeting in Tirana, crisis can also spur innovation. Some of the new ways of working that were introduced by the Albanian Chair will also inspire us to conduct an efficient and successful meeting.

The OSCE is only as effective as we, the participating States, allow it to be. Too often, important decisions are blocked by the opposition of a few. The negotiations for the Unified Budget is one such example that has an impact on the ability of the whole organisation to deliver on its mandate. We stand ready to do our part in leading the negotiations, and I urge all of you to engage constructively.

Excellencies,

I am under no illusions that progress will be easy or that I, as Chairperson-in-Office, will be able to bridge all the gaps that exist in our organisation. My role as Chairperson-in-Office will be to support and facilitate steps that can increase trust and security. In doing so, I will leave no stone unturned.

In the end, it is about our commitments, our security and our OSCE.

Thank you.

Published 15 January 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

National statement by Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde at the Conference on Disarmament

Geneva, 24 February 2020 Check against delivery.

President, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

We cannot take a passive stance on the nuclear threat.

A worsening global security environment has led to milestone treaties and agreements being abandoned or facing an uncertain future and new nuclear capabilities being developed.

Long-established norms are being challenged, as is the integrity of multilateral institutions.

The current polarization and paralysis of multilateral disarmament frameworks are both deeply worrying and dangerous. The absence of trust is moving states further apart from each other in areas where agreement and cooperation are crucial.

This year marks the 75th commemoration of the nuclear bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It should serve as a reminder of the indisputable fact that one single nuclear explosion causes catastrophic humanitarian consequences.

Our collective goal of a world free from nuclear weapons is more relevant than ever – yet it remains distant.

Consequently, disarmament and non-proliferation remain a central foreign and security policy priority for the Swedish government.

President,

We are meeting today in the Council Chamber of the Palais des Nations in

Geneva, the seat of the Conference on Disarmament. For well over two decades, this forum has not conducted any negotiations, nor has it been able to agree on something seemingly obvious – its own programme of work.

Regrettably, the beginning of this year's session of the CD has been no exception. Nevertheless, I welcome your announcement made last Friday, Mr President, that we may be close to an agreement on a programme of work already this week. I would therefore like to echo your call for common sense to prevail. We have a shared responsibility to revive an ossified disarmament diplomacy.

President,

On 5 March we will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Non-Proliferation Treaty entering into force. This year also marks the 25th anniversary of the treaty's indefinite extension. It is an historic occasion for a treaty that has served our collective security very well for decades.

The NPT constitutes the cornerstone of the multilateral disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. It has been successful in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, laying the foundation for significant reductions in nuclear arsenals and facilitating the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. It is truly an impressive achievement.

The 2020 NPT Review Conference will begin in less than two months.

The Review Conference provides an opportunity for states parties to strengthen the NPT. This opportunity must be seized.

I would like to congratulate and warmly welcome Ambassador Gustavo Zlauvinen who was recently nominated President-designate of the conference. I am confident that he will steer the states parties in the right direction and will receive full support and cooperation.

President,

Tomorrow my colleague the German Minister of Foreign Affairs Heiko Maas and I will co-chair the second Ministerial Meeting of the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament.

This initiative brings together 16 non-nuclear weapon states at a high political level. We are united in our engagement to strengthen the NPT. We strive to mobilize political momentum for an ambitious yet realistic outcome

of the Review Conference and beyond, with particular focus on disarmament.

This should not be interpreted as a lack of engagement on the other NPT pillars. The Review Conference will need a balanced outcome which includes all three pillars. They are an indispensable part of the NPT fabric: important and mutually reinforcing. They all need to be part of a consensus package.

The disarmament-related commitments and obligations from past Review Conferences – notably in 1995, 2000 and 2010 – remain valid. Several are still outstanding and should be implemented urgently.

The main features of the Stockholm Initiative can be described through six C:s.

Common ground - the explicit purpose of the Stockholm Initiative is to build political support for a pragmatic and result-oriented disarmament agenda within the NPT framework. The Initiative aims to reach common ground and promote a successful outcome of the NPT Review Conference.

Compatibility - the Stockholm Initiative does not seek to replace any other initiatives or groupings that already exist. Instead, it seeks to complement others by building broad political support for an ambitious and realistic disarmament agenda. There are many points of convergence where various initiatives and groupings could reinforce each other in the run-up to and at the Review Conference.

Composition - the Stockholm Initiative brings together a quite diverse group of sixteen engaged non-nuclear weapon states – we have different geographic perspectives and security policy profiles. This is in itself a source of strength and credibility because it requires a degree of internal bridge-building and a constructive mindset, which also must be applied among the broader NPT membership ahead of the Review Conference.

Collaboration - the Stockholm Initiative has a collaborative and inclusive approach. It is an invitation to all states parties to the NPT - nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states - to engage in a result-oriented dialogue. All state parties must be ready get out of their "comfort zones" and engage in a spirit of compromise in order to reach concrete results. I look forward to broad outreach by members of the initiative in the weeks to come.

Concept – a crucial part of the Stockholm Initiative is the steppingstones approach which can be best described as an action-oriented methodology. It takes a new look at the traditional disarmament agenda – in breaking down long-standing items into more digestible parts - it seeks to identify "actionable" measures which are within reach in the current security environment.

Confidence-building - the Stockholm Initiative also tries to support rebuilding of trust. The absence of trust between states is a major barrier to disarmament progress. The steppingstones approach seeks to re-build mutual confidence by engaging key actors in a practical, rather than normative, incremental process. It seeks to engage states in a cooperative and inclusive process moving in a positive direction – through concrete steps – towards disarmament.

By identifying and implementing short-term measures we can mitigate current risks but also pave the way for further steps and progress on nuclear disarmament –this is the essence of the approach. Our meeting in Berlin tomorrow will be the occasion – at Ministerial level– to agree upon the political message and the steppingstones we jointly want to bring to the Review Conference.

Already in the Stockholm Declaration, the founding document of the initiative, we identified potential areas such as;

more transparent and responsible declaratory policies,
measures to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in doctrines and policies,
ways of enhancing transparency and of reducing risks of any use of nuclear weapons,
strengthened negative security assurances,
work on nuclear disarmament verification, and
the importance of addressing the production of fissile material.
From a Swedish perspective - a comprehensive approach should be applied with steppingstones being adopted in each of these mutually reinforcing categories.

What we need is a political leadership, constructive engagement on substance and contributions from all states parties. The nuclear weapon states have a special responsibility in this regard.

President,

Overcoming the present crisis in strategic arms control is desperately needed. I call upon the United States and Russia to come to an early agreement of the extension of New START. This treaty is a crucial component of global security and would provide a key scene setter for the Review Conference.

I am convinced that progress is possible, even in challenging times. We can - with strong political will and forward-looking mindset - start the journey of unlocking disarmament diplomacy through delivering upon commitments.

We should take the chance.

I thank you!

Published 24 February 2020



Government Offices of Sweden

National statement by Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde at the High-Level Segment of the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council

24 February 2020, Geneva Check against delivery.

Thank you, Madam President, High Commissioner, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

This is the first time I have addressed the Human Rights Council. It is a great honour.

I would like to begin by stating three things.

First, that Sweden reaffirms its support to the Human Rights Council and its unique and important role to address, prevent and remedy human rights violations and abuses. We continue to safeguard the independence of the Office of the High Commissioner and the special procedures.

Second, that we, in this hall, represent a world where human rights are being pushed back and democracy is in decline. This is a global trend that warrants our urgent action just as the Secretary General spoke of this morning when presenting his Call to Action on Human Rights. Which Sweden fully supports. Let us all keep in mind that our obligations as states are towards the individual as the rights bearer and that all our work should be guided by a Human Rights Based Approach.

Third, that multilateral cooperation and dialogue are needed more than ever. It is when we disagree that we need to come closer. Talk more. Try our utmost to build support for democratic values.

And against this background, I wish to add a fourth point: Sweden's response.

Madam President,

The first one, you already know. Few world leaders have not heard of Sweden's Feminist Foreign Policy. Some of you may think: do we need to hear this again?

To you I say: yes, actually, you do.

Because half of the world's population still does not enjoy the same rights, representation and resources as the other half.

As long as women's and girls' enjoyment of human rights is considered less important to that of men and boys, the world stands to lose.

It stands to lose in terms of peace and security. It stands to lose in terms of economic development.

And it stands to lose in terms of democratic participation and social justice.

Not applying a feminist perspective simply means losing out on half of the potential human capital. What nation in today's world can afford that?

So, Sweden will continue pushing for respect for women's and girls' full enjoyment of human rights. This includes women's equal participation in political, economic and social life, and not least sexual and reproductive health and rights for all – a crucial prerequisite for the enjoyment of other rights.

It is our firm position that every person should have the right to decide freely over their own body, sexuality and reproduction, free from discrimination, coercion and violence.

These efforts are especially important this year, which marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, the 20th anniversary of resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, and the 5th anniversary of the Sustainable Development Goals. This is a year of delivery.

We will also continue to push for the protection of the human rights of LGBTI persons. Sweden's position is crystal clear: human rights are universal and apply to all.

Everyone must be able to fully enjoy their human rights whatever their sexual orientation or gender identity.

It is the duty of states to respect, protect and fulfil the human rights of all persons, without discrimination of any kind.

Madam President,

The second initiative Sweden offers in response to today's global challenges is our Drive for Democracy.

For years, the protection and promotion of human rights, multilateral cooperation and the rules-based international order has been the foreign policy identity of Sweden.

Today, we are facing new challenges.

Three decades after the fall of the Berlin Wall, liberal democracy is coming under increasing pressure – in all parts of the world, even in stable democracies.

People's frustration is growing. Social and economic inequality, corruption and lack of a genuine social contract are fuelling this frustration and sowing the seeds of discord. Populism is on the rise.

Civil society and the free media are seeing their legitimate space shrink.

These are dangerous trends.

This is why my Government has added this new focus area to our foreign policy. The Drive for Democracy initiative cuts across our comprehensive foreign policy engagement. It runs parallel with our feminist foreign policy, and the two agendas are mutually reinforcing.

We will work with countries, multilateral organisations and civil society to highlight the role of democracy in equality, participation, sustainable development, inclusive growth, governance, human rights and security. Action to promote and strengthen the role of political parties and media freedom is crucial in this regard.

Trade union rights are also a key component of our Drive for Democracy. In certain countries, standing up for trade unions and decent working conditions means risking your life. This is unacceptable.

As part of the Drive, we will emphasize the rule of law – from the democratic fundamentals of legislation to combatting corruption to fighting for accountability. I have directed the Foreign Service to increase its contribution to the fight against organized crime – that parasitic drain on democratic societies.

Madam President,

I would like to conclude by saying this:

Democracy is being eroded, so Sweden is mobilising.

Human rights are being challenged, so Sweden is strengthening its resolve.

Throughout the entire Swedish Foreign Service, we are stepping up our efforts to strengthen democracy and human rights. We want to strengthen the conversation about the principles of democracy, the merits of democracy, and the urgent need to safeguard democracy.

We will ask you all – governments, international organisations and civil society actors – to engage with us.

Because global conversations, dialogue and cooperation are needed more than ever.

This is how we build peace and security. Sustainable and inclusive growth. Freedom and justice.

This is standing up for human rights.

Thank you.

Published 24 February 2020



Government Offices of Sweden

2020 Statement of Foreign Policy

On 12 February, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde presented the 2020 Statement of Foreign Policy in the Riksdag. Check against delivery.

Mr/Madam Speaker, Honourable Members, Representatives of the Diplomatic Corps, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sweden's foreign policy is conducted with the aim of creating security in our country and around the world.

The conflicts, climate emergency and refugee flows of recent years show that events far from our national borders also affect us in Sweden.

The world is becoming increasingly unpredictable – and it's getting closer. The ongoing coronavirus outbreak shows how interconnected the world is.

There are those who think we should close the door to cooperation. As if the problems would disappear if we just shut our eyes. I am convinced that we must respond to a troubled world by increasing cooperation and solidarity. International problems require international responses.

People around the world are demonstrating for freedom and justice. The climate movement brings millions of people together on the streets. We have a responsibility to listen to their urgent calls.

Well-functioning international cooperation and international law are the foundation of an international order in which rules and agreements take precedence over the concept of 'might is right'. This order is necessary for Sweden to be safe and secure.

We stand up for diplomacy, dialogue and cooperation. This is how we defend our interests, values and security. This is how we make the world safer.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

The EU is our most important foreign and security policy arena. No other actor is a greater guarantor of Sweden's economy, security and peace. Sweden will participate fully in EU cooperation and in shaping it in a way that safeguards Sweden's interests.

The United Kingdom has now left the EU and the time has come to look to the future. Sweden will continue to maintain as close and comprehensive a relationship as possible with the United Kingdom.

We are also strengthening relations with leading Member States, such as Germany and France, and enhancing Nordic cooperation. This makes our region more secure and sustainable. In the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Government is pushing for implementation of the common vision that the Nordic region will become the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030.

A renewed Arctic Strategy will be presented during the year.

For several years, the rule of law and respect for the EU's fundamental values have been undermined in some Member States. Together with the European Commission and other Member States, Sweden takes a clear stand against this trend.

Many people today are concerned that EU enlargement is moving too fast. We take this seriously. At the same time, close relations with the countries of the Western Balkans are important to our common security and economy. We want to find a way forward that unites the EU and that clearly contributes to reform efforts in the Western Balkans. Here, the prospect of eventually becoming a member is important.

The European Commission has previously proposed that negotiations be started with Albania and North Macedonia. Sweden has been prepared to support this.

Sweden supports the proposal for a review of the enlargement process, and it is important that all essential requirements are met before a country can become a member.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Diplomacy is our primary line of defence.

The Defence Commission emphasises the importance of safeguarding our sovereignty and Swedish interests. This means being able to use all the instruments we have at our disposal – political, diplomatic, economic and military – in a coherent manner. This is how we build common security.

I would like to express special thanks to the Swedes taking part in our civilian and military operations in areas such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali and Ukraine. You are making an invaluable contribution to peace and security – internationally and in Sweden.

Europe must take greater responsibility for its own security.

The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy must be strengthened so as to defend the EU's interests and values around the world.

Our security is strengthened by stability and economic growth in the EU's neighbourhood. We stand by our commitments to support reform processes in Ukraine and other countries in the EU's eastern neighbourhood.

The Eastern Partnership recently reached its 10-year milestone. Sweden will continue to promote the Partnership in the EU.

We also want to show that a southern partnership is possible. Close cooperation with the countries of North Africa is already in place. But this must be enhanced and the EU must provide support for the stability and development of these states.

Sweden's security policy remains firmly in place. Our non-participation in military alliances serves us well and contributes to stability and security in northern Europe. It requires an active, broad and responsible foreign and security policy combined with enhanced defence cooperation – particularly with Finland – and credible national defence capabilities. We will contribute to long-term stability and security in our part of Europe.

Rapid technological advances, not least within cyber security and AI, are creating new challenges in the grey area between competitiveness, trade and security policy.

Sweden's foreign and security policy builds on cohesion in the EU and

increased cooperation on a broad front: in the Nordic and Baltic Sea regions, in the UN and the OSCE, and through partnership with NATO. A strong transatlantic link is important for the security of Europe and the United States.

The UN plays an important role for peace and security, development and human rights, and is a central arena for Sweden's response to global challenges. The UN will remain a cornerstone of our foreign and security policy. We support Norway's candidacy for a seat on the United Nations Security Council.

Sweden will not remain passive if another EU Member State or a Nordic country suffers a disaster or an attack. We expect these countries to act in the same way if Sweden is affected. We must therefore be able to both give and receive support, civilian as well as military.

