



Government Offices of Sweden

Opinion piece from Prime Minister's Office

Reinvigorating Multilateralism

Published 28 September 2021

Opinion piece published in Project Syndicate 28 September, by Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and Carlos Alvarado Quesada, President of Costa Rica, Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister of New Zealand, Cyril Ramaphosa, President of South Africa, Macky Sall, President of Senegal and Pedro Sánchez, Prime Minister of Spain.

Last year, the United Nations conducted a worldwide consultation involving more than one million people from 193 countries. The feedback pointed to some important facts. And this year's UN General Assembly must respond by bolstering rules-based multilateralism.

For starters, the consultation found that the expectations and hopes of the world's women, men, girls, and boys are strikingly similar. People want better access to basic health care, sanitation, and education. They also want to see more solidarity with those hit hardest by the pandemic and with those living in poverty. Respondents' top concern over the longer term is the twin crisis of climate change and accelerating biodiversity loss. Almost 90% of participants agree that global cooperation is vital to deal with today's challenges, and a majority believe that the pandemic has made international cooperation even more urgent. Especially encouraging is that young people worldwide clearly want more international cooperation.

Last year's consultation was a call to action. Now, UN Secretary-General António Guterres has released Our Common Agenda, which follows on the UN75 Political Declaration adopted by all UN member Heads of State and Government one year ago. The new agenda sets out a bold plan for how we can tackle the challenges of today and tomorrow.

The threat of breakdown must be viewed as an opportunity for a breakthrough. That is why we are committing to step up our countries' support for the secretary-general's efforts to translate the UN's ambitious agenda into reality.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which we are still battling at the global level, has driven home the message that we live in an interconnected and interdependent world. Moreover, in the last few months, we have seen record numbers of people affected by heat waves, devastating floods, and some of the largest wildfires in recent history, confirming once again the unparalleled threat posed by our changing climate.

The UN is the heart of the international system. The fact that the world came together 76 years ago to create an organization to “achieve international cooperation in solving international problems” is extraordinary in itself. But even more striking is that this organization, despite its challenges and shortcomings, has endured. It has shown that the path to a better, more peaceful, and sustainable future is paved with cooperation, not zero-sum competition.

However, the world's international organizations were built primarily to resolve inter-state challenges, not problems that transcend borders, such as financial crises, pandemics, terrorism, crime networks, threats to our oceans, or climate change. We therefore must modernize our multilateral institutions, making them fit for purpose and better equipped to deal with the global and cross-generational challenges we face.

Having observed the stark differences between the world of the UN's founding generation and the world of today, we decided last year to revive the debate about reforming the UN Security Council, and to continue the work of revitalizing the General Assembly and strengthening the Economic and Social Council. In line with the Joint Statement that we signed on November 10, 2020, in Madrid, we see three areas of action that should be emphasized in order to advance our common goal of reinforcing multilateralism.

First, we need a renewed commitment to international cooperation. Multilateral organizations must be furnished with the means and the mandate to make a difference on the ground. Cooperation among the UN, regional organizations, and international financial institutions must improve at both the policy and the operational level. The multilateral system needs to be more open and inclusive to give young people, civil society, the private

sector, academia, and others a spot at the table.

We are already putting this into practice. On the margins of this year's General Assembly, we have organized the virtual event "Delivering the UN Common Agenda: Action to Achieve Equality and Inclusion" in collaboration with the Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just, and Inclusive Societies initiative. We intend to ensure that all voices are heard.

Second, we must act on the secretary-general's agenda of bold steps to revive and strengthen our capacity to tackle poverty and inequality; ensure inclusion, equal participation, and justice; address the climate crisis and accelerating biodiversity loss; and equip ourselves for future threats of pandemics.

We have learned from the COVID-19 crisis that we need to strengthen our collective ability to anticipate, prevent, and manage complex risks such as disease outbreaks, new wars, massive cyberattacks, environmental disasters, or other unforeseen events. We therefore welcome the secretary-general's suggestions for how to strengthen global foresight and risk-management capacity, including the proposal for a new global "Emergency Platform."

Lastly, we welcome the proposal for a Summit of the Future in 2023, and we should use that opportunity to step up our efforts to strengthen international cooperation. In today's world, with so many issues reverberating across borders and generations, we must seize this moment to create a more agile, effective, and accountable multilateral system that delivers for all citizens and enables us to tackle the global challenges we face.

We want to be at the forefront of this endeavor. Together, we can and must reinvigorate rules-based multilateralism, with a stronger and more inclusive UN at its core. This is the great political task of our times.



Government Offices of Sweden

Opinion piece from Prime Minister's Office

The 'frugal four' advocate a responsible EU budget

Published 17 February 2020

Opinion Piece by Sebastian Kurz, chancellor of Austria, Mark Rutte, prime minister of the Netherlands, Mette Frederiksen, prime minister of Denmark, and Stefan Löfven, prime minister of Sweden, co-wrote this article, which was published in Financial Times on 17 February 2020.

On February 20, the leaders of the 27 EU countries will come together in an extraordinary European Council meeting to discuss the bloc's next long-term budget.

Our group of four countries, Austria, Denmark, Sweden and the Netherlands, stand ready to enter the final negotiations over the multiannual financial framework for 2021-2027.

We have been dubbed the "frugal four" and I and my fellow leaders want to set the record straight. Being "frugal" does not mean that we are any less committed to the EU than those member states who are arguing for an expanded budget. On the contrary, our commitment to the EU is as strong as ever. The success of the European project is measured by our ability to deliver on our political ambitions and achieve tangible results for our citizens not by the size of the budget.

Standing up for common values does not have a price tag, and the single market, a considerable driver of European competitiveness, is not a costly endeavour. We must also consider that the UK, a large contributor to the EU budget, has left the bloc. Now that we have a smaller union of 27 member states, we simply have to cut our coat according to our cloth. The

responsible approach in this situation is to prioritise in the interest of our taxpayers.

Our four countries will engage in the negotiations based on a set of priorities. Above all, our budget contribution must remain stable, taking into account inflation and economic growth. This requires the budget to remain at 1 per cent of EU gross national income and a system of permanent corrections to protect individual states from having to shoulder excessive budgetary burdens.

Let us be clear: a budget of 1 per cent means more money, in nominal terms, than the current financial framework. It would allow the EU budget to keep growing with the economy, thereby providing room for higher ambition in key policy areas. This cannot mean, however, that we continue with business as usual. It is crucial for the EU's legitimacy that we focus a significantly higher share of the budget on meeting today's challenges: fostering an innovative and competitive economy, the fight against climate change, migration and security. We therefore need to spend a smaller share on established policies and we must also truly contain administrative spending by aligning it to national realities.

A budget of 1 per cent will lead to an increase in the contributions of all member states. Currently, more than two-thirds of the budget is redistributed. That means the financial burden of the union is increasingly being put on the shoulders of a small number of member states, including ours.

For decades, Brussels has recognised that some countries foot a disproportionate share of the EU's financing. But the European Commission is proposing to let this system of rebates run out. That means our four countries plus Germany would end up financing 75 per cent of net payments to the EU budget. We are ready to pay significantly more to the EU than we get back. We benefit greatly from being a member of the EU and the single market. However, there are limits. We insist on permanent net corrections to prevent excessive budgetary imbalances and achieve a fair, sustainable outcome.

We are confident that it is possible to reach an agreement on an ambitious and modern budget that devotes at least 25 per cent of its spending to climate action. It must also tie spending to conditions supporting the effective implementation of EU-wide policy objectives and the upholding of the rule of law. We trust that the new council president Charles Michel will

help us achieve such an agreement in a timely manner.

Sebastian Kurz, chancellor of Austria. Mark Rutte, prime minister of the Netherlands, Mette Frederiksen, prime minister of Denmark, and Stefan Löfven, prime minister of Sweden, co-wrote this article.



Government Offices of Sweden

Opinion piece from Prime Minister's Office

Swedish Prime Minister calls on world to fight for memory of the Holocaust

Published 22 January 2020

Opinion Piece by Prime Minister Stefan Löfven, published in Yedioth Ahronoth on 21 January 2020.

