



Government Offices of Sweden

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.”

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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.”

Published 16 February 2022



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



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.

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