

5 October 2010

Statement of Government Policy

Your Majesties, Your Royal Highnesses, Mr Speaker,
Honourable Members of the Riksdag,

The storm has calmed and the clouds have cleared. All across Sweden, faith in the future and the hope that tomorrow will be a little better and little brighter than yesterday are growing. This is a longed-for development. Many people have felt anxiety during the years that followed in the wake of the financial crisis. More and more clearly, this anxiety is now turning into confidence. Into faith in the future. Faith in Sweden.

We see this on the shop floors, where colleagues are now returning to work as order books are filled. It is growing in offices, where desk lamps that remain lit ever later at night tell of the overtime that has opened the door to new recruitment. It is found at building sites, where increasing demand means that more construction is taking place. It is felt by the entrepreneur who cannot keep up and therefore plans to expand their business.

It is found in workplaces from north to south. From Kiruna to Karlskrona. From the Kattegat to the Kalmar Strait.

Sweden is now emerging from the financial crisis. And we are doing so more strongly than almost any other country. It would seem that we have coped with an ordeal that, in previous crises, led to extensive cutbacks, tax hikes and people being excluded. Such was not the case this time. While other countries are forced to take austerity measures, we are able to take steps to prevent unemployment becoming persistent. We can concentrate on meeting the coming challenges that our country faces.

The developments we are now seeing are the result of many factors. Today, Sweden's public finances are the strongest in the EU. Over 100 000 more people have jobs today compared with

2006, sick leave absences have been halved and the number of early retirement pensioners is clearly decreasing for the first time in 35 years. Step by step, unemployment is being pushed back, and more and more jobs are emerging.

A number of international assessments also place Sweden at the top. The eminent World Economic Forum recently presented its ranking of the world's most competitive countries. In it, Sweden has now climbed to second best in the world.

This is the Sweden that is now emerging from the crisis. A strong Sweden. A Sweden we should be proud of. A Sweden we must take care of.

The Riksdag is now assembled following an election by the Swedish people. An election in which no one vote had greater value than any other. Everyone had the chance to make their mark on the election results. This is an expression of a democracy that is not unique to us, but which other areas of our world lack. It is now up to the Swedish Riksdag to take responsibility for Sweden. To live up to the confidence of the voters.

With increased voter support, the Moderate Party, the Liberal Party, the Centre Party and the Christian Democrats will continue to shoulder the responsibility of government. That support now forms the foundation of our efforts as we continue to take responsibility for Sweden. The foundation of our governmental responsibility is our joint election manifesto, which will form the basis of our work.

The Alliance is driven by a conception of Sweden. We want to take responsibility for our country and create good conditions for work and welfare. We want to lay the foundation for a fair

society that stands together, where people can feel safe and secure, take their own initiatives and realise their ambitions. A society in which the family and civil society stand strong.

Our goal is to be a government that sees all of Sweden and all the people who live here. That sees and understands the importance of bringing together all those who want to take part in building Sweden. We want to be a government that seeks broad solutions, consensus and stability in the Riksdag. This will be based on our traditional values of openness, freedom, responsibility, justice and the equal value of all people.

We will safeguard Sweden's strong economic position. Sound public finances are necessary for a stable recovery. They create scope for important reforms in the coming years. Taking long-term responsibility for the economy is vital to our ability to prepare Sweden for the future.

There is still a great deal of uncertainty around the world. Rapid recovery in Sweden requires policy that focuses on giving people the opportunity to find jobs. At the same time, we must safeguard public finances.

It cannot be emphasised enough how important it is to keep Sweden's economy in good order. A lack of responsible action could have a direct impact on the core of the welfare system. A lack of responsible action could pave the way for tax hikes that impair growth and increase unemployment. It could entail higher interest rates that undermine household financial margins and have a negative impact on companies' interest in investments and new recruitment. Sweden will not take this path. Sweden does not deserve this.

Responsibility for Sweden. This is how we will take Sweden from crisis to full employment. The Government therefore wants to unite the Riksdag behind the task of ensuring that Sweden's finances are sustainable in the long term.