On 27 January, it will be exactly 75 years since the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration and extermination camp was liberated by Soviet troops. To commemorate the liberation, and participate in the Fifth World Holocaust Forum 2020, I am visiting Jerusalem and Yad Vashem this week.

The Holocaust (Shoah) fundamentally challenged the foundations of civilisation. The unprecedented character of the Holocaust will always hold universal meaning. Soon, the survivors will no longer be with us; at the same time antisemitism is growing around the world.

Antisemitism exists in many parts of society in many countries, including in my home country. In extreme right-wing groups, in parts of the left and in Islamist environments. It appears in the form of conspiracy theories on social media and in the denial and distortion of the Holocaust. We see antisemitism among adults and children who fled to Sweden from countries where hatred of Jews is fed by schools and state propaganda. I am deeply angry and concerned about this.

The Government I lead has taken a number of measures on Holocaust remembrance and for the safety of Jews in Sweden:

- The Government has appointed an all-party committee to consider the introduction of specific criminal liability for participation in a racist organisation and a ban on racist organisations.

- We have contributed funding to enable more young people to travel to Holocaust memorial sites in Europe, and more teachers and other public sector employees to receive education about the Holocaust. We will open a Holocaust museum in Sweden.
- We have increased resources to Jewish communities and other organisations to ensure their safety.
- The Living History Forum – a Swedish public authority tasked with educating people about antisemitism and racism using the Holocaust as a starting point – and The Segerstedt Institute at the University of Gothenburg have begun an educational cooperation project with Yad Vashem.

I have invited heads of state and government, researchers, experts and civil society representatives from around 50 countries to the city of Malmö, Sweden, on 26–27 October to jointly take concrete steps forward in the fight for Holocaust remembrance and against antisemitism.

This event is called the Malmö International Forum on Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism. The choice of Malmö as the venue is important: Jews who fled across the Öresund strait and were saved from the concentration camps in the final stages of the war came to Malmö. But the situation concerning antisemitism in Malmö today is serious. We do not close our eyes to this fact. It is something we are tackling with determination.

Two of the starting points of the Malmö Forum 2020 are the Stockholm Declaration on education, remembrance and research about the Holocaust from January 2000, and the working definition of antisemitism adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). Sweden endorses the working definition and the list of examples of antisemitism that serve as illustrations.

Antisemitism is not a Jewish problem; it is a problem for all of us. We are working to make the Malmö Forum 2020 an international mobilisation for Holocaust remembrance and combating antisemitism.



Government Offices of Sweden

Opinion piece from Prime Minister's Office

Working for a brighter future: We stand at a crossroads as seismic shifts take place in the world of work

Published 25 January 2019

Opinion piece published in The Times of India 25 January, by Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and Cyril Ramaphosa, President of South Africa.

Technological advances are changing the nature of many jobs, and leading to the need for new skills. The urgently required greening of economies to meet the challenge of climate change should bring further employment possibilities. Expanding youth populations in some parts of the world, ageing populations in others, may affect labour markets and social security systems.

On one path, countless opportunities lie ahead, not only to create jobs but also to improve the quality of our working lives. This requires that we reinvigorate the social contract that gives all partners a fair stake in the global economy.

On the other path, if we fail to prepare adequately for the coming challenges, we could be heading into a world that widens inequalities and leads to greater uncertainty.

The issues are complex. As co-chairs of the Global Commission on the Future of Work we, and our fellow members of the Commission – leading figures from business and labour, thinktanks, government and non-governmental organisations – have been examining the choices we need to make if we are to meet the challenges resulting from these transformations in the world of work and achieve social justice.

We call for a new, human-centred approach that allows everyone to thrive in a carbon neutral, digital age and affords them dignity, security and equal opportunity. It must also meet the changing needs and challenges facing businesses and secure sustainable economic growth.

The opportunities are there to improve working lives, expand choice, close the gender gap and reverse the damage that has been wreaked by global inequality.

But it will need committed action on the part of governments and social partners to turn those opportunities into reality.

So how do we achieve this? Three areas of increased investment are needed:

First, we have to invest more in people's capabilities: This means establishing an effective lifelong learning system that enables people to skill, reskill and upskill – a system that spans early childhood and basic education through to adult learning. It also means investing in the institutions that will support people as they go through transitions in their working lives – from school leavers to older workers.

Making gender equality a reality and providing social protection from birth to old age are also critical. These social investments will not only increase productivity, they will also allow for a more inclusive growth, where informal workers and business can both benefit from and contribute to a sound formal economy.

Second, we must invest more in the institutions of work –including the establishment and implementation of a universal labour guarantee. This will ensure that all workers enjoy fundamental rights, an “adequate living wage”, limits on their hours of work and safe and healthy workplaces.

Linked to this, people need to have more control over their working time – while meeting the needs of enterprises – so that they can fulfil the full range of their responsibilities and develop their capabilities. Collective representation through social dialogue between workers and employers needs to be actively promoted.

Workers in the informal economy have often improved their working conditions by organising. Unions need to expand membership to informal workers, whether they work in the rural economy, on the city streets of an emerging economy, or on a digital platform. This is a critical step towards

formalisation and a tool for inclusion.

We're also calling for governance systems for digital labour platforms that will require these platforms and their clients to respect certain minimum standards.

Finally, we need to invest more in decent and sustainable work. This includes incentives to promote investments in key areas, such as the care economy, the green economy, and the rural economy, as well as high-quality physical and digital infrastructure.

We must also reshape private sector incentive structures to encourage a long-term, human-centred approach to business. That includes fair tax policies and improved corporate accounting standards. We need to explore new measures of country progress to track important aspects of economic and social advancement.

Beyond these critical investments, there is a further opportunity: to place discussions about the future of work at the heart of the economic and social debates taking place at the high table of international policy-making. This could revitalise the multilateral system at a time when many are questioning its legitimacy and effectiveness.

Yet none of this will happen by itself. If change is the opportunity, we must seize the moment to renew the social contract and create a brighter future by delivering economic security, equal opportunity and social justice – and ultimately reinforce the fabric of our societies.

Stefan Löfven, Swedish Prime Minister

Cyril Ramaphosa, President of South Africa



Government Offices of Sweden

Opinion piece from Prime Minister's Office

France and Sweden will cooperate on green innovation

Published 17 November 2017

Opinion piece published in Dagens Nyheter 16 November, by Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and French President Emmanuel Macron.

Following the challenges of recent years, we are now seeing a much-needed debate about the kind of Europe we should have in the future. We welcome this debate, and have each laid out our visions in speeches delivered at two of the oldest and greatest European universities, the Sorbonne in Paris and the University of Uppsala.

We both believe in a strong and united Europe, and in the possibility of the EU leading the world forward in a time of great transition and uncertainty. We know that when we work together as Europeans, we can deliver better solutions to reduce unemployment, increase growth, improve working conditions and gender equality, fight climate change, achieve a sustainable and equitable migration policy, and increase security for our citizens.

One key area on which we are committed to doing more is the social dimension: how we can create more jobs, how we ensure that people obtain the knowledge and skills needed to do the new jobs that are emerging, and how we can achieve fair working conditions that foster mobility without leading to lower wages and unfair competition. These themes will be discussed at the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth in Gothenburg.

We have both worked hard to bring about an improved Posting of Workers Directive that guarantees equal pay for work of equal value, regardless of where workers come from. It should no longer be possible to compete on the basis of unfair conditions or wage-dumping. But this is not enough – we want to continue to pursue efforts for a fair labour market, and the Social Summit

in Gothenburg is an important step towards fulfilling the European promise of shared prosperity.

We will also discuss how to achieve increased growth in Europe. The Single Market is one of our greatest assets, but it needs to be developed. We must set the bar high – the EU must become the most dynamic market, where we compete with the sharpest skills, the best products, the smartest innovations, and the greenest technologies.

We are convinced that the judicious management of one of the most crucial issues of our time – climate change – can bring new opportunities for jobs and growth for France, for Sweden and for Europe.