Sweden's role as Chair of the OSCE in 2021 will be based on our strong engagement for the European security order. Upholding the OSCE's jointly agreed principles and commitments is a major security interest for Sweden.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Everyone has the right to live in safety regardless of where they live. This applies both here at home and in other countries. No one should need to look anxiously over their shoulder on their way home from school or work.

Since autumn 2014, the Government has implemented a range of measures against organised crime, including stricter penalties and more police officers, and has also conducted important crime prevention activities.

But we know that this kind of crime also has links abroad.

We are therefore introducing new initiatives to reinforce law enforcement via our embassies and international cooperation.

We will appoint an ambassador at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs tasked with coordinating the MFA's work against organised crime and supporting Swedish law enforcement authorities.

Our embassies will be instructed to monitor the issue of crime with links to Sweden. Our embassies in places such as the Western Balkans, the South Caucasus and Latin America will be specially tasked with prioritising this

issue.

The Government will continue the successful efforts against organised crime in the Council of the Baltic Sea States and within the framework of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the EU Eastern Partnership and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Sweden will enhance efforts to stop the flow of weapons and drugs, and take new steps against cross-border crime and terrorism. Europol and Eurojust are central to this work.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Global warming is affecting us here and now.

It is not just a matter of direct consequences of more extreme weather – an unstable climate also disrupts the economy, food security and our welfare and security.

Climate change exacerbates tensions and conflicts. Sweden will continue to show leadership through climate diplomacy that encourages other countries to raise their ambitions.

The EU is a necessary force in global climate action. Sweden will continue to show leadership both in and outside the EU and will be the world's first fossil-free welfare nation. Our climate efforts are ranked the highest in the world. We have doubled our contribution to the Green Climate Fund. We are working at home and internationally for a just transition.

Functioning ecosystems are essential for all life. Forests, wetlands and oceans are home to a rich biodiversity. The marine environment is under enormous pressure from climate change, overexploitation, pollution and eutrophication. The Government wants to see a global target of 30 per cent of oceans designated as marine protection areas.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Democracy around the world continues to be challenged and questioned.

This trend is threatening the foundation of our safety and security. Sweden is therefore increasing its efforts to defend and promote democracy around the

world through the Drive For Democracy initiative.

We are building alliances with like-minded countries and organisations that want to help strengthen democracy. The appropriation to democracy aid has been increased.

We are increasing support to ensure open societies, particularly for free and independent media and freedom of the press.

We are defending and promoting the rights of LGBTI people.

We are strengthening our measures to combat corruption, which is one of the worst obstacles to development. All suspicions of corruption in aid are followed up and addressed.

We are boosting the significance of trade as a platform for dialogue on human rights and democracy. Swedish export credits for investment in exploration and exploitation of fossil fuels must cease by 2022.

Increasing antisemitism is a growing concern all over the world and a threat to democracy. The Prime Minister has therefore taken the initiative to hold an international conference in Malmö in October 2020 for Holocaust remembrance and combating antisemitism.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

The rights of women and girls are under attack. Conservative forces are trying to restrict the right of women and girls to decide over their own bodies and lives.

Issues relating to women, peace and security, as well as women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, are especially important to stand up for.

To reverse this trend, courageous action is needed at all levels. This is why we are pursuing a feminist foreign policy.

It is gratifying that we have been joined by countries such as Canada, France, Luxembourg and Mexico.

Within the EU, Sweden and France have taken the initiative to improve the effectiveness of the EU's gender equality work, and we are establishing a

feminist trade policy.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Around the world, more than 165 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. The 2030 Agenda provides a roadmap for sustainable development that permeates Sweden's work. Sweden's development assistance is effective and world-class. The Government remains committed to the 1 per cent goal.

War is a catastrophe for people and societies. Children are often the worst affected. Here at home, in the UN and in the EU, Sweden is working to safeguard rights and strengthen the protection of children.

It is important that the EU has a common asylum system that provides legal certainty, is humane and sustainable, and in which all countries take their responsibility. The right to asylum must be protected.

Extreme poverty has been falling since 1990, but inequality is rising.

Inequality is not only unjust and a barrier to economic development – it also creates a breeding ground for tensions and conflict. We have seen examples of this in several major demonstrations around the world, not least in Chile. Greater equality is part of Sweden's foreign policy.

The Global Deal initiative promotes social dialogue and sustainable growth globally. In certain countries, standing up for trade unions and decent working conditions means risking your life. Trade union rights are part of our Drive for Democracy and will be raised in all Ministry for Foreign Affairs country reports on human rights.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

World trade contributes to lifting entire countries out of poverty and to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

As a member of the EU, Sweden is pursuing a policy for free and fair trade that contributes to sustainable development and creates jobs throughout the country. Every third job in Sweden depends on our trade with the rest of the

world.

We are mobilising our efforts with an updated export and investment strategy for the whole of Sweden.

Expo 2020 in Dubai will showcase Swedish companies' competitiveness in innovation and sustainability.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

We cannot take a passive stance on the nuclear threat.

Developments are alarming: arms control agreements are being abandoned. Nuclear weapons arsenals are being expanded and modernised.

Disarmament and non-proliferation are central foreign and security policy priorities for the Government.

Through the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament, the Government is contributing to the upcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. This work is now being advanced at a new ministerial meeting in Germany.

As Chair of the International Atomic Energy Agency Board of Governors, Sweden is taking responsibility for non-proliferation. Compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action nuclear deal is central.

Within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, Sweden is pushing for an effective international ban on lethal autonomous weapons systems that are incompatible with the requirements of international law.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Our close relationship with the United States is of central importance to Sweden's security and prosperity.

A functioning international community presupposes an engaged United States. It is troubling that the United States is withdrawing from some forms

of multilateral cooperation. The Government is working to ensure that trade relations with the United States work well, and that threats of new trade barriers are not carried out.

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The Government's Russia policy remains unchanged.

Where we have common interests we, like the EU, can and should cooperate with Russia. This benefits our security, and stability in our neighbourhood.

We condemn Russia's aggression against Ukraine and its illegal annexation of Crimea. These breaches of international law challenge the European security order. Sweden supports Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and every country's right to choose its own security policy path.

We are working to ensure that the EU sanctions against Russia are maintained for as long as the reasons for their introduction remain.

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Sweden stands ready to contribute to the easing of regional tensions and to dialogue in the Middle East.

We are continuing our engagement in the global coalition against Daesh. Kurds, Christians and other minorities in the region must be protected.

The Government is keen to have good relations with both Israel and Palestine. Sweden – like the rest of the EU – is working for a solution based on international law in which two states can coexist in peace and security.

The Government has condemned Iran for the shooting down of a civilian aircraft which claimed the lives of 17 people who were resident in Sweden. We demand an independent and transparent investigation.

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We both cooperate and engage in critical dialogue with Turkey. The EU has condemned Turkey's offensive in north-eastern Syria. At the same time, the Syrian regime has ruthlessly bombed its own country to rubble for almost nine years. All licences for Sweden's exports of military equipment to Turkey have been withdrawn.

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The humanitarian, political and economic crisis in Venezuela is worsening day by day. Together with the international community, we are working for a peaceful solution.

Increasing polarisation in Bolivia is serious and has led to escalating violence and vandalism.

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China's increasingly active role in the global arena presents opportunities and challenges. We welcome the Riksdag's consensus on the written communication on our China policy.

We are conducting a frank and open dialogue with China based on our own interests and those of the EU. Human rights and freedom of expression are important aspects of this.

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India is an important global actor and partner for Sweden. It is a significant market that will play an increasingly important role for growth and employment in our country.

At the UN Climate Action Summit in New York, Sweden and India launched the Leadership Group for Industry Transition to ensure a fossil-free future for heavy industry.

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The African continent has a young population. If the many young people there receive access to education and employment, a number of African countries could develop at a rapid pace. But the challenges are also great.

Human rights, democracy and gender equality are priorities in Sweden's Africa policy, along with migration and trade. It is important to support sustainable development in Africa. This can involve girls' schooling and increased access to electricity.

The security situation in the Sahel continues to be very troubling, not least in Mali. The region is characterised by weak states. The situation is a breeding ground for radicalisation.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs handles many consular cases. These can involve anything from crises and disasters to deprivation of liberty. Most people are helped without publicity, but some cases receive a lot of attention.

The work to help Swedes in distress abroad is always conducted with the best interests of those affected in mind.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

In troubled times, with a harsh tone from world leaders and aggressive big-power behaviour, Sweden is showing that another path is possible.

With an open and democratic environment, with tough debates but also a striving for consensus, we are showing that freedom, equality and openness are not yesterday's solutions.

Sweden is, and will continue to be, one of the world's best countries to live in, and we are making a difference around the world. This is something we Swedes should be proud of.

Published 12 February 2020



Remarks by Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde on United Nations Security Council open debate on Women, Peace and Security

Check against delivery

Madam President, Mr Secretary General, dear briefers, dear colleagues and friends,

The adoption of UNSCR 1325 in October 2000 was a true milestone.

The resolution reformed the way we see and conduct conflict analysis and engage in peace keeping. The resolution was an answer to generations of neglect of women as peace makers, as negotiators, mediators and parties to conflict.

Since then, deepened commitments by the UN system and Member States; important initiatives locally, regionally and internationally have moved the agenda forward. Yet, we have a long way to go.

Madam President,

Let me thank South Africa for organising this debate and for their strong focus on implementation. As portrayed in the Secretary General's report the challenges are profound. To deliver more sustainable results we need:

- leadership to keep women's rights and participation at the top of the agenda,
- implementation of concrete steps that matter in the field, and
- accountability to ensure that decisions are acted upon.

Let me briefly elaborate on each of these three components:

Firstly, leadership. To achieve full integration, strong leadership is key. We, as Member States and as the UN, must take concrete steps forward in 2020. We need to counter attacks on women's human rights, including the sexual and reproductive health and rights, and we need to defend our multilateral achievements. Resources need to be committed. Messaging needs to be clear.

Secondly, implementation. Practical measures must be taken by national governments, multilateral institutions, and individual missions. A gender perspective should influence our work, what we talk about and our next steps. There needs to be a gender perspective in conflict analysis and inclusion of sex disaggregated data in all reporting. We welcome the renewed commitments made by the Peacebuilding Commission to adopt an integrated gender perspective in all of its work and we fully support the suggestions presented by the PBC chair to the Security Council today.

Thirdly, accountability. We need clearly defined responsibilities to implement the full WPS-agenda. Follow-up is essential to ensure that analysis and data reflect realities on the ground. There have to be strategies, by the UN and Member States, for women's participation in peace processes and decision-making bodies. Prevention and prosecution of conflict-related sexual violence needs to be central in peace efforts.

Let me stress the role of civil society. During our time on the Security Council, more civil society briefers than ever were invited, resulting in more inclusive and better-informed discussions. Yesterday in our Multi-stakeholder Forum, civil society organisations expressed great concern that progress on women, peace and security is slowing down.

They also stressed increased hostility towards civil society, especially women human rights defenders. Member States, in particular the Security Council, need to take concrete steps to implement decisions and to include civil society as partners.

Not least, there is an untapped potential for civil society to play a role in preventing conflict through early warning.

Madam President,

As we speak of the importance of civil society and strong political leadership, I would like to highlight the recent developments in Sudan. As we heard from Ms Salah, Sudanese women's strong participation was critical in

the movement for change. We are encouraged by the emphasis on women's participation by the new government. We should all stand ready to support the Sudanese people as they move forward on this new path.

Madam President,

It is impossible not to mention what is happening in north-east Syria. After years of defending their homes and our countries against the terrorist sect IS/Daesh, the women and men that make up this region's ethnic and cultural mosaic are now suffering the consequences of the Turkish military offensive. We know that women are among those hardest hit by conflict but in the fight against Daesh they have also been the ones fighting on the front lines. This is especially true of Kurdish women.

We have a moral obligation to stand up for them in times like these.

After more than eight years of conflict, for which the Syrian regime bears the overwhelming responsibility, Syria and the region need peace. Sweden reiterates its support for the UN-led political process – the only path that can lead to sustainable peace.

Madam President,

Finally, let me express my appreciation for the specific commitments in the Secretary General's report. Many of the recommendations Sweden put forward after two years as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council have been addressed in the report.

I am proud of Sweden's contribution to the WPS agenda during our time on the Council. Let me assure you that Sweden will continue to champion these issues in close coordination with you and other partners.

Thank you.

Published 31 October 2019



Government Offices of Sweden

Remarks by Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde at the EU Arctic Forum, Umeå, 3 October, 2019

Check against delivery.

Your Royal Highness, Ministers, Commissioner,

Dear friends of the Arctic,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to Umeå - the gateway to the Swedish Arctic. And more specifically to the University of Umeå, proud to call itself the Arctic University of Sweden.

I would also like to extend a special ‘welcome home’ to all European Union partners. This is what the EU Arctic Forum is all about: to bring the Arctic to Europe and Europe to the Arctic.

I remember those early years when Sweden and Finland had just joined the EU, back in 1995. When the maps in Brussels cut Europe off just north of Stockholm and Helsinki and had to be exchanged for maps showing also the vast new northern territories of the union. The European Arctic. Now you are here. So welcome home to the Arctic part of Europe.

But, in fact, the Arctic is a global asset. We all have stakes in this vast, beautiful, fragile and rich region. We all have a responsibility to understand and address the challenges that we’re facing in the far north. They impact on the planet as a whole, as well as at regional and on the local level. That is what we will discuss today. And at the indigenous peoples’ dialogue tomorrow.

Let us remember that the Arctic is a part of the world that long has been characterized by peace, stability and constructive international cooperation based on respect for international law. And let me immediately say that it’s a core interest for Sweden to keep the Arctic that way.

We have succeeded so far, not least thanks to the Arctic Council, in building a political environment that generates win-win solutions.

We have concluded a number of legally binding agreements to foster closer ties – on Search & Rescue, Oil Spills prevention and Science cooperation. Arctic Council working groups continue to produce world class scientific reports on Arctic challenges. Observers, including the European Union, provide outstanding contributions to this work.

And let me also highlight the Barents Euro Arctic Council, not least focusing on regional, project-oriented cooperation, youth and other people-to-people contacts. This is important in a time of increasingly closed borders.

Later today I will hand over the gavel to my dear friend, Minister Ine Søreide, as Norway assumes the national chairmanship of the Barents Council. While the County of Finnmark passes the torch to Västerbotten on the regional level.

The Arctic is a showcase that we should be proud of. By working closely together, and in good faith, we are now in a position to realize the great potential of this region.

Peace and stability are preconditions for development. We therefore have every reason to continue our efforts and further strengthen our cooperation in the Arctic Council, together with other Arctic states and stakeholders as with engaged non-Arctic nations. The indigenous voices, including that of the Saami people, are key to these efforts.

But the Arctic is not only about opportunities. It is also very much about challenges.

The scientific findings are robust: a climate crisis in the Arctic is not a future scenario – it is happening as we speak.

The Arctic Council reports that annual air temperatures in 2014, 15, 16, 17 and 18 were all higher than any year since 1900. Sea ice volume in September has declined by 75 percent in forty years.

It is commonly said that what happens in the Arctic, doesn't stay in the Arctic. But it is also true that the source of what happens in the Arctic is often not to be found in this region.

A global mobilization of resources and action is required to deal with Arctic

challenges. From Arctic and non-Arctic states alike.

There is a new Arctic emerging that requires new responses, new action geared at adaptation and resilience. We are all in this together.

Global warming and its effects on the Arctic may not only lead to an environmental and ecological disaster in the region.

They are a potential security threat of global proportions.

There is an invoice waiting: Arctic warming could have a cumulative net cost of 90 trillion dollars at the end of this century.

The Agenda 2030 and the Paris agreement represent a shift of paradigm, enabling us to embark on the development of our societies and aspirations to provide a good life, not only for ourselves but for future generations.