The aim of our policies for the electoral period is that public finances are to be in balance and show a surplus of 1 per cent of GDP. The fiscal policy framework will continue to be looked after and strengthened. The government debt as a percentage of GDP will continue to be reduced. This will safeguard the foundation of public services and Sweden's prospects of handling future crises in a secure manner.

As part of a responsible economic policy, all reforms will be examined in light of the scope for new measures. It may be necessary to avoid implementing or to delay reforms, or to provide additional funding if economic development is weaker than expected or to ensure a socioeconomic balance. The Government wants to express this clear statement of responsibility.

Our primary goal is to guide Sweden towards full employment. We want to pick up the pace in Sweden – to increase employment and to safeguard security. The work-first principle remains firmly in place: everyone is to be able to find a job according to their own capacity to work. It must be more worthwhile to work, it must be easier and cheaper to employ people and more companies must start up, stay and grow in Sweden.

We want everyone who can work to be able to find a job. Few gaps in our society are as great as those between people who have a job and people who are outside the labour market. Work, a sense of belonging in a workplace and a wage of their own that they can live on give people power over their daily lives. Giving more people the opportunity to find jobs, across the country, is thus an important issue of social justice.

Work is the foundation of Sweden's prosperity. Our future, the cohesion of our society and our welfare depend on the work people do. Our basic premise is therefore that everyone's work efforts are needed. In a small country such as Sweden we cannot afford to turn down work opportunities, as long as they are offered with good conditions and at contractually agreed wages.

As important as it is for there to be more jobs, it is equally important that everyone who is working feels that it makes a difference for the better. Sweden must be a country where it pays to work. We believe that the nurse who takes the night shift at the emergency department, the upper secondary school teacher who teaches our young people and the police officer who fights for our safety should feel that they get something out of it.

Further income tax reductions for normal wage earners not only create better financial margins for everyone, they also increase labour supply and employment, which in turn creates more resources for the welfare system. The Government will therefore open the door to continued tax cuts that focus on low and middle income earners as the economy gradually turns around. If public finances and the economy so allow, our ambition is to further strengthen the in-work tax credit.

Normal wage earners still pay state income tax in addition to local taxes. Despite raising the threshold for state tax in 2009, it still impacts on large groups of people and makes getting an education less worthwhile. One of the Government's reform ambitions is therefore also to further raise the threshold for the state income tax.

Sweden today is a country that can give force to its ambition of achieving full employment. A country that gradually makes our society more inclusive and dynamic by re-establishing the value of work, with the ability to meet both demographic challenges and ever tougher global competition. With the potential to develop the welfare system that means so much for cohesion in Swedish society.

Forceful measures are being taken to ensure that unemployment does not remain at a high level. Targeted measures are being implemented for long-term unemployed people, young people and others with a weak foothold in the labour market. We do not intend to accept a rise in unemployment in difficult times, which then becomes persistent when the economy picks up.

The initiative of halved employers' social security contributions for those who employ young people under the age of 26 will remain in place. Extra resources will be given to work placement schemes and coaching. The Swedish Public Employment Service will be given additional resources. More young people will have access to measures at an early stage and support to find work. In addition, there will be greater opportunities for unemployed young people who have not completed compulsory or upper secondary school education to temporarily receive a higher student grant in order to supplement their grades.

More paths will also be opened up to improve young people's opportunities to find jobs. A new form of fixed-term employment will be introduced for pupils enrolled on apprenticeship programmes at upper secondary schools. In addition, apprentice probationary employment will be open to people up to the age of 23. The apprenticeship initiative creates completely new paths to jobs for many young people who currently have a weak foothold in the labour market.

Many people with disabilities are particularly detached from the labour market. The measures to remove barriers and create work opportunities for this group are therefore being strengthened. This includes raising the special employment support.

Older people will be given the opportunity to remain in work. We therefore want to extend the right to remain in working life from 67 to 69 years of age. The Government intends to raise this issue with the Social Democratic Party within the framework of the pensions agreement.

The social insurance system and unemployment insurance serve an important security function. They are to be designed to encourage people to work, and be based on active measures to give everyone who can work help and support to return to working life.

