



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Speech by Minister for EU Affairs and Trade Ann Linde at the WTO Ministerial Conference

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Fellow ministers, director-general, excellencies, distinguished delegates,

I would like to start by expressing my warm appreciation to Argentina and to chair Susanna Malcorra for hosting this conference.

I will tell you why this gathering is important for me, representing Sweden.

For a trade-oriented country the WTO is the foundation of the multilateral trading system.

A strong, rules-based, transparent and predictable multilateral trading system is a precondition for growth and jobs.

150 years ago, Sweden was one of the poorest countries in Europe. Since then - industrialisation, innovation, a sound legal political framework and free trade - have brought Sweden to the top of many international rankings.

With a population of 10 million, we have always looked abroad to seek new markets and partners. Whether it is about iron ore, cars, trucks, music or services – the world is our arena and it is crucial that it remains open for trade.

To co-create with our fellow partners for a more sustainable future, we need a robust, rules-based and transparent environment.

The small and poor countries are those who need an open, multilateral

predictable trading system the most. It was true for Sweden and is still true for many today.

All members have a responsibility to increase the least developed countries involvement in the WTO and their share of global trade.

To promote LDC participation the Swedish government has contributed with 56 000 USD to the LDC Trust Fund.

In 2018 Sweden will allocate 2.1 million USD to the WTO Global Trust Fund, to provide negotiation support to developing countries.

Since 1995, the WTO has provided us with a legal framework. Although you don't see it or think of it every day, the WTO is the oxygen and the "bloodstream" of international trade. Therefore we must handle our common artery, the WTO, with great care.

Globalisation and trade do not only create winners. That is why the Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven launched "The Global Deal" initiative. Global Deal is about promoting dialogue. Sound labour relations and decent working conditions contribute to greater equality, increased productivity and inclusive economic development. A win-win-win situation for workers, companies and societies.

Since my first ministerial meeting in 1996, the WTO has taken many steps forward. However, trade and gender equality is an area where I would like to see further work and development. WTO must also address new issues such as e-commerce.

Getting more women into business and trade is sound economic policy. Gender equality contributes to growth in all countries, regardless of the level of development. This is important for me, Sweden and the EU.

In conclusion, we must:

- stand up for a modern, predictable, robust, rules-based multilateral and inclusive trading system
- improve the dialogue between social partners
- further gender integration and
- provide better access for developing countries to the world trading system.

Thank you very much.



Speech from Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Speech by Ann Linde to the Riksdag on the European Commission work programme

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Introduction

Mr/Madam Speaker,

I would like to start by saying that I feel very excited to be here and to have the opportunity to discuss the EU. I will briefly talk about the Commission Work Programme and about increasing inequalities, and for the first time ever I will present the Government's EU priorities for 2017.

I will conclude by also saying a few words about the Commission's White Paper on the Future of Europe, the Swedish Government's work on participation, and Brexit.

The Commission Work Programme

I am pleased that, judging by the statement given by the Committee on Foreign Affairs, there appears to be a broad political consensus on the Commission Work Programme. It is essentially in line with the EU priorities that the Government is presenting today – where issues concerning jobs, climate change, migration and security are in focus. I will return to these issues in a moment, but let me first put all of this in a larger context.

Increased inequalities and the need for an EU that delivers

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Globalisation and trade have lifted many people out of poverty, but many are also worried about growing gaps and increased vulnerability. A wave of nationalism and protectionism has swept over the world and Europe. This of

course also affects the EU.

Many people currently feel that change does not mean improvement. On the contrary, very many people feel that change is making things worse. People are seeing their jobs disappear due to global competition and technological development – and thus how their life situation is under threat.

We must understand that this frustration exists. That it is strong. And that it is, unfortunately, well-founded in many places.

In many ways I think that the populist and nationalist wave has come about because both national governments and the EU have not succeeded in delivering enough – and above all not quickly enough.

Not everyone has benefited from increased growth; instead, the gaps have widened. When people feel that their situation is worsening, they look for alternatives and quick answers.

The most important thing is that the EU can deliver results, both overall and in people's everyday lives. And that it can show that the EU creates value for all citizens.

There is a great deal that can be done here and now. It is important that the EU can deliver results that have a real impact.

This is why the Government is prioritising three areas in its EU work for 2017:

1. a Europe for jobs and inclusive growth;
2. an ambitious climate, energy and environment policy; and
3. a solidarity-based refugee and migration policy and a secure world.

Let me say a few words about why we have chosen these specific areas.

The Government's EU priorities - Jobs

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Since Sweden joined the EU, trade has grown and our real earnings have increased. Over 1.4 million Swedes go to work each day thanks to Swedish exports – and more than 70 per cent of those exports go to the EU.

Trade and the internal market are crucial for Sweden. There is great potential in a more ambitious trade in services and digitalisation. So that even more Swedes can go to work, the Government is pursuing these issues at EU level.