But let me be clear. This transformation does not mean that we should reject economic development or growth. We are on the verge of a global transformation of our energy systems, from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

And this transition is just as morally right, as it is financially smart:

We know from history that major transformations driven by technology and innovation create opportunities and economic growth.

And the future belongs

to those who embrace the new green economy,

to those who invest in sustainable technologies and renewable energy systems,

and to those who seek innovations rather than solutions from the past.

That is why Sweden has set a target to be carbon neutral by 2045.

In the long term, the low carbon story is the only growth-story on offer.

Dear friends,

Here's where the European Union comes into the picture. As was pointed out in the recent EPSC report "Walking on thin Ice": With three EU Member States, and some half a million EU citizens in the Arctic, the EU has a natural role to play in the region.

And, as the Arctic becomes a focal point of economic and geopolitical competition and is increasingly recognized as being central to human and planetary survival, the EU must step up its engagement with Arctic states and other stakeholders. Never has ensuring a peaceful and sustainable Arctic been so essential.

I hope that the EU Arctic Forum will reflect on what has been achieved over the past years. I also hope – more importantly – that it will provide guidance on how the European Union, with a new Commission soon in place, could further contribute to addressing Arctic challenges.

Sweden pledges to do its part.

Let me finally thank all the organizers – the Commission, the MFA, the County of Västerbotten, the City of Umeå and the University for all your work.

Once again welcome to Umeå.

I wish you all a great stay here.

Thank you!

Published 11 October 2019



Government Offices of Sweden

Address by Ms Ann Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sweden, at the 74th Session of the General Assembly of the UN

28 September, 2019 Check against delivery.

Excellencies,

Next year, we will celebrate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations. Born from the ashes of the Second World War to maintain peace and promote prosperity and human rights for future generations. Created to resolve differences. Created to prevent violent conflicts, devastation and human suffering.

It was created to learn lessons from the past, and to meet international threats through cooperation.

It was created to enable nations, no matter their size, to achieve these goals by acting together.

The anniversary is an opportunity to celebrate many significant achievements – most recently, the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the Paris Agreement and the Sustaining Peace agenda.

At the same time, the UN and other multilateral institutions – such as the World Trade Organisation and the International Criminal Court – are increasingly questioned.

This is a disturbing trend that threatens to weaken international cooperation, accountability and our nations' growth, trade and development.

Excellencies,

The climate crisis is the defining issue of our time.

Millions of young people are now demonstrating and demanding urgent action. Their commitment and engagement have inspired school strikes and protests around the world. They have left few of us unmoved.

Their voice was, once again, loud and clear at last Saturday's youth summit. We must not let them down. We cannot let them down.

To keep global warming under one point five degrees and prevent the most extreme impacts of climate change, we need to halve global emissions by 2030. Scientists – the IPCC included – warn of devastating consequences if we do not take immediate action.

Climate change is a driver of conflict. Action is about the survival of our peoples, of our nations. The world cannot afford the cost of inaction. The challenge facing us is enormous. But we can turn this challenge into an opportunity.

I would like to raise two main points.

First, we need long-term policy at all levels. The European Union has put in place a legally binding climate framework, sending a clear message to the international community about our commitment.

In Sweden, our Climate Act and net zero emissions target also send a clear signal. But we can do more. And we will do more. Our goal is to be the first fossil-free welfare nation in the world.

At the Climate Action Summit, we announced the launch of the Leadership Group for Industry Transition, together with India and the World Economic Forum.

This initiative will speed up industry transition to pathways that will ensure that we deliver on the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda. The role of trade and labour unions in this transition is essential.

Second, transforming financial flows is key. We are proud to see the commitment of our businesses and financial institutions to align with the goals of the Paris Agreement. Through our development cooperation, Sweden is investing in renewable energy, energy efficiency and climate-sensitive agriculture.

We are the largest per-capita contributor worldwide to the Green Climate Fund, and we have now decided to double that contribution.

Excellencies,

Today, in many parts of the world, democracy is losing ground. Inequalities are growing. Social and economic gaps are feeding into nationalistic narratives. Anti-democratic forces are creating uncertainty and division. Corruption is a threat to democracy, to economic and social development, and to trade and investment.

Together, we must do more to counter these forces. Because democracy is the bedrock of open and free societies, of equality and prosperity. It invites all citizens to take part in building sustainable societies and societies free from oppression.

Sweden will increase its support for democratic and vibrant civil societies. Voices of democracy need our support.

Excellencies,

Human rights around the world are under attack. We must act against all attempts to weaken respect for human rights and to restrict their universality.

Sweden will continue to be a strong voice for LGBT rights. No one should suffer discrimination, violence or oppression because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Sweden will continue to champion the independence and integrity of the human rights system. Persecution of religious and other minorities occurs in many parts of the world; this is unacceptable. Sweden is strengthening efforts against antisemitism; next year we will host an international forum on Holocaust remembrance and combating antisemitism.

We will continue to protest when freedom of expression is restricted – whether online or offline – when journalists and media actors are silenced, and when human rights defenders are harassed or even killed.

Excellencies,

I am proud to be the Foreign Minister in Sweden's feminist Government, and to pursue a feminist foreign policy. Gender equality is an issue that concerns us all – it is about human rights, democracy, development and peace and

security for all.

We are encouraged by the considerable advances made in certain areas. But progress remains uneven. Every day, in many parts of the world, women's and girls' rights are still being violated.

We are also witnessing growing opposition to women's and girls' human rights. This must stop. Every woman and girl should have the right to make her own decisions about her body and her life. This is a basic human right. Sexual and reproductive health and rights, including the right to safe and legal abortion, are fundamental human rights.

Next year marks several anniversaries of gender equality commitments.

The tasks laid out remain unfinished and need our urgent attention.

Implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda and the Beijing Platform for Action is not only the right thing to do – it is key to achieving sustainable peace and development.

On International Women's Day this year, Sweden and France launched a diplomatic initiative to combat trafficking and prostitution, focusing on reducing the demand for, and protecting the victims of, prostitution – in Europe and globally.

Empowering women and increasing their political and economic participation are key to global development.

Sweden fully supports the United Nation's ongoing efforts to mainstream a gender perspective throughout the UN system and its reform agenda. The Secretary-General's determination to ensure gender parity in the organisation is an important part of these efforts.

Excellencies,

In adopting the 2030 Agenda, we all committed to taking significant responsibilities.

I am pleased that the political declaration adopted earlier this week not only reinforces the 2030 Agenda, but also sets the course for faster action on the Sustainable Development Goals.

The UN plays a central role in this endeavour. With the reforms initiated by

the Secretary-General, the UN will become more effective and enable action on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Sweden will continue to give one per cent of its Gross National Income in Official Development Assistance.

At present, more than 50 per cent of this assistance is channeled to, or through, the multilateral system. This demonstrates our strong commitment to international cooperation, and the importance we attach to the 2030 Agenda for our shared future.

I am encouraged by the high level of engagement from the business sector. Together, as partners, we will achieve the goals. The business benefits of science-based climate action are clear. We look forward to the launch of the Global Sustainable Development Investors in October.

Trade is an important instrument for sustainable economic development and poverty reduction, and for the 2030 Agenda as a whole. We need more trade, not less. A strong rules-based and transparent multilateral trading system is vital. Support to developing countries to increase their capacity for international trade is also crucial.

Free trade is a powerful engine for growth. We need to make growth sustainable and inclusive, and to promote decent work for all.

Sweden will continue to be an active partner in the Global Deal partnership, with its vision of a world of decent work and inclusive growth that guarantees workers' rights.

Excellencies,

Security must be built collectively. Current security threats leave no nation or no person untouched.

Sweden's membership of the Security Council was based on conflict prevention, early action and respect for international law. Our membership has ended but our commitment continues.

This week, Sweden co-hosted a meeting with key partners in support of peace in Yemen, based on the Stockholm Agreement. The UN-led process is key.

We emphasise that international law must be respected. International law

serves as a basis for conflict resolution and prevention – as in the case of Israel and Palestine. An end to the occupation and a two-state solution within secure and mutually recognised borders is the only way to resolve this conflict.

The illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and the aggression in eastern Ukraine challenge core principles of international law. We will continue to work with international partners until Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty have been fully restored.

The Council needs to adopt a comprehensive approach to peace, and to include new risks – such as climate change – on the Council's agenda.

Excellencies,

We are one year away from the 50th anniversary of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the cornerstone of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime.

The Treaty has been successful in preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. However, the deteriorating international security environment has once again increased the threat of the use of nuclear weapons.

The situation on the Korean peninsula remains a cause for concern. We must continue to pursue our common goal of a complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearisation – and of peace and reconciliation on the Korean peninsula, through diplomatic means.

We need full implementation of the JCPOA. We must act urgently and pursue dialogue to restore trust, which is presently lacking in the international arena. The termination of the INF treaty, basically a result of Russian non-compliance, is a further setback.

In June, Sweden launched a nuclear disarmament initiative together with 15 countries in different regions. This initiative aims at building political support for a successful outcome of the NPT Review Conference in 2020.

Concrete measures that can reduce nuclear risks and increase transparency can serve as stepping stones and unlock disarmament diplomacy. Full and constructive engagement by the nuclear-weapon states will be a necessary ingredient as we move forward.

The IAEA is an essential part of the NPT. On 23 September, Sweden took

over as chair of the Agency's Board of Governors for 2019 and 2020. We are honoured to shoulder this great responsibility in these challenging times.

Excellencies,

Today, millions of people on our planet are struggling to survive, day by day. More than 140 million people need life-saving humanitarian assistance. Most of them are women and girls.

Sweden is proud to be one of the world's largest contributors of humanitarian assistance to save lives and alleviate human suffering.

We stand behind the Secretary-General's vision that tensions and crisis can be prevented from escalating into major conflicts.

The role that the UN plays in resolving conflicts – through political and diplomatic efforts or peace operations – is crucial for securing inclusive and sustainable peace.

Post-conflict reconstruction will be successful only if all segments of society are included. This is especially important when it comes to women's participation.

We are firmly committed to supporting the Secretary-General's initiative to strengthen peacekeeping. We will continue our engagement in MINUSMA and other peace operations.

Excellencies,

The late poet Claes Andersson once wrote:

“Fear those who say they only want to be left alone – for they fear no means.”

History has shown us that isolationism, populism and nationalism are all paths to failure.

Sweden's foreign policy rests firmly on democracy, international law, respect for human rights, gender equality, a humanitarian perspective, and free, fair and sustainable trade.

The UN system is a global public good – and it is in our shared strategic interest to keep investing in it. The long-term gains are far greater than any

short-term costs.

The prosperity of one nation is not part of a zero-sum game in which nations either win or lose. On the contrary, we can – and we must – choose a path that will ensure that we continue to rise together.

Thank you.

Published 28 September 2019



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech by Ann Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs at the Article XIV conference on the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty

New York, 25 september 2019. Check against delivery.

Chairpersons, Under-Secretary General,

Let me first thank the Secretary-General for convening this conference, and congratulate Germany and Algeria for taking over as Article 14 coordinators.

I would also like to thank the outgoing coordinators Belgium and Iraq for their persistent efforts in promoting the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Sweden aligns itself with the statement of the European Union. I would like to add some points in my national capacity.

Chairpersons,

For my Government, nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation is a key priority. Threats posed by nuclear weapons are greater now than they have been for several decades.

Nuclear weapon states are developing new capabilities. The international security environment is characterised by increasing polarisation and lack of trust. The web of nuclear arms control agreements which have served global security so well is now fundamentally challenged. Important treaties are being terminated or facing an uncertain future.

The CTBT is a crucial part of the international disarmament and non-

proliferation regime. It contributes to preventing the development of new nuclear weapons as well as the emergence of new states in possession of nuclear weapon.

The urgency of CTBT's entry into force has been agreed upon in the NPT framework as well as the UN General Assembly. There can be no valid excuse to further delay action to sign and ratify this important treaty.

In June, Sweden convened a ministerial meeting in Stockholm where 16 engaged countries conveyed a clear message that nuclear disarmament must be put back on the international agenda. This must be done ahead of the NPT Review Conference in 2020.

Chairpersons,

I urge the DPRK to formalise its commitments to cease nuclear testing by signing and ratifying the CTBT. This would constitute a clear demonstration of the DPRK's commitment towards peace, security and denuclearisation on the Korean Peninsula.

I also call on India and Pakistan to further formalise their moratorium on nuclear testing by signing the CTBT as a first step.

I urge all Annex 2 Signatory States to take concrete steps towards ratification. Meanwhile, all signatories must continue to act in accordance with the object and purpose of the treaty.

Pending the entry into force of the CTBT, all existing moratoria on nuclear test explosions must be maintained.

I sincerely welcome the ratifications of Thailand and Zimbabwe as well as the signature of Tuvalu – all important steps towards the universalisation of the Treaty.

Chairpersons,

The International Monitoring System (IMS) is today playing an important role in providing reliable information on nuclear explosions.

However, only the entry into force of the treaty will allow for the full use of the verification regime, which is so urgently needed to uphold trust in a difficult security climate. Sweden is proud to contribute to the IMS through the SAUNA system for noble gas detection, and to support the upcoming

field exercises with our technical expertise.

Chairpersons,

Sweden's political and technical engagement against nuclear testing will remain steadfast. We will do our part to ensure that nuclear tests are relegated to the history books.

Our goal remains a world free of nuclear weapons.

Thank you.

Published 26 September 2019



Speech by Ann Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs, at the Biarritz Partnership event on gender equality and women's empowerment September 23, 2019

Check against delivery

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to start off with a couple of questions:

Today, there is an ongoing global debate on so called “moral issues”. But what is moral? Is it that someone else decides over your body? Or should you yourself be in charge?

I see it as good moral when every man, boy, woman and girl have the same right to decide over their own lives and bodies.

In 45 economies, there are no laws protecting women against violence in the home. In 104 countries around the world there are laws preventing women from carrying out certain jobs.

In almost all aspects of life there is a gender perspective;

Before becoming Minister for Foreign Affairs, I was Minister for trade. Could there be a gender difference in trade? To my surprise there are.

For example, there are higher tariffs on sportswear for women than for men. And a silk blouse for a woman has a higher tariff than a silk shirt for a man.

Trade has great effects on women, as well as men.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As a feminist Government, Sweden warmly welcomes the important initiative by the G7-group to establish the “Biarritz partnership”.

The 25th anniversary of Beijing offers an opportunity for us all to reaffirm our political will and commitment for the empowerment of all women and girls.

But I would like to make use of this opportunity to talk about something else.

I would like to talk about the difficult times that we find ourselves in at the moment.

To illustrate what I mean, let me remind you of UN resolution 2467 on sexual violence in conflict, that was adopted earlier this spring.

It is a resolution that advances the agenda of conflict-related sexual violence, by focusing on the survivors. Because of that it was needed and welcome.

But remember what happened during the adoption of this resolution. Sexual and reproductive health and rights was not mentioned. Some countries blocked such language.

In other words: In front of Nobel prize Laurates Dennis Mukwege and Nadia Murad, the international community could not agree on stating the need for basic sexual and reproductive health and rights of survivors of sexual violence in conflict.

Should we deny the victims emergency contraceptives? Safe abortions? Sexual education? The right to know about their bodies? To know about HIV and AIDS?

Apparently, this is what this new movement of ultra-conservative moralists want.

But let me assure you, we are many that will not accept this.

When some countries say that women should dress differently, should behave differently, should live differently, our response is:

Let girls and women decide for themselves. It is their human rights.

It's that easy.

Let women chose their own lives and the world will be a better place.

How do we do it?

By making sure that women get a seat at the table. By supporting women's organizations. By proving that female participation in the labor market increases economic growth. By fighting child marriage, female genital mutilation and the use of sexual violence as weapon.

By refusing to let anybody else decide what we do with our bodies and with our lives.