Several important reforms have been introduced within the social security systems. The previous passivity has been replaced by active measures.

It is important to ensure that the intentions behind the reforms are maintained. A person who is seriously ill and cannot work must be eligible for compensation. At the same time, reforms should increase incentives and support for those who can return

to work. Major changes, such as the sickness insurance reform, can lead to unreasonable and unintended consequences for individuals. It is important to remain humble in light of this.

The Government will continue to monitor developments. We will review whether the regulations and their application have had unintended consequences for individuals.

An all-party committee of inquiry has been appointed to review how the social insurance systems can be improved in the long term. The Government will return to the matter of when and how an obligatory unemployment insurance fund can be introduced after the inquiry has presented its proposals.

Free entrepreneurship lays the foundations for work, economic growth and welfare. A robust and dynamic business sector is a central requirement for increased employment. Entrepreneurship and enterprise are therefore to be encouraged. This will allow more companies to start up, stay and grow in Sweden.

Conscious work was begun during the previous electoral period to improve the business climate in Sweden. Taxes were lowered for entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship, the costs of hiring people were lowered and the regulatory burden was reduced. More parts of the economy have also been opened up to entrepreneurs, not least in the welfare sector. This work will continue.

Sweden will improve its business and innovation climate. An innovation strategy is being drawn up. An initiative will be launched on guidance, mentoring activities and funding for

innovation. The work on regulatory reform will continue. So will the initiative for entrepreneurship on the part of women, young people and immigrants. A special initiative will be launched to strengthen developmental capacity in the interior of northern Sweden. A broad examination of corporate taxation will be initiated. The aim is to design taxation so as to favour investment and employment.

We have seen thousands of new jobs emerge through the tax credits for household services ('RUT') and repairs, maintenance and improvement ('ROT'). We have seen unregistered jobs become registered employment, to the advantage of both wage earners and society as a whole. These jobs are to remain. If public finances and the economy allow, VAT on restaurant and catering services will be halved. This will pave the way to reduced costs, which in turn will allow new recruitment and new jobs.

The Government considers that the state's task should be to specify the frameworks and rules that are to apply to the business sector and companies, not to own and run companies. The state should, therefore, in principle not own companies that operate on commercial markets with functioning competition – as long as the company does not have a special social function that is difficult to achieve in another manner.

We can only keep our society together if we see Sweden as a whole. Sweden is a vast country. It contains both large cities and rural areas. All parts of Sweden must be given the chance to develop based on their own strengths and conditions.

Allowing all of Sweden to grow is a matter of promoting the conditions for living, working and entrepreneurship throughout

the country. Access to good electronic communications makes everyday life easier and is necessary for entrepreneurs to be able to conduct activities throughout the country. An ambitious energy and climate policy helps create the basis for investments and entrepreneurship in rural areas. The green industries are important. The 'Sweden – the new culinary nation' initiative will continue to receive funding.

Sweden must have an efficient transport system. Attractive public transport, increased accessibility by road and railway as well as good communications that link cities and the countryside. The Government has recently decided on an historic infrastructure investment of close to SEK 500 billion up to 2021. This investment stands firm. This will allow for major investments in roads and railways in the coming years.

More homes need to be built, and the position of rental apartments strengthened. More housing opportunities, not least for young people, will be created by stimulating rental of private homes.

Giving every individual the opportunity to develop and acquire knowledge is one of the most important tasks of society. By making use of every individual's opportunities and desire to learn, we lay the foundation for the Sweden of tomorrow.

A good school system improves people's opportunities in life. We want to see a school system where all pupils fulfil their potential and where everyone, regardless of their background, is given the opportunity to acquire knowledge. A school system offering knowledge leads to greater equality and inclusion.

Knowledge is the key that gives all pupils the opportunity to succeed.

We have made good progress. With the 'Boost for Teachers' scheme, better teacher education, new and clear objectives in school, obligatory written assessments and a new Education Act. Add to this our reading-writing-arithmetic initiative, more support for pupils who need it, an initiative for mathematics, a more stringent Swedish Schools Inspectorate, increased resources for research and higher vocational education, and a new upper secondary school.