Both our countries have set ambitious targets to live up to the Paris Agreement. The One Planet climate summit to be held in Paris on 12 December will focus on promoting concrete and innovative solutions to increase the pace. France has drawn up a Climate Plan that includes ending sales of fossil-fuel cars by 2040 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. In Sweden, the Government is guided by a target of becoming one of the world's first fossil-free welfare nations, with a sub-target of reducing emissions from the transport sector by at least 70 per cent by 2030. Sweden also aims to be carbon-neutral by 2045. These are ambitious targets, and show that we are prepared to shoulder our responsibilities. This is not just an act of altruism; these targets are also a means of securing the long-term competitiveness of our economies.

Now we want to take our cooperation further. Sweden and France are world leaders in the area of green innovation and will contribute to the transition to a more sustainable society. The countries and companies that are first to showcase their solutions will not only increase their competitiveness, they will also lay the foundations for the export successes and new jobs of tomorrow. To this end, France and Sweden will today sign a strategic partnership for innovation and green solutions.

This partnership will build on the innovative capacities of our industries, start-ups, academic communities and public sectors in four areas: developing green solutions to power our transport and our cities; boosting 'green finance' mechanisms; promoting healthier lifestyle choices for our citizens through medical and environmental innovations; and leveraging the world-class expertise of our digital companies and start-ups in this transition.

Public and private stakeholders will be fully involved and mobilised to

implement the actions and projects set out in the operational roadmap of the partnership. Our ambition is to present concrete progress in two years.

We are convinced that our French-Swedish innovation partnership will create considerable value for our citizens, and contribute to a more innovative, greener European Union.

Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven

French President Emmanuel Macron



Government Offices of Sweden

Opinion piece from Prime Minister's Office

Important step towards a more social Europe

Published 17 November 2017

Opinion piece published in Svenska Dagbladet 17 November, by Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker.

On Friday 17 November 2017, the Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth will be held in Gothenburg, Sweden. As hosts, we have both long argued that the European Union should put greater emphasis on improving the living and working conditions of our citizens. This is the first Social Summit in 20 years and a meeting unique in its kind, as it brings together Heads of State or Government from EU Member States, leaders of the EU institutions as well as social partners and civil society.

Europe has faced many challenges over the last decade. The financial crisis had a major impact on our economies and our social fabric. Unemployment, poverty and inequality had reached unacceptably high levels across Europe, and we have seen growing concern among individuals and rising distrust of political solutions, paving the way for xenophobia and populism. At the same time, digitalisation and globalisation, as well as new lifestyles and an ageing population, are changing the very way we live and work.

To put all this into perspective, there are now more adults over the age of 65 than children younger than 14. Most kids starting school today are likely to end up working in jobs that do not yet even exist. Some 40 per cent of employers already report that they are unable to find people with the skills they need. This shows that new opportunities are being created, but that new challenges are also emerging.

Thanks to determined action, Europe is now slowly but steadily turning the

page: average growth in the EU is back above 2 per cent, more than 8 million jobs have been created over the last three years, unemployment is down to a nine-year low and employment levels are reaching an all-time high.

To further restore trust and hope in the future, EU Member States and institutions need to show resolve and commitment. We have to deliver concrete results and improve people's everyday lives. We are engaged in a sincere debate on the future of the EU, launched at the Bratislava Summit last year and shaped by the European Commission's White Paper earlier this year. Throughout the course of this debate, we have made it crystal clear that a fairer and more social Europe must be the lifeblood of our Union.

The responsibility for this starts locally, regionally and nationally – and should include social partners at all levels in Europe. The EU has an important part to play to support these efforts, as shown by the European Commission's determination to put social priorities and social fairness at the core of everything it does.

The momentum is clearly there. We are pleased to see that a first agreement could be reached on the revision of the Posting of Workers Directive, constituting an important step in enforcing the principle of equal pay for equal work.

And a few weeks ago, the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council agreed on the European Pillar of Social Rights. The Pillar sets out 20 principles for better living and working conditions for Europe's citizens. It is a shared commitment to the values and rights we all stand for – from equality to social protection, from fair working conditions to lifelong learning. The proclamation of the Pillar at the Gothenburg Summit will be an important step towards a more social Europe.

The Summit will be a key moment for the debate on the future of Europe. We will focus on how to improve access to the labour market and get more people into work – especially women, where progress is too slow. We will discuss how to ensure fair jobs and decent working conditions – also for new forms of work – across our continent. We will look at how to ensure that transitions and mobility are better managed in our Union, including by equipping people with the right skills so that they can succeed in successive jobs throughout a career. At the end of the Summit, EU leaders will also discuss the future of education and culture in the EU.

The Europe we are working for is a Europe that puts peoples' concerns and

interests first. In Gothenburg, we will aim to anchor essential values and priorities – such as inclusive growth, fair working conditions and a strong social dialogue – firmly to the future of our European Union. This is what the citizens of Europe expect from us.

Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven

President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker



Government Offices of Sweden

Opinion piece from Prime Minister's Office

Why a Global Commission on the Future of Work?

Published 21 August 2017

Opinion piece, published in *The Independent*, by Stefan Löfven, Prime Minister of Sweden and Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, President of the Republic of Mauritius.

It is our belief that work is the foundation for people and societies to grow. With a decent income, work can pave the way for broader social and economic advancement, strengthening individuals, their families and communities. Yet technology, demography, climate change and globalization are transforming work more quickly, more profoundly and on a greater scale than ever before. These changes have great potential, but we also face many uncertainties about the future of work. The fear that while some may benefit greatly from these sweeping changes, many will not, has become a major concern, not least at a time when so many countries are facing high unemployment.

And if too many people worry that they are being left behind and that our societies are no longer capable of delivering positive change, there is a strong chance that disruptive forces will undermine growth and destabilize social and political harmony. Indeed, the tendency that we are witnessing of a shift towards populist thinking is one of the key challenges of our time.

Therefore, we need to support the job-creating potential of the shift to environmental sustainability and a fair and open world trading system, founded on strong values of rights, freedom and solidarity. Globalisation must benefit all. Only people who feel safe in the present can welcome an uncertain future.

Rather than adopting a wait and see approach, we must think seriously about the future of work that we want and how to get there. The future is not pre-

determined and can be influenced by the societal choices and policies that we make today.

To generate ideas and solutions for addressing these fundamental work-related challenges, we have agreed to co-chair the new Global Commission on the Future of Work launched [today] by the International Labour Organization (ILO). This Commission, which is part of the ILO's Future of Work initiative, brings together eminent thinkers and practitioners from around the world. It will report to the ILO's member states in 2019.

This initiative is, indeed, a truly global effort - over 100 countries have held national dialogues, with governments, employers and workers, to elaborate on approaches to meet the future challenges in the labour market. The contribution of the Commission will also be an important part of the follow-up to the landmark 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. Goal eight, in particular, entails promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.

For almost a century, the ILO has made a significant contribution to making the world of work a much better place. It has done this by bringing together representatives of governments, workers and employers to promote social justice.

By recognizing that the future of work is ours to create, rather than one imposed by forces which we are powerless to control, we are convinced that the future holds a powerful message of hope. We are committed to leading this Global Commission in that spirit, and to focus on concrete solutions, policy advice and best practises, with the goal of making the future of work, a future that includes everyone.

Stefan Löfven
Prime Minister of Sweden

Ameenah Gurib-Fakim
President of the Republic of Mauritius



Government Offices of Sweden

Opinion piece from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Culture

Opinion piece by Stefan Löfven, Prime Minister and Alice Bah Kuhnke, Minister for Culture and Democracy

Published 27 January 2017 Updated 27 January 2017

Opinion piece in Svenska Dagbladet on International Holocaust Remembrance Day by Stefan Löfven, Prime Minister (S) and Alice Bah Kuhnke, Minister for Culture and Democracy (MP)

Hédi Fried, author and Auschwitz survivor, wrote: "Can anyone say when something begins? Grains of sand are added to grains of sand, and before you know it there is a pile of sand in front of you."