While a few seek to restrict the rights of half of the world's population, we represent a global movement for the empowerment of women and girls and their full enjoyment of human rights.

I call on everybody who supports us in this cause, to join me in spreading the message and making your voices heard under the hashtag #EmpowerWomen

Thank you.

Published 24 September 2019



Government Offices of Sweden

Address by Ms Ann Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Sweden, at IAEA General Conference, 16 September, 2019

Check against delivery.

Thank you, Madam President,

Allow me first to congratulate you on your election as President of the 63rd General Conference and underline Sweden's full support of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Let me at the outset pay tribute to the late Director General, Ambassador Yukiya Amano, who served the IAEA and its Member States with great determination, commitment and dignity.

Sweden fully aligns itself with the statement made by Finland on behalf of the European Union. In addition, let me make the following national remarks.

Beginning next week, pending confirmation, Sweden will for the first time serve as Chair of the Board of Governors. This is a great honour and responsibility, and a continuation of Sweden's long history of political and technical support for the IAEA.

The work of the Agency is essential in the promotion of nuclear non-proliferation, peaceful uses of nuclear technology and our shared responsibility for peace and security.

Madam President,

By ensuring that States Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty are following their obligations, the IAEA safeguards system is a fundamental part of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime.

The Additional Protocol, which enables the IAEA to draw the broader conclusion that all nuclear material in a State remains in peaceful activities, is an indispensable tool. However, universalisation of the Additional Protocol must remain the highest priority.

Sweden welcomes that Serbia and Liberia have joined the large group of Member States that apply the Additional Protocol – now 134 in total.

Madam President,

The issue of Application of Safeguards in the DPRK remains of significant concern. We welcome the diplomatic developments since early 2018 and it is important that this momentum can be maintained, on all levels.

Sweden believes in combining a policy of upholding unity in the Security Council on sanctions, with a readiness to support diplomatic efforts. The DPRK should formalise its commitments towards denuclearisation in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner.

We call on the DPRK to promptly resume cooperation with the IAEA and implement its safeguards obligations. The IAEA must play a key role in any future verification effort in DPRK.

Madam President,

Sweden has full confidence in the Agency's impartial and professional work to verify Iran's nuclear programme, and we have made an additional extra-budgetary contribution of SEK 3 million to facilitate those efforts.

We urge Iran to cooperate fully – and in a timely manner – with the IAEA in the implementation of its NPT Safeguards Agreement.

Together with our partners in the EU, Sweden remains a steadfast supporter of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). A disintegration of the agreement would be seriously damaging for the global non-proliferation regime.

In this context, Sweden, and the EU, deeply regret the withdrawal of the United States from the JCPOA and the re-imposition of sanctions.

Like the EU, we are deeply concerned about Iran's recent breaches of the JCPOA. We note Iran's stated intention to remain within the JCPOA and urge Iran to reverse these steps and to return to full compliance without delay.

We underline the importance of Iran's early ratification of the Additional Protocol as a crucial confidence-building measure.

Madam President,

The threat of nuclear and radiological terrorism remains. Sweden strongly supports the role of the IAEA in supporting efforts by States to upgrade their capabilities to prevent, detect and respond to such events.

Madam President,

Sweden has taken yet another step towards a government decision on the construction of a repository for spent nuclear fuel.

The Land and Environmental Court and the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority handed over their statements on the Swedish Nuclear Fuel and Waste Management Company's applications to the Government early last year.

Madam President,

Sweden attaches great importance to the field of human, technology and organisation, and particularly the area of safety culture.

Last year, the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority, together with Swedish licensees, explored the impact of Swedish customs and social behaviour on safety culture with great success. We are pleased that other countries have been inspired to follow this example.

Madam President,

Nuclear science and technology have a significant role in advancing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The IAEA's technical cooperation programme contributes to, among other areas, human health, food security and water management.

This year Sweden has provided SEK 5 million in voluntary contributions to the Peaceful Uses Initiative, in support of water resource management in the Sahel, ocean acidification, tackling marine plastics and cervical cancer control. Women's perspectives must be included in order for projects to be realised in a sustainable and effective way.

Madam President,

Sweden attaches great importance to gender equality at the IAEA secretariat as well as gender mainstreaming in programmes and activities. The full and equal participation of men and women, including at the highest levels, remains essential and will benefit the Agency and its Member States. In this regard, we very much hope that the Agency continues to pursue the goal set

by Director General Amano to achieve gender parity among senior officials by 2021.

Madam President,

To conclude, let me underline the importance that Sweden attaches to the Agency's work. We will do our utmost to assist the IAEA in promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy and the Agency's important work in non-proliferation. Only with this in mind can we guarantee a safer and more peaceful future.

Thank you.

Published 19 September 2019



Government Offices of Sweden

Joint statement from the International Coordination and Response Group for the victims of Flight PS752

The International Coordination and Response Group for the victims of Flight PS752 today issued the following joint statement:

"October 4, 2022, marks 1,000 days since the unlawful downing of Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 (PS752) by Iran that resulted in the deaths of 176 innocent civilians.

We, Ministers representing Canada, Sweden, Ukraine and the United Kingdom, stand with the grieving families on this solemn occasion and honour the memories of the victims killed on board Flight PS752. We renew our demand that Iran fulfills its international legal obligations and ensures transparency and justice for its actions.

As we continue to advance our efforts to hold Iran accountable in accordance with international law, the Coordination Group is thankful for the contribution of four highly recognized legal experts: Professor Payam Akhavan, Professor Harold Hongju Koh, Ms. Jessica Wells and Sir Michael Wood.

They have brought their extensive expertise to our legal teams, who continue their diligent work in response to Iran's unlawful and egregious downing of Flight PS752.

We continue to stand in solidarity with the families and loved ones of the victims of the downing of Flight PS752."

Published 03 October 2022



Government Offices of Sweden

Statement from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Stockholm

Statement from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Stockholm.

Messages and images that we have reason to believe are manipulated have been circulating on social media, asserting that Sweden supports PKK. Relevant measures have been taken.

This is a deliberate and malicious influence campaign with the clear aim of obstructing Sweden's accession to NATO.

Sweden has clearly denounced the PKK, which is a terrorist organisation, and Sweden condemns terrorism in all its forms.

Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde has never expressed any support for the PKK, and strongly rejects the manipulated video and the PKK.

Published 17 June 2022



Government Offices of Sweden

Joint statement of Foreign Ministers on increased restrictions on the human rights of Afghan women and girls

Statement by the Foreign Ministers of Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, United States:

Afghan women and girls make enormous contributions to their country. Achieving peace, stability and economic development requires their equal participation in shaping Afghanistan's future.

We remain deeply concerned by the continued restrictions on girls' access to education in Afghanistan, and call on the Taliban to respect the right to education and adhere to their commitments to reopen schools for all female students.

We are deeply disappointed about escalating restrictions imposed by the Taliban that impact on the human rights of Afghan women.

The Taliban's directive that women and girls must cover themselves in public and leave home only in cases of necessity, and with a man, restricts their universal and inalienable human rights. We deplore that family members could be punished to enforce compliance with these restrictions.

Afghan women should be free to choose how they express themselves in accordance with their faith and have the right to move freely in society.

The international community cannot consider these recent directives as isolated decisions. The Taliban have taken other actions that limit the human rights of women and girls.

These include their rights to education, work and freedom of movement,

opinion and expression through restrictions on unaccompanied travel, participation in the workforce, and ability to express themselves openly.

These decisions contradict repeated Taliban assurances to respect and protect the human rights of all Afghans.

All Afghans should be able to enjoy their fundamental human rights. These rights are indivisible and inalienable, expressed in international human rights law, and endorsed by all members of the United Nations.

We call on the Taliban to reconsider decisions which constrain the right of women and girls to make their own choices, gain an education, work, and participate equally in society.

We will continue to judge the Taliban on their actions, not their words.

Published 13 May 2022



Government Offices of Sweden

Joint Statement of Female Foreign Ministers on the occasion of the re-opening of schools in Afghanistan

Statement by the Foreign Ministers of Albania, Andorra, Australia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Estonia, Germany, Iceland, Kosovo, Malawi, Mongolia, New Zealand, Sweden, Tonga and the United Kingdom.

Every spring, the re-opening of schools in Afghanistan comes along with great hopes and expectations of millions of students: to meet classmates and friends again, to resume learning and training, and to take another step forward in life.

As women and as foreign ministers, we are deeply disappointed and concerned that girls in Afghanistan are being denied access to secondary schools this spring. The Taliban's decision to suspend secondary classes until further notice is particularly disturbing as we repeatedly heard their commitments to open all schools for all children.

We urge the Taliban to live up to their commitments to the Afghan people and to adhere to the international conventions that Afghanistan has subscribed to. We call upon the Taliban to reverse their recent decision and to grant equal access to all levels of education, in all provinces of the country. Practical difficulties in implementing a non-discriminatory educational policy must be overcome.

We will watch closely whether the Taliban deliver on their assurances. We will measure them by their actions, not by their words. The scope and extent of our countries' engagement in Afghanistan beyond humanitarian assistance will be tied to their achievements in this regard.

Access to education is a human right to which every woman and every girl is entitled. Individually, girls' education and women's empowerment lead to a better life, help to alleviate economic challenges for their families, and are the basis for exercising social rights and political representation.

Collectively, girls and women contribute with their education to the country's development and welfare, to peace, security and social justice. No country can afford to not take advantage of the potential and talent of its entire people.

The undeniable rights and opportunities achieved for - and by - girls and women in Afghanistan in recent decades must be preserved and expanded. Let their hopes and expectations flourish, as truly equal members of Afghan society.

Published 25 March 2022



Declaration on the participation by the Russian Federation and Belarus in the work of the Council of the Baltic Sea States

3 March 2022. Declaration by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland and Sweden and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the participation by the Russian Federation and Belarus in the work of the Council of the Baltic Sea States.

The Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) was established in 1992 in order to serve as overall regional forum for cooperation and coordination among the Baltic Sea States. The founding decision – the Copenhagen Declaration - emphasized cooperation on the basis of the UN Charter as well as the Helsinki Final Act, the Charter of Paris and other OSCE documents. Subsequent political decisions have confirmed the aims of peace, cohesion and democracy, most recently expressed in the Vilnius II Declaration of 1 June 2021 - A Vision for the Baltic Sea Region by 2030.

These fundamental principles and aims have now been dramatically violated by the unprovoked and illegal military attack and aggression committed by the Russian Federation against sovereign and democratic Ukraine.

We, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and the High Representative strongly condemn Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine. Nothing can justify Russia's illegal use of force. We must now draw the necessary conclusions. We see no possibility to continue our cooperation as envisaged with the Russian Federation within the framework of the CBSS. In the current circumstances Russia should not enjoy the benefits of, and participation in,

any CBSS-led cooperation. We will ensure the suspension of Russia from the proceedings, work and projects of the CBSS and its working bodies until cooperation under the fundamental principles of international law has become possible again.

At the same time we suspend the participation in activities of the Republic of Belarus as a CBSS observer state. We condemn Belarus' involvement in Russia's aggression against Ukraine. By allowing Russia to use its territory for aggression against Ukraine, Belarus itself is responsible for an act of aggression.

We acknowledge the important contribution of the CBSS to regional cohesion and cooperation. The Norwegian CBSS Presidency in close coordination with the CBSS Committee of Senior Officials will ensure the proper adjustment of the operation of the organisation in these changed circumstances.

Our decision takes immediate effect and shall be duly communicated to all stakeholders and strategic partners of the CBSS.

[Download: Declaration on the participation by the Russian Federation and Belarus in the work of the Council of the Baltic Sea States, 3 March 2022](#)

Published 04 March 2022



Government Offices of Sweden

Joint statement from the International Coordination and Response Group for the victims of Flight PS752

The International Coordination and Response Group for the victims of Flight PS752 today issued the following joint statement:

“Almost two years ago, in the early morning of January 8, 2020, the Iranian military fired two surface-to-air missiles and destroyed Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 near Tehran.

“We, Ministers representing Canada, Sweden, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom, honour the memory of the 176 innocent passengers and crew who lost their lives that day. We will never forget this senseless loss of life and stand in solidarity with the victims’ families. They deserve transparency, justice and accountability for this reprehensible tragedy.

“As a group of states that have been specially affected by Iran’s breaches of international law, we have united our efforts to ensure that the interests of the victims and their families are served, and that there is respect for the rule of law. With this common purpose, we have consistently called upon Iran to engage in good-faith negotiations to fulfill its international legal obligations to make full reparations for the downing of Flight PS752.

“Most recently, the Coordination Group asked Iran to commit to engaging in negotiations with the Group by January 5, 2022. Unfortunately, on December 27, 2021, we received an unequivocal response from Iran that it does not see a need to negotiate with the Group. After initially agreeing to engage with the Group during our first round of negotiations held on July 30, 2020, Iran is now categorically rejecting any further negotiations with the Group related to our collective demand for reparations. As reparations are

owed to the affected states, this matter must be discussed collectively, so that all victims are treated fairly and equally.

“It is clear that Iran continues to avoid its international legal responsibilities, including by refusing to negotiate further with the Coordination Group and make full reparations for its actions. We will not stand for this affront to the memories of the 176 innocent victims.

“Despite our best efforts over the past two years and multiple attempts to resolve this matter through negotiations, the Coordination Group has determined that further attempts to negotiate with Iran on reparations for the destruction of Flight PS752 at this time are futile. The Coordination Group will now focus on subsequent actions to take to resolve this matter in accordance with international law.

“We remain united in our commitment to hold Iran accountable for the actions and omissions of its civil and military officials that led to the illegal downing of Flight PS752 by ensuring that Iran makes full reparations for its breaches of international law.”

Published 06 January 2022



Government Offices of Sweden

Joint statement from the International Coordination and Response Group for the victims of Flight PS752

The International Coordination and Response Group for the victims of Flight PS752 met on 16 December and issued the following joint statement

“The International Coordination and Response Group representing Canada, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Ukraine, met virtually to discuss the Islamic Republic of Iran’s response to our offer to discuss reparations for the downing of Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 (PS752) and which steps need to be taken to ensure accountability and justice.

We have delivered a further request inviting Iran to discuss the matters that pertain to our claim and demands for reparations for the downing of PS752 during the week of January 17, 2022.

However, due to the apparent reluctance of the Islamic Republic of Iran to address this matter in a constructive and timely manner, our response to Iran indicates that they have until January 5, 2022 to confirm whether they are willing to engage in negotiations with the Coordination Group, after which we will have to assume that further attempts to negotiate reparations with Iran are futile. The Coordination Group will have to seriously consider other actions to resolve this matter within the framework of international law.

It has been nearly two years since the downing of Flight PS752, and yet the Islamic Republic of Iran has shown no interest in adhering to its international legal obligations. The Coordination Group’s patience is wearing thin. The Group stands in solidarity with the victims’ loved ones and remains united in its objective to hold the Islamic Republic of Iran accountable for the acts and omissions by civilian and military officials that led to the deaths of 176

innocent people.”

Published 17 December 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

5th Ministerial Meeting of the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament

Stockholm, 14 December 2021.

Today – co-chaired by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden Ann Linde and the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany Annalena Baerbock – Ministers from Argentina, Canada, Ethiopia, Finland, Germany, Indonesia, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland gathered for the fifth Ministerial Meeting of the Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament.

Collectively, the Ministers reflected on the Stockholm Initiative’s work since its inception in 2019 and reaffirmed their unwavering commitment to a results-oriented 10th Review Conference of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), to be held January 4-28, 2022:

“The upcoming NPT Review Conference – two years after the Treaty’s 50th anniversary – is a moment to demonstrate political leadership, honour commitments and achievements made under the Treaty, and set ourselves on a decisive path towards a world free of nuclear weapons, in the interest of preserving humanity. We remain united in our resolve to achieve the elimination of nuclear weapons in an irreversible, verifiable, and transparent manner, and to reduce the risks they pose in the interim.