While the internal market must be deepened even further in order for trade to increase, we also need to ensure that there are decent conditions for those working in the internal market – and that we do not end up with wage dumping or deteriorating conditions.

The economic crisis has shown that the EU Member States are affected by each other's economic and social development. When the gaps widen, confidence in cooperation and political solutions is undermined. Instead, fear of globalisation and mobility grows, which risks creating a breeding ground for xenophobia and extremism. The Government is determined to address these problems.

On 17 November, the Prime Minister will co-host with Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker a summit in Sweden on fair jobs and growth. By exchanging experiences with Member States, the social partners and other key actors at the highest level, we can learn from each other how to tackle common challenges.

Climate change

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Our cooperation within the EU is important not least in the area of climate, energy and the environment. Together we can continue to be a strong and proactive global force. Despite the fact that levels of carbon dioxide emissions have fallen over the past three years, a great deal remains to be done.

The Government continues to pursue an ambitious climate, energy and environment policy. We are doing this by working to ensure that the EU honours the Paris Agreement and its implementation. In February 2017, we proposed the introduction of a Climate Act, a historic decision with the ambition to make Sweden one of the world's first fossil-free nations.

Environmental problems are borderless. Environmental destruction occurs locally, but the impact of environmental destruction does not respect national borders. Air pollution is one example where the EU is helping to tackle problems that individual countries cannot solve by themselves. In 2016, the EU adopted new legislation that is expected to help halve the number of premature deaths caused by air pollution in the EU.

Migration and security

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Migration to Europe is a challenge for the EU Member States and solutions

must build on everyone taking responsibility. We must of course work with a long-term approach to counter the root causes of involuntary migration and at the same time ensure that the EU has control over its external border. This is a prerequisite if freedom of movement within the Schengen area is to work.

Despite the challenges, things are nonetheless moving in the right direction. The EU is already doing a lot of positive things in efforts to combat human smuggling, and the Member States are working to quickly agree on a new asylum system. For the Government, it is important that such a system enables a more even distribution of people seeking protection in the EU and that more legal routes to protection in the EU are created. In addition, we must ensure that asylum investigations are legally certain and that those who have their applications rejected return in an efficient manner.

We know that human rights, democracy and the rule of law are being challenged around the world. These fundamental values cannot be taken for granted. They must be continuously defended and promoted, both within the Member States and in the EU's external relations.

Russia's aggression against Ukraine and the awful terrorist attacks over the past few years demonstrate the need for stronger and more coherent EU action. We must build our security together with others, and the EU is more important than ever in this regard.

With the implementation of its Global Strategy, the EU will develop a common security and defence policy that includes effective civilian and military crisis management capacity. The EU's capacity to manage both external and internal security is crucial for maintaining the security order in Europe.

The EU's future – the White Paper and Rome

Mr/Madam Speaker,

I have now talked about the Government's priorities in its EU work for 2017, so let me now say a few words about the future of the EU.

On 1 March, the European Commission presented a White Paper on the Future of Europe. The report does not contain any distinct conclusions; instead, it contains scenarios aimed at highlighting the consequences of various choices for the EU's development up to 2025.

A number of working papers on key policy areas will be presented over the

coming months. The purpose of these is said to be to encourage debate by presenting alternative developments without drawing ready conclusions.

We must analyse what the consequences of the various choices may be for both the EU and Sweden.

Debates on 'The Future of Europe' will be held in all Member States. I am very pleased about this step towards greater participation in the design of EU policy.

Participation

Because increasing participation in EU work is an issue close to my heart.

With the 'EU handshake' for increased participation with various actors and partners, I am trying to strengthen knowledge and encourage debate on EU issues.

In December, I initiated the first EU handshake for increased participation with the social partners. Just over a month ago, I completed another EU handshake in Skellefteå. This year, I will be undertaking more handshakes – because I really do believe we can make a difference.

As part of efforts to increase participation, the Government has committed to implementing 'EU expertise consultations'. So far, two have been held. In connection with the Commission's White Paper, I will convene a new EU expertise consultation focusing on the future of the EU.

Brexit

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Let me say something about the imminent divorce between the United Kingdom and the EU. It is important that we remaining members of the EU stick together and that we put in place a functioning free trade agreement with the UK.

The Government's priority is to maintain Sweden's good relations with the UK, and we will do everything to ensure that the negotiations are as positive and constructive as possible. I have met the UK minister responsible for Brexit, David Davis, on two occasions this year. We have had good talks. However, we know that the UK's decision to leave the EU will have consequences – for us Swedes, but perhaps above all for the British themselves.

We have an opportunity to make a constructive and forward-looking

contribution here – and we will.

Conclusion

Mr/Madam Speaker,

With these words, I would like to say thank you. I look forward to a constructive and energetic debate.