Today is International Holocaust Remembrance Day, when we remember one of humanity's greatest crimes against itself. But knowing the terrible things that humanity is capable of compels us to do more than just remember. Racism, anti-Semitism, antiziganism, hate against LGBTQ people and prejudice against people with disabilities are still an ongoing scourge. This misanthropy limits freedom for the individual and cohesion among us all. It finds expression in everything from physical violence on our streets, to threats and conspiracy theories on social media.

It also exists in Swedish politics. There are members of the Swedish Riksdag who openly question whether Jews can be regarded as Swedish. Proposals, motivated by anti-Semitic notions, have been submitted to limit the freedom of the media. On an almost daily basis, political actors are exposed for spreading racist ideas, openly or in secret. Grains of sand are added to grains of sand.

The principle of the equal value of all people must never be compromised. Democratic values in Sweden must be defended, deepened and strengthened for the future. The Government is therefore implementing a national plan to combat racism, as well as similar forms of hostility and hate crime. The Living History Forum is rolling out an extensive educational initiative to reach Swedish schools and professional groups, such as employment agents, social workers and police employees. The Swedish Research Council has begun a survey of racism in the Swedish labour market. The Research Bill outlines major investments in research involving racism and xenophobia, and faith communities are receiving increased support for interfaith dialogues around the country.

At the same time, more work is required to strengthen security for vulnerable groups and people. Everyone must be able display their religious affiliation or identity openly and proudly in public. This is the duty of democratic society. Religious communities will therefore receive extra funds for security-enhancing measures to strengthen security around religious and cultural activities. The Swedish Police Authority has also been tasked with strengthening efforts against hate crime, and now has the capacity to investigate and combat hate crime in all regions of Sweden, with special hate crime groups in the three metropolitan regions.

This work must never stop. Therefore, we are today presenting three further measures:

1. Greater security at schools. School must be a secure place for all pupils and staff, regardless of religious affiliation. Children should never have to worry about hate crime or intolerance at their school. The Government will therefore further support security at schools identified as having a threat situation.
2. More effective measures against anti-Semitic hate crime. The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention is being tasked with conducting an in-depth study of anti-Semitic hate crime. Using this as a base, efforts against anti-Semitic hate crime will be strengthened and made more effective.
3. New international forum. Two decades will soon have passed since the major Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust which, in the Stockholm Declaration, set out the basis for international cooperation on remembering the Holocaust. Never forgetting means always reminding ourselves. The Government therefore intends to host a second international forum in 2020, 20 years after the first, to honour the victims, follow up the work and, together with other countries and

organisations, continue to develop the initiatives to prevent new crimes against humanity.

Finally, we want to underline that your efforts are also needed. Never tolerate hate or threats, regardless of who is targeted, question conspiracy theories and false rumours, seek understanding where others try to spread contempt. The defence of democracy is a responsibility shared by all democratic citizens.

Those of us who live in Sweden must be able to feel secure and free, regardless of which culture we are part of, which god we believe in, or who we love. We must therefore see every grain of hate and intolerance in Sweden, and prevent them from ever gaining a foothold. Today, and every day, those of us who defend democracy have a duty to remember the Holocaust and through our actions say: "Never again."

Stefan Löfven, Prime Minister (S)

Alice Bah Kuhnke, Minister for Culture and Democracy (MP)



Opinion piece from Prime Minister's Office

Sweden's security must be seen in a broader perspective

Published 10 January 2017 Updated 10 January 2017

Opinion piece by Prime Minister Stefan Löfven in *Dagens Nyheter*, 8 January 2017. Sweden's peace, freedom and security must be safeguarded. There is no more important task for the State than this.

The new security situation, the growing political power rivalries and the broader security policy developments place new demands on the State's capacity to safeguard the security of Sweden's inhabitants. They also place new demands on strategic thinking over longer periods, and a better understanding of security developments, around the world as well as in our own country.

The security policy situation in our region has deteriorated over the past few years, particular following Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea. We have received reports of foreign underwater activities in Sweden's territorial waters, and we have seen a significant increase in military activity around the Baltic Sea. International terrorism affects an increasing number of innocent civilians. Climate change is becoming increasingly tangible, with more dramatic weather events and more regional conflicts that force people to flee. We are more susceptible to disruptions in vital public services – electricity grids, railways, water supply. Information technology, which has improved most people's lives, has also created new vulnerabilities that can be exploited by both States and individuals.

In addition, security issues must now be viewed from a broader perspective than previously. This has shaped the work of the Government's security policy council that I established after taking up my post as prime minister. The broad concept of security also forms the basis of the national security

strategy that the Government will present today when the Folk och Försvar Annual National Conference convenes in Sälen.

For the first time, a Swedish Government is now systematising its view of Sweden's security in a broad sense. The security strategy proceeds from our security objectives, determines the direction and sets the framework for the work needed to safeguard our security and to place the common resources where they do the most good. In the strategy, the Government defines the national interests that guide our security efforts. The strategy also takes up the fundamental – and inalienable – values that underpin our security. Based on these interests and values, the strategy analyses eight primary threats that challenge our capacity to protect our population and our country.

Military threats

It remains unlikely that a single armed military attack will directly target Sweden. But crises and incidents that include military force can never be ruled out. Our non-participation in military alliances serves us well and contributes to stability and security in northern Europe. At the same time, we are deepening our various defence and security policy cooperation forums. Sweden is now strengthening its defence after many years of cut backs, and creating modern and coherent total defence planning, including a psychological defence tailored to the current situation.

Information and cyber security

The cyber threat is serious and tangible. US authorities recently reported that they have evidence that the latest presidential election was unduly influenced by operations directed from Russia. Sweden too can be subjected to such attempts to exert influence. At the same time as we continue to develop our capacity to make use of all the possibilities that digitalisation provides, we must also develop our capacity to reduce vulnerability, resist efforts to exert influence and strengthen our information and cyber security.

Terrorism and violent extremism

Most terrorist attacks are committed outside of Europe's borders, but developments show that Europe is increasingly being subjected to terrorism. Several of our neighbouring countries have been severely affected, and terrorism is an imminent threat in Sweden as well. The Swedish strategy against terrorism is based on preventing, averting and impeding. Individuals

at risk must be identified before they are radicalised. The police and other public authorities must have proper resources and capabilities to avert terrorism.

Organised crime

Organised crime is becoming more malicious, more extensive and more menacing. Trafficking in human beings, weapons and drugs are everyday activities for professional criminals. Some networks have both the intention and the ability to disrupt fundamental democratic processes. There is a need for preventive measures at an early age and an increased police presence. Work to combat illegal weapons and explosives will continue. Especially sustained measures are needed in areas particularly prone to crime.

Threats to energy supply

Disruptions in the supply of electricity, fuel, gas and heat may result in serious consequences for people's lives and health, and also to the functioning of society. A secure and robust energy system must be based on a diverse energy mix, safe transportation and efficient energy markets. Reduced dependence on fossil fuels will improve the security of supply.

Threats to transportation and infrastructure

Disruptions and loss of resources such as fuels, electricity supply, vehicle provision and IT/telecommunications are associated with particular risks. Ensuring that transportation vital to society is robust and replaceable is of utmost importance. This particularly applies to our food security. The perimeter security concerning key parts of the transport infrastructure must be improved.

Health threats

Communicable diseases pose threats to the health of the population, as do other types of biological and chemical threats. These could be in the form of bacteria, viruses and other microorganisms, but also radioactive, biological and chemical weapons. One particularly severe threat to modern medical care is the increased resistance to antibiotics. Sweden must have contingency plans that involve regular training, and resources for managing various kinds of health threats, such as influenza pandemics.

Climate change

Even today, climate change threatens the population and existence of certain States. In no other area is the need for preventive measures more apparent. Sweden will strengthen its leading role in international cooperation to curb climate change. This is reinforced by our national policy for reduced fossil emissions, and our development aid focus on reducing the global greenhouse gas emissions.