The Government has the clear ambition to continue strengthening the education system. Teachers are indispensable to this work. To support teachers so that they are able to do a good job, a teachers package is being implemented with a continued Boost for Teachers, stronger educational leadership, further education for teachers who lack full teaching qualifications and research schools. More hours of teaching time will also be given in compulsory school.

Children who feel secure learn more. This is why we need a welcoming school environment, efforts to combat bullying and an awareness of the fundamental values of society. A special initiative for school health and welfare services will give teachers the time to be teachers, while the pupils who feel ill at ease can get help.

We are introducing a clearer, knowledge-oriented school curriculum and a new pre-school curriculum with greater educational content. A new grading system will be introduced with grades from year six.

Everyone has it in them to grow with improved skills on their own terms. A good school recognises and provides the scope for this. We are therefore upgrading the practical programmes by developing vocational and apprenticeship programmes within upper secondary school. We are continuing with initiatives in the area of adult vocational education and we are developing higher vocational education.

Everyone is to be given equal opportunities to realise their ambitions. This is why it is important to have a well-developed system of publicly financed student support. Despite one of the most generous systems of student finance in the world, many students find it difficult to make ends meet. The Government is therefore raising the loan part of student finance by SEK 500 per month as of 1 July 2011.

We want Sweden to continue to be a research nation of the highest standing. The Government's investments in research and innovation have already meant the biggest ever extra injection of resources in Swedish research. Now this work will continue. An investment in quality in higher education will be made.

At the crossroads between everyday toil and the dream, Sweden emerged as a welfare state. People's efforts and enterprise, together with an openness to the rest of the world, have made Sweden one of the richest countries in the world. Our wealth has laid the foundation for the welfare systems that even out differences and give everyone a chance.

Sweden must be a country with a good welfare system. A well-developed welfare system is a matter of social justice. The activities and services offered by the welfare system must be of

the highest quality and targeted at individual people according to their needs, irrespective of background, place of residence, gender or financial situation. The basis for achieving this is public financing in a spirit of solidarity.

During the last electoral period the Government implemented several reforms aimed at improving quality, freedom of choice and access. At the same time, we have safeguarded our welfare system throughout the crisis. Whereas other countries have been forced to make major cuts, we have been able to inject the largest level of extra resources that the welfare system has ever seen, thanks to responsible policies.

Efforts will now continue to protect and strengthen the welfare system. In addition to a permanent increase of SEK 5 billion in the general government grant to municipalities and county councils, a temporary additional contribution amounting to SEK 3 billion will be provided in 2011. We want to see these resources used to protect core local government activities: medical care, social services and activities intended for children and young people.

One of Sweden's most important challenges in the area of welfare is ensuring that we have a fair and equitable medical care system. This is why we are introducing a Patients Act. There will be a national initiative to increase patient safety and to shorten waiting times at emergency departments throughout the country. The health care guarantee will gradually be improved and efforts to eliminate health care waiting lists will continue.

End-of-life care will be improved. Current investments in psychiatric care will be made permanent. The dental care reform will be completed with special measures for those whose needs are greatest. Welfare will continue to be developed so that people

have the opportunity to decide more for themselves. This includes childcare, elderly care and medical care.

All elderly people have the right to age with dignity. Our elderly people must feel that their economic situation is reasonable. They must feel that they are secure, part of a community and included in society in general.

Economic security forms the main foundation for dignity in old age. We want the elderly people of Sweden to feel that they can live on their pension, even after tax. This is why we have reduced taxes for Sweden's pensioners in two stages. A third tax cut will be implemented on 1 January 2011. The Government's ambition is to further reduce taxes for pensioners when public finances and the economy allow us to do so.

Housing is also an important issue of independence and security. The Government's ambition is to give elderly people the opportunity to decide for themselves when it is time to move to housing that is adapted to their needs. Similarly, elderly people who wish to continue living together should be able to do so, even if their care needs are different.