The upcoming NPT Review Conference is a pivotal opportunity for all states to show high-level commitment to nuclear disarmament. The Stockholm Initiative for Nuclear Disarmament has presented a feasible way forward in this regard. We offer our full support to the President-designate of the Review Conference, Ambassador Gustavo Zlauvinen, in guiding delegations to secure the continued success of the Treaty.

Our message at the Review Conference will be clear: Nuclear weapon States must advance nuclear disarmament, in accordance with Article VI of the

Treaty. They can do so by taking forward the practical and meaningful steps reflected in the Stockholm Initiative's Stepping Stones and Nuclear Risk Reduction Package, supported by an increasing number of NPT States Parties, and by presenting a forward-looking plan for making further progress on nuclear disarmament.

In addition to member countries of the Stockholm Initiative, we welcome the additional 20 NPT States Parties that have formally aligned themselves with the Initiative's documents. We encourage all States Parties to draw upon the language and feasible ideas contained in these documents, notably in the drafting of any outcome to the Review Conference.”

Ministers welcomed the the extension of the U.S.-Russia New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) in January 2021 as well as the June 2021 presidential statement announcing a U.S.-Russia Strategic Stability Dialogue, which included a reaffirmation by that “a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.”. These are positive developments that respond to two of the stepping stones for nuclear disarmament of the Stockholm Initiative. Ministers noted the Summit Meeting between the U.S. and China held on November 16, 2021.

Despite some progress, there is considerable work that remains to be done. Ministers acknowledged that further steps remain to be taken by the five NPT-recognized nuclear weapon states reduce their nuclear arsenals, bearing a special responsibility to do so under the Treaty. Also evident is the clear unwillingness to disarm among other nuclear possessing states.

Rebuilding trust and confidence among the nuclear weapon states will help end the longstanding stasis in global nuclear disarmament.

Ministers urged all nuclear weapon states to take clear and decisive steps to lay the groundwork for next-generation arms control arrangements, to reduce or further reduce nuclear arsenals, to show leadership in putting a definite end to nuclear weapon test explosions, commencing negotiations on a treaty prohibiting fissile material production, as well as to support efforts to develop multilateral nuclear disarmament verification capacities.

The Stockholm Initiative developed the Stepping Stones for Advancing Nuclear Disarmament and a Nuclear Risk Reduction Package with the express purpose of rebuilding trust and confidence and promoting progress through practical measures, such as transparency on nuclear arsenals, reducing role of nuclear weapons in security and defense policy, and

increased dialogue. Ministers identified nuclear risk reduction as an area of particular urgency. They discussed concrete measures to curtail risks and avoid escalation, in order to advance the overarching goal of nuclear disarmament.

Ministers took note of the outcome of the P5 Principals Meeting in Paris and encouraged the nuclear weapon states to make full use of, and further develop, the P5 format to yield more concrete results at the upcoming Review Conference and in the next NPT cycle.

Ministers reiterated their call in the “Stepping Stones for Advancing Nuclear Disarmament” to engage with the young generation, including through dialogue platforms, mentoring, internships, fellowships, scholarships, model events and youth group activities. They also reiterated their call to encourage visits to and interaction with communities affected by nuclear weapons, including Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and former nuclear test sites such as Semipalatinsk and in the Pacific. They remained resolved to integrate a diverse gender perspective and promote the full and effective participation of women in nuclear disarmament decision-making.

Ministers also committed to exploring new, innovative ways to advance nuclear disarmament and address associated challenges. They resolved to make full use of the remaining weeks in the lead up to as well as during the upcoming Review Conference, including by advocating for the Stockholm Initiative’s Stepping Stones and Nuclear Risk Reduction Package.

Ministers underlined the need for continued engagement on Article VI of the Treaty beyond the Review Conference in January 2022, to ensure full implementation of commitments and to promote further progress on global nuclear disarmament.

In conclusion, Ministers underscored that they are equally committed to further cooperation across the broad spectrum of nuclear opportunities and challenges – including peaceful nuclear uses as well as addressing proliferation challenges.

Published 14 December 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

Joint statement from the International Coordination and Response Group for the victims of Flight PS752

The International Coordination and Response Group for the victims of Flight PS752 today issued the following joint statement

"We, Ministers representing Canada, Sweden, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom, express our deep disappointment that the Islamic Republic of Iran has not accepted our multiple requests to meet on November 22, 2021 to negotiate on the matter of reparations for the downing of Flight PS752.

We remind the Islamic Republic of Iran that it must fulfil its international legal responsibility to make full reparations to the Group of Countries and thus reiterate our call to negotiate in good faith and to do so before the end of this year.

We will continue to stand in solidarity with the families and loved ones of the PS752 victims in their profound loss and suffering. They can be assured that the Coordination Group will remain united in its objective to hold the Islamic Republic of Iran accountable for this tragedy.

Should Iran continue to avoid negotiating with the group, the Coordination Group will have no choice but to seriously consider other actions and measures to resolve this matter within the framework of international law."

Published 24 November 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

OSCE Chairperson-in-Office welcomes confidence-building steps between Armenia and Azerbaijan

VIENNA/STOCKHOLM, 13 June 2021.

The return of 15 Armenian detainees to Armenia today, and Armenia's handover to Azerbaijan of information that will facilitate important demining work, are welcome confidence building measures, said OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde. "These important steps bring the sides closer to dialogue, closer to stability, and closer to a comprehensive settlement."

"I appreciate the valuable role played by the Georgian and US governments, as well as the excellent cooperation between the President of the European Council and the Swedish OSCE Chairpersonship, ahead of the agreement. The developments are a vital step also for regional cooperation in the South Caucasus", Minister Linde noted.

Noting that core issues remain, Linde urged Armenia and Azerbaijan to build upon these positive steps by releasing all remaining detainees, and resuming high-level negotiations under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs and with the assistance of my personal representative, Ambassador Kasprzyk, in order to find a comprehensive political settlement to all outstanding issues.

Published 13 June 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

Joint statement from the International Coordination and Response Group for the victims of Flight PS752

The International Coordination and Response Group for the victims of Flight PS752 today issued the following joint statement:

“We, Ministers representing Canada, Sweden, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom, today (June 3 2021) delivered a notice of our claim against the Islamic Republic of Iran, in relation to the downing of Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 (PS752).

The Republic’s actions and omissions amount to breaches of international law. Our claim states that our respective countries, nationals and residents on board flight PS752 were seriously and irreversibly harmed by the tragedy and Iran must fulfill its legal responsibility to make full reparations to the group of states.

We have made a series of demands that include, but is not limited to, an acknowledgement of wrongdoing and a full accounting of events that led to the downing, a public apology, the return of missing and stolen belongings of the victims, assurances of non-repetition in the most concrete terms, transparency in the criminal prosecutions in accordance with the rule of law, and equitable compensation for material and moral damages suffered by the victims and their families regardless of nationality and in an amount consistent with its obligations under international law.

We now call on Iran to work with us to set a date to formally begin negotiations on reparations.

As always, we stand in solidarity with the loved ones of the victims of

PS752, who continue to grieve their profound loss.”

Published 03 June 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

Joint Statement from the International Coordination and Response Group for the victims of Flight PS752

The International Coordination and Response Group for the victims of Flight PS752 today issued the following joint statement:

“We, Ministers representing Afghanistan, Canada, Sweden, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom, have taken note of the release of the Islamic Republic of Iran’s final safety investigation report into the downing of Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 (PS752).

The Coordination Group countries will now carefully review this report and its findings. We stand in solidarity with the families and loved ones of the victims, who continue to grieve their profound loss.

As we have done since the beginning, the Coordination Group will continue to seek accountability and transparency from the Islamic Republic of Iran for this tragedy and justice for the victims.”

Published 17 March 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

The Foreign Ministers of Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark mark the International Women's Day 2021

For decades, Nordic countries have prospered due to the equal participation and inclusion of women and girls in all areas of societal life. For us, ensuring the enjoyment of human rights of all women and girls, in all their diversity, and ending gender-based discrimination in all of its forms, is the right and the smart thing to do because gender equality benefits everyone.

Globally, we have seen remarkable improvements for the health and rights of women and girls over the past decades. But the global pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities, with disproportional impact on the health, participation, wellbeing and socio-economic status of women and girls worldwide – and has also increased gender-based violence. Now, global leaders must commit to placing women at the center of recovery plans, ensuring their participation in decision making processes, and redouble efforts to secure the health, rights and needs of all women and girls.

Additionally, we will continue to counter the growing pressure on human rights of women and girls and attacks on the notion of gender equality both globally, in multilateral fora and within Europe. We are particularly concerned about actions to undermine or roll back sexual and reproductive health and rights, including the access to safe and legal abortions, comprehensive sexuality education and modern contraceptives.

We also remain committed to strengthening the agenda for Women, Peace and Security, which celebrated its 20th anniversary last year. Women peacebuilders and women human rights defenders play key roles in ensuring

sustainable peace. They must be empowered and protected.

For International Women's Day 2021, the Nordic Ministers for Foreign Affairs strongly recommit to the fundamental values and principles of gender equality. We condemn any attacks on the rights of women and girls and take this opportunity to reiterate that they must be defended and safeguarded at all times.

Published 08 March 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

Statement from International Coordination and Response Group for the victims of Flight PS752 marking one year since the tragic downing of Flight PS752

January 8, 2021 - Ottawa, Ontario - Global Affairs
Canada

One year ago, in the early morning of January 8, 2020, Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752 was downed by two Iranian military surface-to-air missiles near Tehran.

Today we honour the memory of those who perished and offer our sincere condolences to all who mourn the victims of the PS752 tragedy. We share the grief of the families, relatives and friends who lost loved ones.

We urgently call on Iran to provide a complete and thorough explanation of the events and decisions that led to this appalling plane crash.

Our countries will hold Iran to account to deliver justice and make sure Iran makes full reparations to the families of the victims and affected countries.

Signed on January 8, 2021

Mohammed Haneef Atmar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic
Republic of Afghanistan

François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada

Ann Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden

Dmytro Kuleba, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine

James Cleverly, Minister for Middle East and North Africa of the United Kingdom

Kabul/Kyiv/London/Ottawa/Stockholm

Published 08 January 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

National Statement of H.E. Ann Linde Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, at the 27th OSCE Ministerial Council in Tirana, 3 December 2020

Check against delivery.

Excellencies, dear colleagues,

I want to thank our Albanian hosts, and my friend Edi Rama, who have guided the organization through this challenging year. Thanks to your efforts, and those of your professional team, the OSCE was among the first organizations in the global system to resume activities in the beginning of the pandemic. Thanks also to all dedicated women and men in the various OSCE field operations that every day continue to contribute to our security.

I also want to offer my heartfelt condolences to all who have lost family members, friends and loved ones during the pandemic.

Excellencies,

This year we celebrate the 45th anniversary of the Helsinki Final Act and the 30th anniversary of the Charter of Paris, the foundations for the European security order. When looking back at the Charter of Paris, one can feel the sense of hope that existed when it was adopted. After the decades-long Cold War, a new era for security in Europe was dawning, built on respect for international law, human rights and democracy rather than a balance between rival global powers and their so called “spheres of interest”.

A year after Paris, at the Moscow meeting in 1991, we, as participating

states, emphasized that human rights, democracy and the rule of law are of international concern and do not belong exclusively to the internal affairs of the State concerned.

By holding each other accountable we make sure that our commitments remain relevant. By honouring our commitments, we make sure that our region is safe. The turbulent events after the presidential election in Belarus are a reminder of the importance to uphold these principles.

The OSCE's autonomous institutions play an important role in ensuring accountability. They support us all in the implementation of our commitments. I look forward to the appointment of the three new heads of institutions and the new Secretary General. I particularly welcome that gender balance will be achieved in the appointments. For Sweden, gender equality is a core priority. It goes just as well for appointments to high positions as for the inclusion of women in all parts of society. The economic empowerment of women is a key aspect of viable societies, just as the inclusion of women in peace talks is a prerequisite for sustainable peace.

With the institutions fully operational we are better equipped to handle the many challenges that our organization and our region are facing.

Of all these challenges, the conflicts that remain unresolved in our region are the most acute. The ceasefire in eastern Ukraine is of course welcome, but it remains fragile and the conflict in and around Ukraine is still far from being resolved, both as regards the eastern parts of the country and the Crimean Peninsula.

The escalation in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the tragic human losses this conflict has caused show the risks inherent in the unresolved conflicts. With the ceasefire agreement in place, we hope that negotiations under the auspices of the Minsk Group Co-Chairs can result in a sustainable political solution that prevents further suffering. These tragic events should also serve as a reminder why the protracted conflicts in Georgia and Moldova need our continued attention and political commitment.

The OSCE has a unique value as an organization for conflict prevention and confidence and security building measures. Although not without challenges, the Open Skies Treaty and the Vienna document still serve as models for other regions when searching for tools to lower tensions and create more transparency. It is our duty to make sure that they remain implemented and relevant.

When Sweden takes on the role as Chair of the OSCE next year, our primary focus will be on the fundamental tasks of the OSCE:

- To defend the European security order as expressed in the Helsinki Final Act and the Charter of Paris.
- To uphold the OSCE comprehensive concept of security, with a special focus on human rights, democracy and gender equality, including the Women, Peace and Security agenda.
- And to contribute to resolving the conflicts in our region.

I look forward to working together with all of you in trying to achieve these goals.

Thank you very much!

Published 11 December 2020



Government Offices of Sweden

Statement by Sweden's Foreign Minister Ann Linde at the opening session of the 2020 OSCE Mediterranean Conference

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear colleagues, First of all, I want to direct myself to all our colleagues and friends in Vienna, after last night's terrorist attacks. I hope you are all well and safely at home. Our thoughts are with the victims and their families. We must all stand united against attacks on our open society.

Excellencies,

I want to thank all of you who have joined us today. We are living through one of the most difficult times in recent history. I want to offer my heartfelt condolences to all who have lost family members, friends and loved ones during these past months.

Next year, Sweden will take on the role as Chair of the OSCE. Our primary focus will be to go back to basics. Emphasis will be on the fundamental tasks of the OSCE: to defend the European security order and to uphold the OSCE comprehensive concept of security. The comprehensive concept of security stipulates that political and economic security, human rights, democracy, and gender equality are interrelated. It highlights how economic, social and environmental issues are linked to security.

These priorities have also influenced our work as chair of the valuable Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group this year, and I am glad that we are gathering today to discuss what we together can do to strengthen our common security. The pandemic has shown the absolute necessity of international cooperation and solidarity and this partnership is a valuable platform for strengthening our regional dialogue as well as our cooperation

on security.

This is not the time for protectionism and isolation. Solidarity and cooperation will be crucial for all of us in this situation, but especially so for countries affected by conflict, inequality, poverty and humanitarian crises, which face even tougher consequences. I look forward to our discussion this morning and to hear your views on how we can promote security in the OSCE Mediterranean region through sustainable development and economic growth. I especially want us to draw on the lessons we have learnt about how this can be done during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During our time as Chair of the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation Group this year we have focused on security topics of concern to us all: Information technology and the fight against human trafficking; Women, peace, and security, and; Youth engagement and participation to counter violent extremism and radicalization that may develop into acts of terrorism. I believe these discussions have shown that we have a lot to learn from each other, and that we share many of the same challenges.

I also look forward to the expert discussions later on today on how we can ensure women's economic empowerment and promote environmental cooperation during the COVID-19 pandemic, as these topics are linked to promoting our common security, inclusive economic growth and sustainable development.