Implementation of the national security strategy requires the involvement of Swedish society as a whole. Therefore, active participation by public authorities, private individuals, the business community and civil society is of crucial importance to preventing and managing crises.

However, the overall responsibility rests with the Government, and all ministries will base their work on the strategy as the next step is taken and work on various initiatives is pursued. We must be better able to safeguard total defence interests in various areas of society. Therefore, a regulatory review will be carried out to ensure that strategic security decisions do not become municipal or private standpoints, but national decisions. At the same time, there is reason to consider how to best carry out the business sector's security work focusing on crucial social technology and services of strategic interest to Sweden.

Most issues related to Sweden's security have attracted broad majorities in the Riksdag. I feel that it should also be possible to achieve a broad consensus in the work to realise the content of this strategy. Stronger Swedish security is not created by political games and tactical manoeuvring, but rather through the pursuit of consensus and cooperation in the best interests of the country.

Prime Minister Stefan Löfven



Opinion piece from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

We in Sweden are not alone in our frustration at violations in the Middle East

Published 16 October 2016 Updated 16 October 2016

Opinion piece in SvD 16 October 2016 by Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and Margot Wallström, Minister for Foreign Affairs. The images of human suffering in Syria are heart-rending. Hospitals are bombed, and small children are dug out of the ruins. Humanitarian assistance is not getting through. It is unbearable to behold. The UN Secretary-General has likened Syria's largest city, Aleppo, to a slaughterhouse and the bombs continue to fall.

In recent weeks, an aid convoy was attacked in an act of barbarity targeting the most vulnerable. It is an outrage that this is being permitted to continue. But without a political solution to the conflict, we cannot begin to work for peace. Together with the other European prime ministers and foreign ministers, we need to put pressure on the Syrian regime and on Russia.

Firstly, what is needed is an immediate ceasefire. Since the ceasefire was broken, the bombs have continued to fall and the chasm between the parties is considerable. Last weekend, Russia once again blocked the UN Security Council from approving a resolution to bring an immediate end to the fighting. A clear signal needs to be sent to the Syrian regime and to Russia. Russia is not only responsible for its actions on the ground in Syria, it is also the country with the greatest influence over the Syrian regime.

Secondly, the suffering of the Syrian people must be alleviated. In their

efforts to defeat the opposition, the Syrian regime and Russia are exposing tens of thousands of civilians in Aleppo to indiscriminate violence, motivated by the fight against terrorism. As long as the bombs keep falling, people cannot access the humanitarian assistance – food, supplies and medical care – that the UN stands ready to provide. Since the crisis erupted, Sweden has been a staunch contributor to the UN-led humanitarian operations in Syria and its neighbouring countries. Over the last five years we have contributed a total of SEK 2.2 billion in addition to our substantial core support to the UN.

Last week, the EU launched an initiative for humanitarian access to Aleppo to ensure that aid convoys can reach those in need. The regime in Damascus must allow aid to reach all of the areas they have besieged and desist from removing medical equipment and medicines from the few aid convoys that are allowed in.

Thirdly, the issue must be raised of responsibility for the violations of international humanitarian law – the laws of war – and human rights. Both the UN's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights have stated that it is likely that war crimes, and possibly also crimes against humanity, have been committed. Chemical weapons and other prohibited, indiscriminate weapons have been used, entire cities have been besieged and starved into surrender, a UN aid convoy has been bombed, tens of thousands of people have been arbitrarily detained, and the systematic and extensive use of torture and sexual violence has reached almost industrial proportions. Responsibility for these disgusting acts must be investigated and international justice must be done.

Next week, two important meetings will be held in Brussels: first a foreign ministers meeting, then a summit of EU leaders. It is crucial that the EU agrees on a way forward. We also made this point when the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs, Federica Mogherini, visited Stockholm last Monday. We in Sweden are not alone in our frustration at the violations currently taking place in the Middle East. But our long-term aim must be for the UN Security Council once again to be able to do its job, and our support for the UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura remains firm.

Since 1 October, Sweden has held an observer seat on the UN Security Council, and we are therefore following the discussions on Syria closely. On 1 January 2017 we will take a seat as a member of the Security Council for two years. The Security Council's scope for action on the war in Syria is

restricted by the fact that one of the combatants – Russia – is a permanent member that therefore has the right of veto. This limits what can be achieved through the Security Council. Sweden will nonetheless try to exert an influence. In the long term, it is in the interests of every member of the international community to uphold the humanitarian law standards that have formed a part of the international security order since the Second World War. Ending the war in Syria and other conflicts will thus be the most important – and the most difficult – task of our term on the Security Council.

We will therefore seek alliances with countries both in the EU and on the Security Council to find ways of bringing about meaningful peace negotiations – with both women and men at the negotiating table – and, in the longer term, the reconstruction of a ravaged Syria. We have a frighteningly long way to go. But the images that are emerging from eastern Aleppo demand immediate and unwavering efforts from us, and from the rest of the world.



Opinion piece from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

The time has come for the EU to deliver

Published 10 September 2016 Updated 10 September 2016

Opinion piece in Svenska Dagbladet 10 September 2016 by Stefan Löfven and Ann Linde. Europe is currently facing what may be the greatest challenges since the European project emerged out of the ruins of two devastating world wars. The refugee crisis, the widening gaps and the unemployment that have characterised the last few years have also mobilised powers for less cooperation and more isolationism.

We share the frustration that many feel. Not everyone has benefited from the increasing globalisation and world trade that have lifted many people out of poverty and increased prosperity around the world. Far too many people link globalisation with widening gaps and increased vulnerability.

But we do not share the conclusion that less cooperation is the solution. On the contrary. More and more of our social challenges are of a cross-border nature and can only be solved by means of cross-border cooperation. One clear and frightening example is the fight against terrorist organisations, which move between countries and continents and which no single country can fight on its own.

The European project also provides opportunities that are vital to Sweden's prosperity. The opportunity that, together, we can be a strong voice in all decisions that affect us in international forums. The opportunity to ensure healthier air, cleaner water and joint efforts against climate change. The opportunity for you, as a citizen, to study, work or run a company in any EU country you wish.

On Friday, the heads of state and government of the 27 Member States will meet in Bratislava to discuss how the EU will manage the British exit.

The Government is ready to begin negotiations with the UK and has set up a group at the Government Offices with special responsibility for monitoring Swedish interests. We want to see close cooperation even after the UK leaves the EU. At the same time, it is important to make clear that access to the single market entails rights as well as obligations. Cherry-picking must not be allowed, such as by implementing the free movement of services but not of people.

The meeting in Bratislava also has an even more important agenda item: defining the path the EU will take in the future. Sweden's position is that this path does not go through major new projects that require amendments to the Treaties. On the other hand, it is high time that the Member States actually implement the decisions taken by common accord. In this work, the Swedish Government will give priority to three areas: more and better jobs, a more ambitious environment and climate policy, and a long-term, sustainable migration policy that safeguards the right of asylum.

1. More and better jobs

It is time to create a more far-reaching and fairer single market. The single market stimulates competition and trade, enhances quality, increases the supply of goods and services – and represents 70 per cent of Swedish exports. We must therefore continue to remove unnecessary barriers to trade and deepen the digital single market so that more Swedish companies can increase their exports and employ more people.

Economic and social developments must also keep pace so as to be sustainable. Social issues, such as the way welfare is designed, are usually national in nature and must remain so. But considering that different countries have different social systems, we need to identify bottlenecks and find solutions that can, for example, make the step between education and the labour market easier to navigate, make it easier for parents to combine work with family life, and increase women's access to the labour market. The Swedish Government is also very active in efforts to improve the Posting of Workers Directive and to ensure that the principle of equal pay for equal work applies regardless of where you come from.

This means that it is of the utmost importance to further develop the European Pillar of Social Rights that was launched by the European

Commission. The Government will therefore organise an EU summit on social issues in Sweden in 2017 to move this work forward and put these issues on the agenda.

2. Ambitious environment and climate policy

Climate is a global issue – and the EU is a pivotal actor in ensuring that we succeed in the transition. We are convinced that there would not have been a globally binding climate agreement in Paris without influence from the EU.