Efforts to improve quality and freedom of choice in elderly care will continue. Care for the elderly is to be designed with human dignity in focus. Local dignity guarantees should be in place in all municipalities in the country. There will be an initiative to promote such a development. To ensure better, more coherent care, a broad investment will be made in social and health care. The aim is to achieve greater collaboration between municipalities and county councils in order to support the most frail elderly people with multiple illnesses.

Good health care and social services for elderly people in Sweden. This is also largely a matter of seeing the people who work in this sector and giving them the opportunity to do a good job. Giving employees the opportunity to have an influence, be included and develop. As part of these efforts, a special education initiative is being introduced for employees in the health care and social services sector – a ‘Boost for Carers’.

Few things inhibit people’s freedom as much as the fear of being a victim of crime. Being a victim of crime means having your life and property violated; this challenges some of the most fundamental values on which Swedish society is based. In a safe society, Swedish law applies equally to all, everywhere in Sweden. An efficient legal system lies at the core of a functioning democracy and a developed welfare society.

A safe society is also about the right conditions for children to grow up in a safe environment. Where they can encounter love and understanding, face demands, take responsibility and learn to respect and look after others. Ultimately, this is about us taking responsibility for ourselves, our actions and our fellow human beings.

The foundations of a society based on the rule of law are the protection of the individual and the right to respect for one’s privacy. We want a society in which those who commit crimes are punished and the victims of crime are seen. Where fair punishments are imposed so that the victim can get redress, but also so that the criminal is able to make amends for their crime and is given a second chance.

During the last electoral period, the Government made the biggest investment in the Swedish judicial system in modern times. There are currently 20 000 police officers working visibly, in people's daily lives, to improve safety. The goal is to create a safer Sweden for all, irrespective of who you are or where you live. These efforts will continue.

We want to move forward with tougher sentences for persistent and repeat offenders. The work of the Police Service and the judicial system will continue to be modernised and made more effective. More crimes will be prevented and more crimes will be cleared up and brought before the courts. The Police Service must become better at using modern technology in its work so as to be more effective, but also to combat the growing number of crimes committed over the Internet.

There are clear links between alcohol, drugs and violent crime. Preventive measures to reduce alcohol consumption and to stop drugs and the effects of other harmful substances will continue. This is an initiative for improved health and safety in society.

To feel free and safe in our daily lives must be everyone's right. Women and children are often particularly vulnerable. We must, therefore, strengthen protection for women living under protected identities, have a special focus on violence in close relationships, sexual offences, harassment and help for children who are mistreated.

The feeling in particular among young people in Sweden is that society's most common reaction to crime is that nothing happens. There is a feeling that the adult world is absent. In some parts of Sweden there is a feeling that the principle of 'might is right' has eclipsed law and order. This development is

unacceptable. This is why the fight against youth crime will be given special priority.

Society cannot afford – from an economic or human perspective – to turn a blind eye when young people go off the rails. We must face up to all crimes, clearly and at an early stage. Collaboration between the police, social services, schools and parents needs to increase. The judicial system must shorten its processing times and the transition from institutional youth care to the outside world must be improved.

Everyone's equal value and right to make their own choices. This is fundamental to how we want Sweden to meet the future. The path to an equal Sweden is about treating everyone with respect. A more equal Sweden will be a more dynamic and cohesive Sweden.

Gender equality in Sweden has come further than in many other countries. However, there remains a great deal to be done if women and men are to have the same opportunities. Reduced income tax, the tax credit for household services and more entrepreneurs in the welfare system are improving women's opportunities to live on their salaries, combine a career with family life and run businesses.

The Government is continuing its efforts for greater gender equality. Gender equality work in schools, measures for women subjected to violence and greater protection for women living under protected identities, as well as the battle against prostitution, are some important elements of these efforts.

Our family policy is based on the possibility for children to develop together with their parents. With the awareness that families are different and have differing situations and needs. By establishing that parents themselves are in the best position to make decisions about their own daily lives. This is how we want to create secure conditions for children and young people to grow up in, freedom of choice and diversity in childcare services, the conditions for families to have time together and to encourage greater gender equality within families.