Regarding women's economic empowerment, Sweden is working hard to ensure that the global response to COVID-19 includes a rights and gender perspective, in the short, medium and long term. This is crucial in order to 'build back better' and to leave no one behind. There are numerous reports of increased gender-based violence and domestic violence when people are in quarantine, or just generally spend more time at home. Women dominate the health and caregiving sector globally, but they are paid less, their jobs are often less secure, and they have less access to social protection systems. Women's economic empowerment, in terms of labour market participation, participation in trade and access to financial services as well as ownership rights, will be crucial if we are to build back better and achieve sustainable development.

When it comes to environmental cooperation, we already see how climate change affects millions of women, men and children around the globe. This is particularly the case for the Mediterranean region, which is among the

most affected and vulnerable in the world. Environmental contamination, water shortage and lack of “future proof” energy supply affect the lives of the hundreds of millions living around the Mediterranean. We need to pay more attention to the link between climate change and security, and demand better and more integrated analyses from the field. We need to make conflict prevention climate aware, and efforts to combat climate change conflict sensitive. Our recovery strategies should be used as an opportunity to take on important reforms towards fulfilling the Agenda 2030 and the sustainable development goals, as well as the goals of the Paris agreement. We need to ensure that the recovery is based on green transition. Lack of action towards climate neutrality will bring about consequences and costs that by far exceed the transition costs.

We also need a democratic approach towards recovery. This includes ensuring good governance, strengthening civil society and the respect for human rights, including freedom of expression and information – online and off line – and everyone’s freedom of religion or belief. It also includes reducing inequalities and gender inequalities. We must not leave the most vulnerable behind as we tackle this crisis. No one of us can succeed these efforts on their own.

International cooperation and dialogue are needed. Sweden aims to support inclusive dialogue via The Swedish Dialogue Institute for the Middle East and North Africa, which serves as a platform for contacts and dialogue between on the one hand Sweden and the countries of Europe and on the other hand the countries of the Middle East and North Africa. Also, the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination through interreligious and intercultural dialogues is key to preventing conflicts and increase tolerance and understanding across cultures and between regions.

Excellencies,

The COVID-19 pandemic is a historic catastrophe and our response to it has included unprecedented measures. When we strive to build back better, international cooperation will be key. I am glad that we are gathering here today to discuss how we together can promote security and sustainable development. I look forward to our discussion.

Thank you.

Published 24 November 2020



Government Offices of Sweden

Minister's Declaration by the Foreign Ministers of the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden

Minister's Declaration at the occasion of the Conference "2020 Capturing Technology - Rethinking Arms Control".

We, the Foreign Ministers of the Czech Republic, the Republic of Finland, the Federal Republic of Germany, the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Kingdom of Sweden, convened today at the occasion of the conference "2020. Capturing Technology. Rethinking Arms Control" to promote new and effective approaches to arms control that can contribute to international security and stability in the 21st century.

We are concerned by the unravelling of international arms control arrangements which have over the past decades been cornerstones of international and European security. We are mindful of the speed of technological developments in key areas such as artificial intelligence, biotech, cyber, missile technology and quantum computing, that add new dimensions and complexities to world security and future conflict scenarios.

While we recognize the great potential for human progress and economic growth inherent in the application of new technologies, as well as potential benefits for the verification of arms control arrangements, we are also aware of the mounting risks for international peace and stability created by the potential misuse of new technologies. We note with concern the growing risk of a destabilizing arms race between major military powers, which is exacerbated by the new military capabilities based on new technologies. In the framework of the Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, we affirm that the European Union, acting as a community of values and as a security community for all EU citizens, must lay the

foundations for peace and stability for future generations.

The European Union must equally defend its own founding values – human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights – as well as multilateralism and the rules based international order.

To these ends, the undersigned Foreign Ministers will work together to strengthen the role of the EU in promoting arms control for a new technological age by

- renewing commitment to the goal of an effective global arms control architecture firmly anchored in international law, including human rights law and international humanitarian law, and multilateral decision-making,
- enhancing our common understanding of the existing and potential risks as well as the benefits of the military use of new technologies,
- advancing the development of effective arms control solutions that aim to mitigate the possible risks of the military use of new technologies while also utilising their potential to enhance the effectiveness of existing arms control arrangements, inter alia by providing more effective tools for verification,
- reconfirming the responsibility of states to ensure that all development, deployment and use of new weapon systems is in line with international humanitarian law,
- proposing a strategic EU process on the responsible military use of new technologies including artificial intelligence and on guidance to defence related innovation,
- developing effective global multi-stakeholder formats involving academia and industry to ensure the principles of responsible innovation are respected by research, development and commerce and building on the work of the European Union's Global Tech Panel,
- considering improved measures preventing proliferation of sensitive new technologies to illegitimate non-state actors such as terrorists,
- harnessing the full potential of European diplomacy in taking forward multilateral arms control discussions focusing on the military use of new technologies,
- supporting independent research including by the European Non Proliferation Consortium analyzing the risks and opportunities of the military use of new technologies for international security and stability and developing new and effective arms control solutions.



Government Offices of Sweden

Joint Statement from the International Coordination and Response Group for the victims of Flight PS752

October 27, 2020

The International Coordination and Response Group for the victims of Flight PS752 held a virtual meeting today (October 27, 2020).

Ministers representing Afghanistan, Canada, Sweden, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom discussed progress made on the investigations, and securing accountability and justice for the victims of the downing.

The Coordination Group recommitted to remaining united and to working together to achieve our objectives of transparency, justice, accountability and reparations in order to help families get the answers they deserve and find closure.

The Coordination Group continues its call on Iran to conduct an independent and comprehensive investigation into the causes and contributing factors that led to the downing in accordance with the standards and recommended practices set out under to Annex 13 to the Convention on International Civil Aviation.

The Coordination Group will continue to seek accountability for those responsible by encouraging a full and transparent criminal investigation and to call for impartial judicial proceedings in order to obtain justice for the victims of this tragedy.

Published 28 October 2020



Government Offices of Sweden

Chairs' Summary Third Ministerial Strategic Dialogue on UNRWA

15 October 2020

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Ministers H.E Ayman Safadi of Jordan and H.E Ann Linde of Sweden hosted the third Ministerial Strategic Dialogue today, via telecommunication, to discuss joint efforts to support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Participants included Egypt, France, Germany, Japan, Kuwait, Norway, the United Kingdom, the European External Action Service and the European Commission. UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini attended the meeting.

The participants underscored the importance of UNRWA as a critical component for humanitarian relief, regional development, stability and security, and underlined that UNRWA must continue to operate in fulfilment of its UN mandate until a durable and just solution to the Palestine refugee issue is found in accordance with international law and relevant UN resolutions, including UN General Assembly resolution 194, and within the context of a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the basis of the two-state solution.

Commissioner-General Lazzarini briefed the participants on the many challenges UNRWA is facing in a region of political and economic turmoil, compounded by the COVID-19 crisis. He also outlined the severe financial situation of the agency and the need to achieve a more forwardlooking and predictable funding.

The participants emphasized the importance of UNRWA's programmes in providing essential services to over 5.6 million Palestinian refugees in its five areas of operations, in line with UN values and contributing to the Agenda 2030, in accordance with UNRWA's mandate.

The Strategic Dialogue members reiterated their full support for UNRWA's mandate as demonstrated at its renewal at the United Nations General

Assembly in December 2019 and stressed the need to translate that political support into financial support, to allow UNRWA to continue delivering its vital services to Palestinian refugees efficiently and without interruption.

Participants called for continued support to UNRWA's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including through ensuring that the Agency's flash appeals are fully funded. Participants also expressed appreciation for the capacity of UNRWA and its staff to adapt to the difficult circumstances, including the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering the Agency's dire financial situation, the participants urged both current and new donors to do their utmost to close the funding gap for the remainder of 2020, in order to ensure that UNRWA is able to maintain its educational, health, relief and vital development services to refugees and to advocate for their rights and protection in accordance with its mandate. The participants agreed to work jointly to close the funding gap, including through outreach to other donors.

The participants stressed the need to move from short-term financial crisis-management to a more strategic, sustainable and predictable financial support, notably through multiyear financial commitments and core financing from a more diversified and expanded donor base. In order to sustain the work towards a more forward-looking and sustainable approach, the participants agreed to convene a larger international event beginning 2021.

Published 15 October 2020



Government Offices of Sweden

Joint statement by the Foreign Ministers of Sweden and Denmark

We are deeply concerned by the contents of the documentary called *The Mole*, which concerns a number of activities related to the DPRK.

In response to these concerns, we have decided to task our missions to the UN with bringing the documentary to the attention of the UN Sanctions Committee. We will also raise the issue in the EU.

We take the content of the documentary very seriously as it raises a number of deeply problematic questions and concerns.

The sanctions adopted by the UN Security Council against the DPRK in response to the DPRK's nuclear and ballistic missile programs and activities must be respected and upheld.

We want to be very clear - it is the duty of the DPRK and all other states to implement and adhere to the sanctions levelled against the DPRK.

The recurring reports, including from the Panel of Experts of the UN Sanctions Committee on the DPRK, of extensive violations of sanctions on the DPRK is a matter of serious concern.

We are analysing the information in the documentary and what possible further steps it may entail. We will not prejudge further steps that the competent national authorities may wish to take on this issue.

Published 12 October 2020



Joint Statement by the Foreign Ministers of Estonia, Finland and Sweden

Estonia, Finland and Sweden have agreed that in case of a new significant information on the catastrophe of the M/S Estonia that has not been reported before, Estonia, Finland and Sweden will jointly assess the new information. A Discovery Network documentary about the M/S Estonia disaster in 1994 includes new underwater video images from the wreck site showing damage on the starboard side of the wreck. Estonia, Finland and Sweden have agreed that verification of the new information presented in the documentary will be made in accordance and full respect of the Agreement between the Republic of Estonia, the Republic of Finland and the Kingdom of Sweden regarding the M/S Estonia signed in 1995. The fundamental idea with this agreement is to protect the M/S Estonia, as a final place of rest for victims of the disaster, from any disturbing activities. Our countries will cooperate closely in this matter and Estonia as Flag State will lead this process. Estonia, Finland and Sweden emphasize that we rely on final conclusions of JAIC (Joint Accident Investigation Commission) Final Report of 1997.



Government Offices of Sweden

Friends in Defence of Democracy

Today, foreign ministers and their representatives from Georgia, Liberia, Mongolia, Portugal, Sweden, Tunisia and Uruguay have come together in the margins of the UN General Assembly to mark the beginning of a new partnership, the Friends in Defence of Democracy.

We share a common concern for the challenges facing democracy, human rights and the rule of law around the world. These worrisome trends have been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We, the Friends in Defence of Democracy, will collaborate with a view to manifesting our commitment to democracy and to stepping up our efforts to protect democracy, its principles, processes, institutions and defenders.

25 September 2020

Published 25 September 2020



Government Offices of Sweden

Joint Statement by the Nordic Foreign Ministers (N5) from Bornholm

On 17 September, the Foreign Ministers of Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark met on the Danish island of Bornholm, in the Baltic Sea. The ministers' discussions focused on international security and foreign policy issues.

The ministers condemn in the strongest possible terms the poisoning of Russian opposition leader Alexey Navalny and call upon Russia to conduct an impartial and transparent investigation including experts from the OPCW. The Ministers express their deep concern over the use of a banned nerve agent on the territory of one of our neighbouring countries. Russia must immediately disclose any relevant information on how a chemical weapons attack could be conducted on its territory. Any attack with a chemical weapon is a clear breach of international law, undermining existing norms against the use of weapons of mass destruction. The international community needs to see those responsible held accountable. Further, attacks on members of the opposition are an unacceptable breach of democratic principles, human rights and international law. We regret this grave blow against democracy and political plurality in Russia.

The ministers also reiterated their support and solidarity with the people of Belarus who demand respect for fundamental freedoms and free and fair elections. The Belarusian authorities' brutal repression and disproportionate use of force against its own citizens must end. Referring to previous statements, the ministers call on the Belarusian authorities to immediately release all unlawfully detained, to launch a genuine national dialogue and to engage meaningfully with the OSCE. The foreign ministers underline the importance of swift imposition of sanctions by the EU and likeminded states on those responsible for electoral fraud and oppression of civilians.

The ministers also discussed Mr. Björn Bjarnasons report on Nordic Foreign and Security Policy, which opens an important new chapter in Nordic cooperation on foreign and security policy. Welcoming the report, the foreign ministers have agreed to look into recommendations within all three chapters of the report: climate, hybrid/cyber and multilateralism, with a view to taking them forward.

Finally, the ministers agreed on the need for further Nordic efforts related to conflict prevention and Women, Peace & Security (WPS). 20 years after the UN Security Council adopted the first resolution on WPS, underlining the importance of increasing women's full and equal participation in conflict prevention and sustainable peacebuilding, the agenda needs increased commitment globally to ensure its implementation. At the same time, conflicts are becoming more complex. The Nordic ministers reiterate that peace can only be achieved if women are at front and centre in peace processes, and they each commit to stronger Nordic cooperation as well as stronger integration of WPS in conflict prevention efforts.

Published 22 September 2020



Joint Communiqué on the Conflict in Yemen

On September 17, Foreign Minister Ann Linde co-hosted, together with the Foreign Ministers of Germany, Kuwait and the UK, a virtual high-level meeting on the situation in Yemen, in connection to the United Nations' 75th General Assembly. The meeting was attended by UN Secretary-General António Guterres and a Group of countries particularly engaged in supporting UN efforts in Yemen. The Group comprises the five permanent members of the UN Security Council (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States), Sweden, Germany, Kuwait and the European Union. The meeting followed-up the Group's high-level meeting in New York last year, which was also co-hosted by Sweden.

At the meeting, the Group voiced their deep concern over the continued hostilities in Yemen and the deteriorating humanitarian crisis. It gave strong support to the UN efforts and urged the parties to engage with the UN Special Envoy to reach a national ceasefire. They also emphasized the urgent need for more funding to the UN humanitarian response. The Group agreed on the following Joint Communiqué.

Joint Communiqué by Germany, Kuwait, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, China, France, Russia and the European Union on the conflict in Yemen:

1. The Foreign Ministers of Germany, Kuwait, Sweden, and the United Kingdom co-hosted a meeting on Thursday 17 September 2020, in connection with the 75th United Nations General Assembly, with Ministers and representatives of United States, China, France, Russia, and the High

Representative of the European Union, to discuss the urgent need for political progress in Yemen.

2. Following briefings by the UN Secretary-General and his Special Envoy for Yemen, the Group discussed the urgent need for military de-escalation and political progress in Yemen, underlining their full support for the Special Envoy, Mr Martin Griffiths, including his efforts to facilitate agreement between the Yemeni parties on the Joint Declaration comprised of a nationwide ceasefire, humanitarian and economic measures and the resumption of a comprehensive, inclusive political process. The Group reaffirmed the international community's firm commitment to uphold Yemen's sovereignty, unity, independence, and territorial integrity. They reiterated that only an inclusive political solution can end the conflict in Yemen.

3. The Group stressed the need for the parties, through the political process, to swiftly conclude a comprehensive transitional agreement in order to end the conflict, usher in a transitional period where power is shared among diverse political and social components, and at the end of this period, ensure a peaceful transition of power to a new, inclusive government on the basis of credible national elections. The Group underlined the need for an inclusive political process, including the full participation of women and youth. The Group called on the Government of the Republic of Yemen and the Houthis to engage with the Special Envoy constructively and continuously, without preconditions, in order to swiftly reach agreement on the UN peace proposals. The Group also called on the neighbours of Yemen to use their influence to this effect in support of UN efforts.