We want to continue our leadership in this momentous issue. The Government will work actively to ensure that the climate agreement is ratified by the entire EU as quickly as possible. We will push for a high level of ambition in the proposals now being negotiated in the EU and which form the basis of the EU's implementation of the agreement. We will also be a strong driving force in the EU for cleaner air and the reduced use of hazardous chemicals.

3. All countries must take their responsibility in the refugee crisis

The Government wants to see a Union that provides security for its citizens and takes responsibility for refugees. It is positive that progress is being made in the negotiations on reinforcing the EU's external borders and that the EU is now placing greater focus on how we can make use of the common foreign, trade and aid policies to improve efforts aimed at stopping people being forced to flee.

But to prevent the EU from again becoming as paralysed as it was during the most acute stage of the refugee crisis last year, it is also necessary for more countries to be involved and contribute.

Sweden has been one of the most proactive Member States for a more even distribution of asylum seekers in the EU, and we will continue working for a more uniform asylum system in the EU, where all the Member States take their share of the responsibility for the reception of asylum seekers. One prerequisite for this is that all Member States have reception systems with sufficient capacity, a legally secure asylum process, an equivalent assessment of the need for protection and certain basic rights linked to the need for protection.

The time has come for the EU to deliver. The Government will also encourage increased participation in EU issues at home in Sweden. By doing so we not only create increased legitimacy for EU decisions that are taken, we also get suggestions as to what the EU could do better.

Europe's citizens have every right to be horrified over terror, war and oppression, and angered over poverty, widening gaps and climate threats. But there is one thing that Europe's history has taught us: solving these problems requires more cooperation – not less.

Stefan Löfven
Prime Minister

Ann Linde
Minister for EU Affairs and Trade



Opinion piece from Prime Minister's Office

Long-term perspective in foreign and security policy creates stability

Published 20 January 2016 Updated 20 January 2016

Opinion piece by Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and Prime Minister Juha Sipilä, published on Sunday the 10th of January 2016 in Swedish in the Dagens Nyheter newspaper and in Finnish in the newspapers of Lännen Media.

Today, it is more obvious than ever how dependent our countries – Finland and Sweden – and our citizens are on the developments in the world surrounding us.

Right now, the most pressing issue is the refugee crisis. The war in Syria, the tensions in Iraq as well as instability in Afghanistan and many African countries have prompted millions to flee, many of them to Europe. Finland and Sweden belong to those EU countries that have lately admitted the most asylum seekers per capita.

The events in Paris were shocking testimony of the need to further strengthen the fight against international terrorism. Both Finland and Sweden have had to step up preparedness for possible threats and incidents against our own countries, too.

The cruel bombings of civilians by Assad's regime continue to claim innumerable human lives while at the same time also ISIL continues its heinous attacks.

In our own neighbouring areas, the security situation has worsened due to Russia's reprehensible actions against Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea. Military activity in and around the Baltic Sea Region has increased.

In the light of all these events, we are faced with the most serious threat against European security since the end of the Cold War.

Against this background, we both want to highlight the importance of following a long-term strategy for peace and stability in Northern Europe and the Baltic Sea Region.

Both Finland and Sweden are outside military alliances. We believe military non-alignment serves us well. This experience should also be taken into account when assessing today's challenges. Military non-alignment also contributes to stability and security in Northern Europe on the whole.

However, this does not mean that we have adopted a policy of isolation. We are active members in the European Union. Collaboration with other Nordic countries as well as the Baltic countries is particularly important to us. And while we are not members in Nato, we work in close collaboration with the Alliance. We also have a strong transatlantic link.

Finland and Sweden have recently made further significant advances in defence cooperation, such as joint exercises, increased exchange of information and mutual use of airfields and ports in both countries. Provided the political decisions necessary are taken in both countries, Finland and Sweden will in the future be able to act together also in the event of a crisis or armed conflict. As the President of the Republic of Finland said in his New Year's speech, it would be logical to continue extending the foreign and security policy cooperation between Finland and Sweden.

We stand united in defending the respect for international law and the right of each country to make their own choices in security policy. Dialogue, diplomacy, confidence-building and prevention of conflicts are important tools in our efforts to strengthen our common security together with others.

Both Finland and Sweden are active in the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). We joined the EU at the same time and often promote the same policies in the Union. Following the terrorist attacks in Paris, both Finland and Sweden - along with the rest of the EU countries, in line with the EU treaties - decided to contribute strongly to the joint fight against ISIL.

We are living in times where our existing world order, our fundamental values and our open societies are being challenged from many directions. In times like these, it is imperative to act responsibly and from a long-term

perspective.

The military non-alignment of Finland and Sweden enjoys high credibility. We do not believe in rapid policy changes in security policy – they are especially poorly suited to matters that concern our countries' security. Finland and Sweden drive their security policy with a long-term perspective, in good cooperation and in ever closer contact with each other.

Stefan Löfven
Prime Minister of Sweden

Juha Sipilä
Prime Minister of Finland



Government Offices of Sweden

Opinion piece from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Employment, Ministry of the Environment

Establishment of new arrivals to Sweden to be reformed

Published 19 February 2015 Updated 17 May 2015

Dagens Nyheter 19 februari 2015

Events in the rest of the world affect us all. Terrorist organisation IS hunting down fleeing families, children being abducted by Boko Haram, repressive states persecuting journalists. These events provoke abhorrence against the perpetrators, but they also arouse empathy with the victims.

Questions are raised around every breakfast table: What if it was our family under threat? What if it was our children hearing the shelling at night? Many people in Sweden bear personal memories of repression that are now being reawakened.

Today almost 50 million people in the world are displaced. This is the most serious refugee situation since the Second World War. Conflicts around the world are forcing people to leave behind everything they own to seek security in another country. They are fleeing in desperation from war, torture, repression, abuses and rape.

One or two of every thousand refugees in the world seek asylum in Sweden. We bear a small part of the global responsibility, but in the short term it is still a major challenge, even for a rich country such as Sweden. Our values and our respect for human dignity mean that we have a collective duty to help people in distress. This Government will always stand up for a humane asylum policy and unwaveringly defend the right of asylum.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, recently praised Germany and Sweden for setting a good example in taking responsibility for the reception of refugees and providing extensive support to the UNHCR. At present, just a few EU Member States take in the vast

majority of those seeking asylum in the EU. Sweden will seek international cooperation to enable more EU countries to increase their responsibility for displaced people. In addition, Sweden will take steps in the EU to create more legal channels for people to seek asylum in the EU and to increase the reception of quota refugees in other countries.

Immigration in Sweden is regulated and asylum legislation is based on international conventions and EU law. Those granted asylum begin a journey to build a new life in Sweden. People have a strong drive to create a home, get a job and a secure income, use their skills and find their place in society. The Government's policy for getting immigrants established builds on this drive.

Handled properly, the reception of immigrants offers a massive opportunity. For many years, public debate has been characterised by concern over the demographic challenge whereby young people of the future will have to provide for an increasing number of elderly people.

The increased number of immigrants arriving in Sweden helps create better prospects of tackling this challenge.

Many of those who come to Sweden are of working age and have an education – often a higher education – and professional experience. Just as it did with the waves of immigration from Latin America, the Middle East and the Balkans in the 1980s and 1990s, Sweden's reception of refugees will bring new colleagues, neighbours, friends and family members who will help to build Sweden's prosperity. In the global economy, having good knowledge of regions, cultures and languages brings a competitive advantage, not least for an export-dependent country such as Sweden.

But there are significant shortcomings in the current policy concerning the establishment of new arrivals in the labour market and in society. This has been the case for a long time, under both centre-right and Social Democratic governments.

It takes far too long for new arrivals to find work. When not all municipalities take a share of the responsibility for receiving refugees, those who have recently arrived are forced into long stays in accommodation centres instead of being allowed to begin the process of getting settled. The measures offered to new arrivals are not sufficiently well tailored to the circumstances and needs of the target group. Finding the right path, and getting academic certificates assessed and skills validated can take several

years. In some cases there is a lack of opportunities for supplementary education to allow those with vocational training and graduates to find jobs that match their skills. Many people with foreign backgrounds also encounter discrimination.

The Government's focus is on creating more jobs, closing gaps and increasing cohesion in Sweden. For this reason, as soon as this Government came into office we launched a serious project to reform the establishment of new arrivals. In recent weeks, the debate has featured cobbled-together symbolic proposals – which for the most part risk delaying the establishment of immigrants rather than accelerating it. Making life worse for new arrivals, weakening job security or reducing remuneration and wages will not help them become established or increase cohesion in Sweden.

The Government is currently drafting an establishment package of well-founded reforms in four areas. The individual reforms in these four areas will be presented as and when the details are completed in the Government Offices. The first will be presented today.

1. Quickly into work through language, training, validation and housing. Work is key to establishing adults in Swedish society. More people establishing themselves in the labour market requires better Swedish language training, a more efficient validation process and greater opportunities for supplementary education, combined with work placements and jobs. It also requires active anti-discrimination measures in working life. The Government considers that the social partners have an important role to play in ensuring more rapid establishment in the labour market.

The Government will also present measures to ensure that more housing is built, in both the short and long term. More housing is needed for young people and students as well as new arrivals in parts of the country where the labour market is strong.

2. Every child and young person must receive a good education in preschools and schools. Municipalities will be given increased support to be able to offer newly arrived children and young people a good education in preschools and schools, and the social support needed for young people to get a good start in life. Children and young people should learn Swedish quickly, alongside continuing to develop their mother tongue and subject knowledge.

3. All municipalities must take in refugees. The reception of refugees is a

national concern. All municipalities must play their part to ensure that new arrivals can establish themselves as quickly as possible. At the same time, the municipalities should be allowed better planning opportunities when new arrivals are allocated, and be given reasonable and stable economic conditions.

4. Civil society has a key role to play. Civil society already does a great deal throughout the country to help new arrivals establish themselves. Many people do what they can to give new arrivals a warm reception. This is our country at its best, and it is a way for us to stand united. For this reason, support will be given to efforts by civil society organisations to facilitate their contribution to dignified reception of refugees. This includes a wide range of activities, from contact families and sports for children to mentors from similar professional backgrounds and language cafés.

These are the starting points for the reforms that the Government will present. This also means choosing a way forward for Sweden. We will not present symbolic proposals that worsen the establishment of refugees. Instead, we will implement well-founded reforms as part of a broad establishment package, so that people who come to Sweden can use their skills and benefit from their professional experience. Together we will develop our country.



Opinion piece from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation

“Worrying that Swedish exports are losing market shares”

Published 06 February 2015 Updated 17 May 2015

Dagens Nyheter 6 februari 2015

Four challenges. Swedish exports are too EU-oriented. Too few small companies export their goods and services, and exports are too low in the value chain. In addition, we are threatened by a growing protectionism, write Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and Minister for Enterprise and Innovation Mikael Damberg.

Globalisation means that the economies in countries throughout the world are becoming increasingly closely interwoven. For a small, export-dependent country such as Sweden, this creates major opportunities. Exports are a linchpin of our economy; they create growth, employment and greater prosperity.

The Government’s overarching objective is to increase the number of people in employment and the number of hours worked to such an extent that we achieve the lowest unemployment in the EU by 2020. Sweden’s exports of goods and services will play a key role in how well we succeed in this.

Exports of goods are currently worth SEK 1 127 billion and exports of services are worth approximately SEK 500 billion. This corresponds to almost half of Sweden’s gross domestic product. In simple terms, we can say that around half of what we produce in Sweden is exported.

However, in view of the fact that trade is so important for Sweden’s welfare, it is worrying that it has shown weak growth. In recent years, Sweden’s GDP has been driven by consumption, not exports. Between 2000 and 2013, Sweden’s export growth was 93 per cent measured in US dollars. This can be compared with global export growth of 166 per cent.

The state of Swedish exports worries us. The figures may show a certain rise over time, but compared with other countries' export growth and looking at the prospects in the longer term, the situation is troubling. Put simply, Sweden finds itself in the foreign trade 'comfort zone'. Of Sweden's exports, 70 per cent go to the EU internal market. Trade with our closest neighbours is very significant in this regard, and it is important for our economy. But we consider that trade in the internal market needs to be supplemented so that Sweden as an export nation does not lose market shares.

We have identified four challenges for Sweden's foreign trade:

- Swedish exports do not focus enough on the new growth markets in Asia.
- Far too few small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) export their goods and services.
- Swedish exports must, to a greater extent, comprise downstream goods and services, to help create growth and jobs in Sweden.
- Protectionist tendencies in other parts of the world, not least the G20 countries, risk having a negative impact on Swedish exports.

1.

The first challenge is that Swedish exports do not focus enough on new growth markets in Asia, Africa and South America. A large proportion of current exports of goods and services go to the EU. It is natural that we export most to our neighbouring countries, but the fact that Sweden does not have much trade with other parts of the world means that we have not been able to make full use of the growth generated in the new growth countries, especially in Asia.

The fact that the economies in the EU have not picked up speed has direct consequences for Swedish export companies. Sweden would gain from increased exports to parts of the world where economies are actually growing. Up to 2020, Asia is expected to account for almost half of the world's combined economic growth.

New development trends are emerging on the horizon, with a number of growth markets growing strong and starting to pave the way for a new world order. This is not about a strict shift from west to east or from north to south; rather, it means that we will be living and working in a global economy, with more economic centres around the world. This, of course, brings with it both challenges and opportunities for Swedish companies.

2.

The second challenge is that by far too few SMEs export their goods and services. Small companies now enjoy entirely new opportunities for exports. Thanks to technological developments and internationalisation, even a small company can, with the right product, make sales on the international market. However, when it comes to the level of internationalisation among small and medium-sized enterprises in the form of foreign trade, our SMEs perform relatively well compared with the EU average, but compared with countries in our immediate neighbourhood we see that we perform less well than Germany, and substantially worse than Denmark.

Since many new jobs are created in small and medium-sized enterprises, it is extremely important that SMEs also increase their exports. Studies suggest that SMEs that start to export also increase their number of employees.

3.

The third challenge lies in the fact that too small a proportion of Swedish exports consists of goods and services high up the value chain that help create jobs and growth and thereby ensure our prosperity. The higher up the value chain our exports are, the more profitable they are. The service industries have become increasingly important for manufacturing, and help create value in processing. To ensure growth and jobs, goods and services higher up the value chain need to constitute a larger proportion of exports.

4.

The fourth challenge to Swedish exports is the increasing protectionism that we are seeing in the aftermath of the financial crisis. Sweden is a country that supports free trade and stands up for free and fair global trade. The Swedish Government believes that it is important to dismantle trade barriers, while at the same time standing up for the environment, employees' interests and people's health. The current negotiations between the EU and the United States on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) could create the world's largest regional free trade area. Together, the EU and the US account for approximately half of the world's GDP and a third of global trade flows. Once negotiated, the TTIP will serve as a model for future free trade agreements around the world. The Government's goal is to achieve as ambitious a result as possible to support growth and employment – without impairing protection of the environment, the interests of wage earners and the health of people and animals. For this reason, it is important that the TTIP is a deep and comprehensive agreement that respects democratic decisions.

Developing trade relations with other parts of the world is high on this Government's agenda. Our international visits therefore have a clear focus on increasing Sweden's exports.

Sweden cannot afford to let exports take a back seat. They are far too important for jobs and growth in our country. For this reason we are now launching a project for a new export strategy that will tackle the increasingly exciting challenges facing Swedish foreign trade. However, we do not think that a national export strategy is a matter only for politicians and officials at the Government Offices. Sweden's new export strategy will therefore be drafted in collaboration with the country's entrepreneurs. The work is now beginning, and we will be inviting representatives of all of the different business sectors to work with us to produce a strategy that will provide a boost for Swedish exports.