4. The Group stressed the urgent need for de-escalation across Yemen and a nationwide ceasefire, as well as a full implementation of resolution 2532. In this regard, they welcomed the Secretary-General's call on 25 March for an immediate cessation of hostilities in Yemen as well as the unilateral ceasefire announced by the Coalition to Support Legitimacy in Yemen on 8 April, and expressed regret that the Yemeni parties did not seize the opportunity to achieve a nationwide ceasefire. The Group voiced its great concern about the continuing Houthi offensive on Marib, putting residents and displaced persons there at grave risk, which threatens to derail the UN peace process. The Group emphasised its concern about continuing violence in the Yemen conflict, including the continuation of Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia, which pose a serious threat to regional security. The Group expressed its concern about reports of continued civilian casualties. The Group called on all parties to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law, including the

protection of civilians, notably humanitarian workers and health personnel, as well as civilian infrastructures.

5. The Group reiterated its commitment to the Yemeni peace process and the relevant Security Council Resolutions, including UN Security Council Resolution 2216, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, and the National Dialogue Conference outcomes. It reiterated the importance of full compliance by Members States with the arms embargo imposed by UN Security Council resolutions concerning Yemen. The Group welcomed the announcement on 28 July of acceleration of the Riyadh Agreement, mediated by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and welcomed the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in this regard, and called on the Yemeni Government and Southern Transitional Council to fully implement those steps urgently. If implemented these agreements would bolster UN efforts to achieve a comprehensive solution.

6. The Group welcomed the commencement of the latest round of prisoner exchange negotiations in Geneva and called on the parties to urgently implement their stated commitments in this regard. The Group reaffirmed its full support for UNMHA and called on the Yemeni parties to respect the ceasefire in Hodeidah and to engage constructively on the implementation of the Stockholm Agreement, including the UNVIM mandate, and which remains an important part of the Yemen peace process. In this regard, the Group further called on the Yemeni parties, to engage constructively with UN proposals to ensure the adequate and unhindered flow of fuel, humanitarian goods, and food into Yemen through Hodeidah port and to establish a mechanism for directing port revenues to civil servant salary payments, based on the 2014 payroll database. The Group expressed concern over the humanitarian consequences of fuel shortages in northern Yemen. The Group emphasized the importance of ensuring that the civilian population can regularly access adequate supplies of fuel and other essential goods. The Group also reaffirmed its support to the United Nations Verification and Inspection Mechanism for Yemen.

7. Following the white note issued on food security risks by the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs on 4 September (with reference to UN Security Council Resolution 2417), the Group noted that economic and humanitarian indicators show rising food insecurity, and that famine is a realistic prospect in Yemen this year in the event of prolonged food import disruption or hindrances to distribution, exacerbated by the outbreak of Covid-19. In this regard, the Group expressed deep concern that the UN Humanitarian Response Plan has received only 30 per cent of the funding it

needs this year. The Group expressed appreciation to the UK, US, Sweden, Kuwait, and the EU, for committing additional funding since the 2 June Pledging Conference to the UN Humanitarian Response Plan totalling over \$350m. In order to prevent famine, the Group called on all donors to disburse existing pledges immediately and to consider making further contributions. The Group also discussed the central role of economic collapse in intensifying the risk of famine and urged Yemen's partners to consider all possible measures to strengthen the economy, including regular foreign-exchange injections into the Central Bank and steps to encourage robust flows of critical commercial imports through all of Yemen's ports. In this context, the Group reiterated the need to address the main drivers of the current humanitarian crisis, and referred to the ongoing coordinating efforts by the EU, the UN, and the World Bank in this regard.

8. The Group recognised that obstruction and interference with humanitarian assistance operations remains extremely challenging, particularly in northern Yemen. While the Group took note of initial steps taken by the Houthis, greater progress overall is needed to enable humanitarian organisations to continue delivering life-saving assistance to millions of vulnerable people throughout Yemen. The Group called on the Yemeni parties to facilitate full, safe, and unhindered humanitarian access to all the people in need. The Group urged potential donors who have made significant contributions in the past, to step-up humanitarian assistance to the UN-led response.

9. The Group further recognised the grave threat posed by the Safer oil tanker, whose dire condition risks an environmental, economic and humanitarian catastrophe to Yemen and the region, and called on the Houthis to urgently facilitate unconditional and safe access for UN experts to conduct an assessment and repair mission.

10. The Group looked to the Security Council to review progress at the next session, and agreed to reconvene at senior official level within six months. The Group welcomed the German offer to host such a meeting in Berlin.

Published 17 September 2020



Government Offices of Sweden

Joint statement from Nordic-Baltic (NB8) Foreign Ministers' annual meeting

08.-09.09.2020 Tallinn, Estonia. Statement by Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden.

The Foreign Ministers of the Nordic-Baltic 8 - Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden - condemn in the strongest possible terms the usage of a chemical nerve agent of the Novichok group to poison the Russian opposition leader Alexey Navalny. Ministers call upon Russia and the international community to initiate an impartial and international investigation that would include the experts of the OPCW. Those responsible for the attack must be brought to justice.

NB8 Foreign Ministers also call for a strong and joint international response to the poisoning. Two years ago a chemical nerve agent of the Novichok group was used to commit a similar crime in the United Kingdom. Such attacks constitute an unacceptable threat to human lives as well as grave violations of basic human rights and international law. It is the responsibility of the international community to implement measures that would prevent similar crimes from happening in the future. We wish Mr Navalny a full and speedy recovery.

Referring to their joint statement from 11 August 2020 on recent developments in Belarus, the NB8 Foreign Ministers express their solidarity with the people of Belarus and admire their peaceful resolve. The continued violence from the authorities against peaceful demonstrators, threats to use military force, targeting of journalists, revoking foreign media accreditation, blocking of independent media websites and Internet shutdowns are alarming and must end. Ministers express concern about the criminal case opened against the Coordination Council, as well as the intimidation and detention of its members. The Coordination Council, which consists of representatives of

different parts of the society, could be instrumental in paving the way for a genuine and inclusive national dialogue.

In this regard, the NB8 Foreign Ministers call on the Belarusian authorities to engage with OSCE and the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Prime minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of Albania, Edi Rama, and the incoming OSCE Chairperson-in-Office, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Ann Linde. Ministers urged the authorities of Belarus to release immediately and unconditionally all unlawfully detained persons. There is a need for a complete and transparent investigation of all abuses in order to hold those responsible to account.

Ministers agree that further strengthening of the regional economic cooperation can help to address the impact caused by the spread of Covid-19 virus. Current crisis has underlined the importance of digitalization as a tool to strengthen the resilience of affected countries and societies; regional digital solutions can help to address immediate challenges of the crisis and assist in medium and long-term recovery.

NB8 Foreign Ministers also pay tribute to the work done in the Nordic-Baltic format. By Nordic Baltic 8 cooperation award, the Ministers' meeting marks and celebrates the 30th anniversary from the first meeting of the NB8 Foreign Ministers, held in December 1990 in Copenhagen, and thus also the 30th anniversary of establishing the Nordic – Baltic cooperation format. The 1990s was a defining time in the history of Europe and the world. 30 years ago the Nordic countries were the most vocal supporters of restoration of the independent Baltic States, helped to pave their way back to international community.

Ministers recognise that the cooperation between Nordic-Baltic countries has developed over time, and today the group is working together aiming to build a more secure, innovative, strong, competitive region.

Published 09 September 2020



Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde in telephone conversation with Belarusian Minister of Foreign Affairs Vladimir Makei

During the conversation, Ms Linde expressed deep concern over the developments in Belarus and referred to the statements that Sweden and the EU have issued concerning the unacceptable violence against demonstrators and election fraud during the presidential election.

Ms Linde pointed out that violence and provocations must not be used against demonstrators and called for the immediate release of all political prisoners.

Dialogue between the opposition, civil society and the authorities must now be initiated. It is important that the Belarusian Government listens to the people's protests rather than using violence to intimidate them. Sweden considers that the OSCE, of which Belarus is a member, can support to bring about the dialogue between the parties, a view that Ms Linde expressed to Mr Makei.

Sweden is the incoming Chair of the OSCE. In that role, Ms Linde offered to visit Minsk together with Albanian Prime Minister and Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Edi Rama, who is currently the Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, to meet with representatives of the Belarusian Government and the opposition.



Statement by Minister for Foreign Affairs

The presidential election that took place in Belarus on 9 August was, as we have all seen, neither free nor fair. The people's engagement and desire for democratic change was met with a clenched fist by the Belarusian Government. The violence and repression used against demonstrators, journalists and opposition members exceeded our worst fears. The Belarusian authorities themselves state that over 6 000 people have been arrested; the opposition estimates that the real figure is considerably higher.

The Swedish Government was clear about what the demands and expectations were prior to the election: respect for human rights, democratic principles and no harassment of the opposition or civil society. I was in direct contact with representatives of the opposition and of civil society on election day and I reiterated our support for their democratic endeavours and their safety. After the election, we were among the first countries to immediately summon the Belarusian Ambassador in order to convey our strong criticism and condemnation.

The EU has also reacted clearly. On 11 August, the EU issued a strong statement calling for all those who had been deprived of their liberty in connection with the election to be released immediately. The EU also demanded that the Belarusian leadership begin a genuine dialogue with the opposition and that a thorough review of its relations with Belarus will be initiated.

The Swedish Government has been a staunch supporter of the clear standpoint of the EU. During an extraordinary Council meeting between the EU foreign ministers today, Sweden reiterated that the EU's reaction to the actions of the Belarusian Government must be strong and reflect the demands we need to set concerning respect for human rights and the rule of law. The Minister for Foreign Affairs stated that the EU should immediately initiate the process of adopting new sanctions against individuals who are directly responsible for the violence, unfounded arrests and fraud in connection with the presidential election. The minister also stressed that the EU's measures must not result in the population being isolated or punished

for the regime's violent actions. Sweden also stressed that the EU should increase its support to civil society and independent journalists in Belarus.

The meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council today resulted in a forceful condemnation of the violence against demonstrators and strong demand to release all persons detained in connection with the election. The EU also reiterated that the election was neither free nor fair. The EU expressed its readiness to facilitate a dialogue with the opposition and the possibility to send a mission to Minsk was also discussed. Furthermore, the ministers agreed to launch the process to adopt new sanctions against those directly responsible for violence against demonstrators and for election fraud. This constitutes an important step and is very much welcomed by Sweden. The ministers also agreed to increase support to civil society in Belarus, including through financial means.

Published 14 August 2020



Government Offices of Sweden

Joint Statement of Nordic-Baltic Foreign Ministers on recent developments in Belarus

The Foreign Ministers of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden, in the context of the developments that are taking place in Belarus, express their grave concern about the violence against post-election demonstrations that have occurred in response to reports of widespread electoral fraud. We are very troubled by the reports of physical injuries inflicted on the demonstrators.

The presidential elections, which took place in Belarus on 9th August 2020, did not comply with the international commitments of Belarus and globally recognized standards of democracy and rule of law, and they were not free and fair.

We urge the Belarusian authorities to stop persecution of political opponents, to release all those unfairly detained immediately and to respect human rights and freedoms. We call upon the Belarusian government to immediately engage in a genuine political dialogue with the opposition in order to avoid further use of violence.

We remain committed to the people of Belarus and will continue to closely follow developments.

Published 11 August 2020



Statement on the developments in Belarus

I take a very serious view of the developments in Belarus following yesterday's presidential elections. The police have used violence against demonstrators in a disproportionate and unacceptable manner. Demonstrators and journalists have been detained. There are reports that a number of people have been injured, and there are also reports of deaths. The responsibility for these violent developments lies with President Lukashenko and the Belarusian Government.

The conduct of the presidential elections follows a dismal tradition of undemocratic elections in Belarus. Electoral fraud is thought to have been widespread, including reports of a disproportionately high rate of advance voting. However, this information is difficult to verify as OSCE/ODIHR election observers were not given the opportunity to monitor the elections. Several opposition candidates were prevented in advance from participating in the elections, including through claims of invalid nomination signatures and politically motivated charges. In addition, the election campaign has been plagued by arbitrary detentions and fines imposed on journalists and political activists.

At the same time, the election campaign has demonstrated that demand for democratic change and reforms in Belarus is high. The massive popular engagement for change was clear when I spoke with representatives of the Belarusian opposition and civil society last night. I also met several of them during my visit to Minsk in November last year. My message was clear: Sweden will continue to support the Belarusian people's legitimate demands for democracy and respect for human rights.

We now demand that the authorities immediately release everyone who was arrested in connection with the elections and that politically motivated charges are dropped. We expect President Lukashenko to respect democratic principles and listen to the people's demands for change. Freedom of expression and assembly must be guaranteed, and all cases of electoral fraud and irregularities must be independently investigated. As an

initial step, the Belarusian leadership must enter into a genuine dialogue with the opposition.

If President Lukashenko refuses to listen to his people and continues along the chosen path of continued violence, it will have consequences for Sweden's relationship with the political leadership in Belarus. This will be conveyed to the Belarusian Ambassador today. We are in close contact with our EU partners, including on our further action should President Lukashenko refuse to listen to his citizens.

Published 10 August 2020



Sweden, South Africa, Mexico, Spain and Germany discussed economic gender equality and engagement in a global coalition

On 2 July, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde invited minister colleagues and government representatives from South Africa, Mexico, Spain and Germany to discuss economic gender equality. These countries, together with representatives of civil society, international organisations and private funds, will lead a global coalition on economic gender equality to accelerate results for global gender equality. Here are the key messages from the meeting:

- We, the Ministers in this meeting, share a strong commitment to global gender equality and women's and girls' full enjoyment of human rights. 25 years after the agreement on the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the World Conference on Women in 1995, the gender gap remains. This calls for intensified and concerted action. We therefore welcome the UN Women multi-stakeholder initiative "Generation Equality Forum", co-hosted by the governments of Mexico and France, and are fully engaged in moving the process forward.

- We are of the conviction that there can be no peace, security or sustainable development if half the population is left out. Gender equality is therefore not only a goal in itself, but also a means of achieving all the goals of the 2030 Agenda.

- Economic rights are fundamental human rights. Yet around the globe, a majority of women continue to live in abject poverty as opposed to men. A

majority of women also work in vulnerable, low-paid, or undervalued jobs. Gender wage gaps on the other hand are strikingly persistent in economic data. Globally, women continue to be paid less than men and as reported by the UN Women recently, women in most countries earn on average only 60-75% of men's wages. The principle of economic justice and socio-economic rights for women and girls must underpin our work to realise economic gender equality and the economic empowerment of all women and girls. This is also a lever for achieving progress in other related areas, such as women's and girls' representation and participation, countering of gender-based violence and strengthening of sexual and reproductive health and rights. Still, economic gender equality is one of the areas that is furthest from being reached according to World Economic Forum. This underlines the need for action in this matter.

- Economic gender equality means that women and men have the same opportunities to reach their full potential throughout their life cycle. In order to attain that, much needs to be done, including the strengthening of economic and social reforms for gender equality and work against discriminatory laws, as well as changing gender norms and roles. We must deliver game-changing results for women's active participation in our economies as creators of wealth, value contributors, innovators of new products across all sectors of our economies. We urgently need to turn commitments into actions and create economic opportunities for women in the margins, by building their productive assets as a primary driver for economic inclusion, giving access to land, digital id's and financial services. We must recognize unpaid care work and equally redistribute care and domestic work through a gender perspective. Women and girls need to have greater access to work, education, training, and social protection systems. We must also work on ending the gender technology gap in order to empower women and girls. There is also great potential in the area of trade and gender equality, including in reforming public and private procurement regulations to include and benefit female owned-enterprises.