Government Offices of Sweden

Opinion piece from Prime Minister's Office

Statement by Prime Minister Stefan Löfven on the attack on Mariupol

Published 24 January 2015 Updated 17 May 2015

I condemn today's attack on the Ukrainian city of Mariupol. I extend my condolences to the families of those who were killed and to Ukraine.

This attack by the Russia-backed separatists, together with their announcement of a renewed offensive in eastern Ukraine, is highly concerning. They run counter to all commitments made and undermine efforts to find a solution to the crisis.

Together with its European Union partners, Sweden expects Russia to immediately stop its support to the separatists and use all its influence to prevent continued fighting. Further escalation would lead to a further grave deterioration of relations between the EU and Russia.



Opinion piece from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

“Gender equality will be a priority in the amending budget”

Published 22 January 2015 Updated 17 May 2015

Dagens Nyheter 22 januari 2015

The World Economic Forum is currently taking place in Davos. One of the key issues Sweden will highlight there is the importance of greater gender equality between women and men. Sweden is, and must be, a leading country in the area of gender equality.

The Swedish Government is a feminist government. We place gender equality at the core of both national and international work. Gender equality is ultimately a question of democracy and social justice. Everyone should be free to be the person they are without being locked into gender norms. This is also part of the Government’s idea of the modern welfare state. Gender equality contributes to economic growth.

Employment levels should therefore be equally high among women as they are among men. Women should be in gainful employment to the same extent as men, with a good working environment and career opportunities. The pay gap between the genders must be reduced. Everyone must have the right to work full-time and be financially independent.

But we have a long way to go. There is still a difference of SEK 3.5 million in lifetime earnings between women and men in Sweden. Women still account for the majority of unpaid work and men only take a quarter of parental insurance days. We are currently seeing a situation in which many women are forced to reduce their working hours because welfare provision is not up to standard, because staffing levels in elderly care are too low or because preschool opening hours are too inflexible.

In its budget, the Government planned major investments to reduce the

gender equality gap. We proposed major investments in increased staffing levels in elderly care so that people do not have to reduce their working hours to care for their elderly relatives, a responsibility that women often shoulder. We planned major investments in maternity care and women's health. We also raised maintenance support for single parents and we wanted to extend preschool opening times to cover unsocial working hours, so that single parents – often mothers – are able to accept the jobs that are offered and support their children. Unfortunately, the Alliance – together with the Sweden Democrats – voted against the Government's budget.

We now want to make parental insurance more gender-equal by introducing a third insurance month that is reserved for the other parent. The centre-right parties and the Sweden Democrats have so far chosen instead to continue supporting the strongly criticised child-raising allowance, despite the fact that evaluations have shown that this allowance keeps the most financially vulnerable women out of the labour market. This is a reactionary policy that is leading Sweden in completely the wrong direction.

Sweden's new Government is now moving forward in building up the world's first gender-equal central government administration, and we are attaching much greater weight to gender equality policy in the Government Offices as well. It is already clear that the new Government Offices is completely gender-equal in terms of women and men in politically appointed positions. Thanks to a conscious appointment and recruitment process, we have an equal number of women and men as ministers, state secretaries and political advisers.

A feminist government is not content merely having analysed the consequences of its political decisions; it also ensures that they lead to greater gender equality. Feminism must be a central theme running through all of the Government's policies, through all of its priorities and decisions. For this reason, we have taken the initiative to create a steering group within the Government Offices to provide all ministers with tools to ensure that a gender equality focus is reflected in all of the Government's work. We are also starting work on gender equality budgeting.

In addition, all ministries will be instructed to work on gender mainstreaming in all of their activities. This means that decisions in all policy areas must have a clear gender perspective.

A development programme for gender mainstreaming is currently under way in 18 government agencies. The lessons from this programme will now be

shared with more agencies. The Government will therefore expand this initiative to cover 41 agencies, including the Swedish Social Insurance Agency and the Swedish Tax Agency. In their appropriation directions, the agencies will report on how they plan to work on gender mainstreaming during the period 2015–2018 to help achieve the gender equality policy objectives. Each agency will describe how gender equality can be embedded in the mainstream of its regular activities, such as the agency's management processes.

Swedish gender equality efforts have served our country well. Besides being morally right, gender equality has contributed to Sweden's high levels of employment and growth. But it has not happened by itself; it is largely the result of political decisions, such as reserving the first and second months of parental benefit for fathers, and removing joint taxation.

A feminist government's ambitions for greater gender equality apply both nationally and in terms of our international cooperation. Developments in the world are moving forward. Today, we have as many girls as boys starting primary school throughout the world, the proportion of women in the world's parliaments has grown, and more women are working in sectors other than agriculture in a global perspective. This is a positive trend, but much remains to be done.

Swedish aid is to help combat the systematic subordination of women and girls in society. The absence of all forms of violence against women and girls is key to this. The Government is prioritising work to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights.

So far, it has been mainly women pursuing gender equality efforts. In recent years, however, there has been a growing awareness, both globally and in Sweden, of the role of men and boys in gender equality work. The participation of men and boys is an important part of the Government's strategic gender equality work. This is clear, for example, through our commitment to the UN campaign HeForShe.

It is our strongly held conviction that politics must continue to advance gender equality work. We want a gender equality policy that reflects the Sweden of today and everyone who lives in our country. This is not an issue that will resolve itself. The Government will therefore prioritise reforms that lead to greater gender equality in the coming Budget Bill and in the amending budget we will be presenting this spring.

Current and future generations must be met by a gender-equal society in which every individual can reach their full potential. Gender equality is not just right; it is a smart policy that creates growth and development. Half of the world's talent must have the opportunity to blossom.

Stefan Löfven, Prime Minister

Åsa Regnér, Minister for Gender Equality



Opinion piece from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Children come first - in Sweden and around the world

Published 20 November 2014 Updated 17 May 2015

Aftonbladet 20 november 2014 Today we are in New York, attending the 25th anniversary celebrations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. A quarter of a century has passed since the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Since then, almost every country in the world has signed the CRC and it has become the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history.

Our new cooperation Government declared in the Statement of Government Policy that we want to make the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child law in Sweden. The rights and living conditions of children in Sweden must satisfy the requirements of the CRC and other international agreements. We are not there yet. While Swedish legislation is generally adequate, much still needs to be done to guarantee the rights enshrined in the Convention.

The new cooperation Government has therefore begun the detailed work to incorporate the CRC into Swedish law. The Convention will thereby act as a safety net for the decisions and activities affecting children. Work is already under way and we are very hopeful that there will be broad collaboration between many positive forces. Most of the parliamentary parties are very interested in being involved in the work and engagement among civil society actors is strong. It goes without saying that the work will also require the voice of children to be heard.

Children's rights are high on the agenda of the new cooperation Government. We intend to protect children's rights at local, national and global level. As children cannot choose their parents, we have a shared responsibility for all children. This gives children's rights issues a moral dimension that is far stronger than for many other issues.

This is why the Government's Budget Bill contains investments to improve conditions for the most vulnerable children. We are raising maintenance support for single parents with children, the standard for income support for parents with children between 7 and 18 years of age, and the basic level of parental insurance. Medicines for children will also be free of charge. No parent should need to choose between buying food or buying medicine.

To give every child a better childhood, we are investing heavily in preschools and schools. We are investing in more staff and smaller groups in preschools. In schools we are investing in smaller primary school classes, more special needs teachers and remedial teachers, and more resources for the schools with the greatest needs.

Children are also a priority on Sweden's international agenda. Our country is one of the largest core donors to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and reducing child mortality is an important priority in our development assistance. In the context of the negotiations on the new global sustainable development goals, the post-2015 development agenda, Sweden is pushing to ensure it will contain a child and young people's perspective.

Olof Palme once said: "As I see it, the only tangible link that we really have with the future is our children. Because it is through them that we see the future take shape. This is where our shared responsibility for the children in our society comes from. It's not a matter of my children and your children, but our children – all children. And that's why children have to come first."

If we look at children's rights through his eyes, we can see that it is not just about having a duty here and now to ensure that all children have a good upbringing. It is also about securing our common future.