- The COVID-19 crisis has revealed and exacerbated already existing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequalities. Women and girls are affected in a multitude of ways, including economically. Women have lower wages and pensions than men and are in majority in the informal, less secure, sector of the labour market. In addition, women are often outside social protection systems, but still bear most of the responsibility for domestic work, care work and the un-paid care work. As a result, this crisis has thrust to the spotlight the inherent structural precarity of women's roles in the labour force. Despite this, the COVID-19 crisis also

offers a unique opportunity for prioritisation of women and girls in the economic recovery plans. Prioritising women and girls is not just morally right, it is also an economic imperative. Women have always been critical agents of post-crisis recovery, and investing in gender equality has the potential to stimulate the economy and reverse losses to global wealth. Recovery from the COVID-19 crises requires that we develop a clear set of relief measures through a gender-lens, to ensure that we build back better to sustainable and inclusive economies that do not leave women behind. Women in the margins, such as those in the SMME and informal sectors deserve special attention in this regard.

- With this meeting, we would like to underline our commitment to work on economic justice and gender equality through actions that will guarantee the autonomy and economic empowerment of women. Germany, Mexico, South Africa, Spain and Sweden, together with other partners, will be co-leaders of the Global Action Coalition on Economic Justice and Rights, within the framework of the “Generation Equality”. This is a five-year commitment to contribute to accelerated progress on gender equality.

- Today, we are all facing the same crisis. We have an opportunity to make gender equality a top priority in the response and building back from the crisis and beyond. We are committed to contribute such transformative change in collaboration with UN Women and other partners.

Published 03 July 2020



Government Offices of Sweden

Statement by Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde on developments in Hong Kong

Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde regrets China's decision to impose a national security law in Hong Kong and takes a very serious view of this decision.

The decision is in violation of China's international obligations, as the declaration by the EU of 29 May also pointed out.

These issues should be dealt with by Hong Kong within the framework of Hong Kong's Basic Law, which provides for Hong Kong making its own laws in the area.

Sweden and the rest of the EU support the 'One Country, Two Systems' principle to preserve Hong Kong's autonomy with an independent political and judicial system in accordance with Hong Kong's Basic Law.

Sweden and the EU have expressed our views to the Chinese authorities on several occasions.

The EU was able to raise the issue of Hong Kong directly with China's highest leaders at the EU-China summit on 22 June, which was very valuable.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs is following the serious developments closely and is pushing for continued and clear joint EU action.

Published 01 July 2020



Government Offices of Sweden

Second Ministerial Strategic Dialogue on UNRWA

22 April 2020

Foreign Ministers H.E Ayman Safadi of Jordan and H.E Ann Linde of Sweden hosted the second Ministerial Strategic Dialogue today, via telecommunication, to discuss joint efforts to support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Participants included Egypt, France, Germany, Japan, Kuwait, Norway, United Kingdom, the European External Action Service and the European Commission. The meeting was attended by UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini.

The participants underscored the importance of UNRWA as a critical component for humanitarian relief, regional development, stability and security, and underlined that UNRWA must continue to operate in fulfillment of its UN mandate until a durable and just solution to the Palestine refugee issue is found in accordance with international law and relevant UN resolutions, including UN General Assembly resolution 194, and within the context of a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the basis of the two-state solution.

The participants emphasized the importance of UNRWA's programmes in providing essential services to over 5.6 million Palestinian refugees in its five areas of operations, including East Jerusalem and Gaza, in line with UN values, and contributing to the Agenda 2030 in accordance with UNRWA's mandate.

The Strategic Dialogue welcomed the overwhelming international support for UNRWA's mandate renewal at the United Nations General Assembly in December 2019 and stressed the need to translate that political support into financial support, to allow UNRWA to continue delivering its vital services to Palestinian refugees efficiently and without interruption.

The participants expressed strong support for UNRWA's new leadership and

welcomed the Commissioner-General's briefing on his plans to further strengthen the Agency.

Given the gravity of the global COVID-19 crisis, the participants called for support to UNRWA's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including through ensuring that the Agency's flash appeals are fully funded. Participants also expressed appreciation for UNRWA's staff as frontline responders to the Covid 19 pandemic and the Agency's ability and ensure the delivery of its mandate in an increasingly challenging political and financial environment.

The Strategic Dialogue called for a renewed international commitment for 2020 and beyond, in order to ensure that UNRWA is able to maintain its educational, health, relief and vital development services to refugees and to advocate for their rights and protection in accordance with its mandate. The participants invited all donors to actively support UNRWA, notably through multiyear financial commitments and core financing, to help the Agency meet the 2020 budget requirements and ensure sufficient sustainable, and predictable financial support. Furthermore, the participants explored ways to assist the Agency diversify and expand its donor base and its funding opportunities.

The participants agreed to convene a virtual pledging conference in the coming months to ensure that the Agency's financial needs are met.

Published 22 April 2020



Government Offices of Sweden

Jordan, Sweden Convene Trilateral Meeting on UNRWA

Amman/Stockholm 14 April 2020

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of Jordan, H.E Ayman Safadi, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, H.E Ann Linde, and UNRWA Commissioner General, Philippe Lazzarani, held a meeting by teleconference today to discuss the importance of international and regional support to UNRWA as it faces increased financial and operational pressures compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic in its areas of operations. The meeting was also attended by the Minister of International Development Cooperation of Sweden, H.E Peter Eriksson, and former Acting Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Christian Saunders.

The meeting addressed the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic on Palestinian refugees and on the Agency's budget and operations. With the destabilising effect of COVID-19 worldwide, participants called on the international community to respond to the UNRWA flash appeal and emphasised the importance of the Agency's work as a critical component for regional development, stability and security.

The trilateral discussions explored resource mobilisation efforts in support of the 5.6 million Palestinian refugees under the Agency's mandate. To this end, participants discussed the preparations for convening the second Ministerial Strategic Dialogue on UNRWA in the near future, via telecommunication, with the aim to ensure sustainable political and financial support to UNRWA in 2020 and beyond.

The meeting explored ways to support UNRWA following the overwhelming international support to renew its mandate at the United Nations General Assembly in December 2019. In this regard, the participants stressed the need to translate the political support into financial support, to allow UNRWA to continue delivering its vital services to Palestinian refugees efficiently and without interruption. Participants acknowledged the role that UNRWA plays in situations of humanitarian emergencies, as well as its role

in ensuring that Palestinian refugees continue to access basic rights such as the right to health, education and other human rights, in line with Agenda 2030, as well as with the Decade of Action, which aims to leave no one behind, including Palestine refugees.

Participants of the teleconference underlined their strong political support for UNRWA and for it to continue to operate in fulfillment of its mandate until a durable and just solution of the question of the Palestine refugees is found in accordance with relevant UN resolutions, including UN General Assembly Resolution 194 and within the context of a comprehensive solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the basis of the two-state solution.

Published 14 April 2020



Government Offices of Sweden

Nordic-Baltic Foreign Ministers meeting on 16 March 2020

Joint statement

The Foreign Ministers of Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia and the State Secretary of Norway discussed over a video conference on Tuesday the response to the situation caused by the spread of COVID-19 corona virus.

The Ministers and State Secretaries emphasized the need to coordinate and co-operate closely and

- stressed the resolve to work together to ensure transit for EU and EEA citizens and permanent residents who are returning home, if necessary by establishing transit corridors;
- decided to establish a network of consular directors to exchange information, best practices and possible practical measures to help citizens and permanent residents of their countries returning home;
- acknowledged the impact on economies and stressed the importance of free movement of goods, including medical equipment, and keeping cargo corridors open to ensure that the internal market keeps functioning.

Published 18 March 2020



Government Offices of Sweden

Joint press statement by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Sweden and France

Paris, 11 March 2020

Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ms Ann Linde, and French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Mr Jean-Yves Le Drian, met in Paris yesterday, at a time when the world is facing many challenges and threats. The deeply disturbing developments in Idlib leading to a humanitarian catastrophe, the rapid spread of the coronavirus and the climate crisis are examples that confirm the need for enhanced international cooperation and active diplomacy to build peace and security.

In this context, while recalling that France and Sweden are both engaged members of the Alliance for Multilateralism, and in line with the "Declaration on cooperation between France and Sweden in the field of European Affairs, as endorsed on June 7th, 2019 by French President Emmanuel Macron and Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven, the Ministers decided to strengthen cooperation on foreign and security policy in areas related to peace, security and democracy. The Ministers confirmed their commitment to the Euro-Atlantic security order and a comprehensive approach to security where security is intertwined with democracy, the respect for international law and human rights.

The Ministers also underlined the importance of the joint efforts conducted within the European Union's Common Security and Defence Policy. They also welcomed their cooperation in the European Intervention Initiative.

The Ministers discussed the need for a coherent and active engagement on security, development and humanitarian aid in the Sahel and underlined the contribution of the 'Coalition for the Sahel' as a framework for strategic and political engagement with the Sahel. They underlined the centrality of the UN's efforts and coordination role in the region. They welcomed the close

cooperation between Sweden and France regarding the Sahel. Current tensions around the Gulf will need to be addressed through a long-term strategic approach and an active EU-role in support for an inclusive regional dialogue. They also discussed other foreign policy issues such as Iran and the continued importance of Iran's compliance with the JCPOA, and the upcoming NPT review conference.

Sweden and France reaffirmed that the two-state solution, with Jerusalem as the capital of each state, is the only framework that makes it possible to meet the aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians and, in so doing, to bring about a lasting solution to the conflict.

Ministers confirmed their commitment to building a strong and effective Europe that responds to citizens' needs and, in this context, looked forward to the next Conference on the Future of Europe. The deliberations highlighted issues of common interest where Ministers decided to work more closely together.

Transnational organised crime is a threat to our common security and requires a collective response. Ministers expressed their readiness to share best practices and lessons learned. The soon-to-be appointed Swedish Ambassador in charge of combatting organised crime will work closely with the French counterpart to foster cooperation and promote appropriate initiatives at EU and international level.

Ministers agreed to intensify cooperation on emerging technologies, as well as cyber security, aiming at strengthening the capacity of the EU to secure critical infrastructure for the maintenance of vital societal and economic functions, counter cyber threats. The discussions underlined the shared view that the EU has the instruments and potential to become a leading global security policy actor in this area. France and Sweden share a common ambition for a safe, open, single and neutral digital space.

The Ministers confirmed their already strong collaboration for gender equality and all women's and girls' full enjoyment of human rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and economic and social conditions. France, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, and Sweden, as incoming chairperson of the OSCE in 2021, will jointly increase efforts to support women's participation in conflict prevention, peace processes as well as in post-conflict reconstruction. In parallel, Sweden and France will jointly advance gender equality in all realms of the European Union as well as press on with their joint diplomatic initiative to fight

trafficking for sexual exploitation. Ministers reiterated their close cooperation in the run-up to the Generation Equality Forum to be held in Mexico City on 7-8 May and Paris on 7-10 July.

Finally, the ministers agreed that our two countries would benefit from greater coordination to promote our convergences, particularly at European level with a view to their next Trio of presidencies in 2022-2023 and a joint commitment to supporting a strong and cohesive EU foreign and security policy.

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International Coordination and Response Group for the victims of Flight PS752 – Framework for Cooperation with Iran

Canada, Ukraine, Sweden, Afghanistan and the UK – members of the International Coordination and Response Group for the victims of Flight PS752 – held an in-person meeting at Canada House in London, UK, today and agreed upon a framework for cooperation with Iran in response to this tragedy to provide closure, accountability, transparency and justice for the families and loved ones of all the victims.

The framework is centred on five key elements that will guide our engagement with the Iranian authorities to ensure:

1. Full and unhindered access for our officials to and within Iran to provide consular services.
2. That the victim identification process is conducted with dignity, transparency and according to international standards and that the wishes of the families regarding repatriation are respected in all cases.
3. A thorough, independent and transparent international investigation open to grieving nations governed by the Convention on International Civil Aviation.
4. Iran assumes full responsibility for the downing of flight PS752 and recognizes its duties towards the families of the victims and other parties – including compensation.
5. Accountability for those responsible through an independent criminal investigation followed by transparent and impartial judicial proceedings which conform to international standards of due process and human

rights.

We welcome Iran's engagement to date and encourage their continued cooperation.

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Joint Communique on Ministerial Meeting on Yemen Crisis at UN General Assembly

On Thursday September 26th, on the margins of the 74th United Nations General Assembly, Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde co-hosted a high-level breakfast meeting together with the United Kingdom and Kuwait on the situation in Yemen. The meeting was attended by a number of countries who have been particularly engaged in supporting a political solution in Yemen within the UN Security Council. The Group agreed to continue their joint efforts for a political process in Yemen, and adopted on the following statement.

1. Representatives of the Governments of France, Germany, Kuwait, the People's Republic of China, the Russian Federation, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America met as a Group on Thursday, 26 September 2019, to underline their continued support for the UN-led peace process in Yemen.
2. The Group underlines its full support for the UN Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen, Martin Griffiths, and calls on the Government of Yemen and the Houthis to engage constructively and continuously with him. The Group commends the tireless efforts of the Special Envoy to support the parties to implement the Stockholm Agreement and to achieve a political solution to the conflict in Yemen. In this regard, the Group reaffirms its commitment to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Yemen.
3. The Group emphasises the need for de-escalation and efforts by all parties to ensure that the conflict in Yemen is not further drawn into growing

regional tensions. In this regard, the Group condemns in the strongest terms the increased intensity of Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia as such attacks pose a serious national security threat to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as a wider threat to regional security, and threaten to undermine the UN-led political process. In this context, the announcement on 20 September that the Houthis would cease strikes on Saudi Arabia is an important first step towards de-escalation which will need to be followed with positive action on the ground by the Houthis as well as restraint by the Coalition.

4. The Group reiterates the need to increase the pace and scale of the humanitarian response. It expresses its concern at reports that the UN is increasingly running out of funding, forced to scale back or stop life-saving activities. The Group is clear that a political settlement is the only way to address the humanitarian crisis, but given the risk of starvation faced by millions, the Group calls on all donors to disburse promptly their pledges to the UN humanitarian response. The Group expresses appreciation for the disbursement of \$500 million by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the UN on 25 September. It also calls on the conflict parties to facilitate safe, rapid and unhindered humanitarian access in compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 2451. The Group calls on all parties to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law, including ensuring the protection of civilians.

5. Following the recent developments in the south of Yemen, the Group urges the invited parties to engage in the dialogue led by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to preserve Yemen's territorial integrity. These developments give further urgency for the need to start a comprehensive and inclusive political process that will lead to an enduring political settlement to end the conflict in Yemen.

6. The Group reiterates its commitment to the Yemeni peace process and the relevant Security Council Resolutions, including UN Security Council Resolution 2216, the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism, and the outcomes of the comprehensive National Dialogue Conference. In this regard, the Group expresses its full support for the UN Special Envoy's plan to hold informal consultations with Yemeni political actors and establish a political advisory group in preparation for the resumption of formal negotiations. The Group calls on the Yemeni parties to engage constructively with the Special Envoy to resume inclusive and comprehensive political discussions which can end the conflict.

7. The Stockholm Agreement remains an important element of the Yemen peace process and should be implemented as envisaged in order to alleviate the humanitarian situation, create confidence between the parties, and improve the conditions for political talks. To gain momentum, the Group calls on the Yemeni parties to respect the ceasefire in Hodeidah and participate constructively in negotiations on implementation of Hodeidah Agreement. In particular, the Group expresses its full support for UNMHA and calls on the Yemeni parties to engage constructively with the Mission as well as with UN proposals on security arrangements, which will allow for disengagement and the mutual withdrawal of military forces, tripartite monitoring and the establishment of the UNVIM presence. The Group further calls on the Yemeni parties to engage with UN proposals to establish a mechanism for redirecting port revenues to salary payments. It also calls on the parties to start implementation of the prisoner exchange agreement as soon as possible. However, lack of full implementation of the Stockholm Agreements should not prevent the parties from participation in the Special Envoy's process toward a broader political settlement to end the conflict.

8. The Group looks to the Security Council to review progress when they next meet. The Group also agreed to continue to meet regularly at different levels and with other partners in order to support the UN-led peace process.

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