A number of reforms will be implemented during this electoral period. Lone parents will be given the opportunity to transfer parental benefit. The child-raising allowance will be made more flexible. Parents will be able to take parental leave simultaneously for 30 days during the child's first year. In addition, the gender equality bonus will be simplified to make it a clear incentive in the endeavour to achieve a more gender-equal use of parental leave.

There will be a special investment to support families with children in vulnerable economic situations. Many lone parents in particular currently find it difficult to make ends meet. Raising the large-family supplement has been one step in response to this. We are now taking another step. The Government is raising the part of housing allowance that is payable as a special allowance to families with children from 1 January 2012. This is an important measure to support those with the smallest financial margins.

One of the most Swedish things we have is our tradition of openness to the rest of the world. Generations of people who have fled persecution and poverty have been given a chance to

start a new life in Sweden. They have enriched our country, made us wiser and given us a more developed society. They contribute to our prosperity. Without this openness, Sweden would have been a poorer country.

At the same time, there are major shortcomings in the system for immigrants to become established in Sweden. These are reflected in the high rate of unemployment and social problems in our metropolitan suburbs. We see them in inadequate educational outcomes and discrimination in the labour market. And while it is true to say that we in Sweden have these shortcomings, it is also true that it is poorly functioning systems and structures that have created these problems – not the people who have come here.

Improving integration is one of our greatest challenges. We are serious about breaking away from the existing shortcomings. More people must be given the opportunity of work and education in Swedish society. We want to do more to ensure that people who have come to Sweden from other countries feel seen and are able to contribute. And this is to be based on the values on which our society is built, and that we want to be Sweden's trademark.

The Government wants Sweden to have a humane, legally secure and organised asylum policy. Sweden must be a place of refuge for those fleeing persecution and oppression.

The possibilities for immigrants to come to Sweden and create a better future for themselves through their own work were broadened during the previous electoral period. The new labour migration rules are very important. They mean that Sweden has taken the lead the development towards more open borders and increased mobility, which is a great advantage to a society that

wants to develop and be well placed to tackle future demographic challenges. We will therefore stand up for and nurture this reform.

Integration builds on the foundations of work and opportunities to support oneself. For this reason, the Government's work-first principle is also a part of integration policy. We want integration policy to be based on the same premise as all other areas: everyone who can support themselves should have the opportunity to do so.

Our integration policy focuses on work and language skills. Continued improvements are needed in order to utilise the potential and drive of people with foreign backgrounds. During the next electoral period we will therefore propose a range of reforms. Along with reforms that have already been approved and implemented, they will emphasise work as the route into Swedish society.

Initiatives will be undertaken to further strengthen opportunities for those born abroad to become established in the labour market at an earlier stage. The focus will be on new arrivals being able to obtain jobs, Swedish language skills and a knowledge of how society works. They must have access to good schools for their children and a home in which they feel happy and secure.

This includes continued improvements to Swedish for Immigrants (SFI), with a stronger link to the labour market. It also includes step-in jobs; initiatives for guidance and mentorship to support entrepreneurship among immigrants; improving resources in schools in disadvantaged areas in order to stimulate improved outcomes. An inquiry will also be appointed to consider the possible introduction of a system of tax relief for

companies in particularly disadvantaged areas, known as ‘new start zones’.

Citizenship has important practical implications, but also great symbolic value. Swedish citizenship brings with it both rights and obligations. We want to signal the gravity and significance of citizenship by affirming it at a ceremony.

Society is bigger than the state. An open and tolerant society is built on clear values, whereby we distinguish right from wrong, show tolerance for differences and give people space to grow. Society is built on a daily basis by those people who participate in and make up civil society, with its wide range of voluntary and non-profit organisations and activities.

We want to continue to encourage non-profit forces by making it easier to get involved and by allowing civil society communities to develop in line with their own distinctive nature. We want to cooperate with and complement the non-profit sector, rather than control and compete with it. As part of this, and if the economic situation allows, our ambition is to introduce tax deductions for charitable donations.

We want culture to be a dynamic, challenging and independent force based on freedom of expression. We want to strengthen the importance of culture in society, based on its freedom and intrinsic value, and strive to ensure that more people benefit from it, regardless of their background and circumstances. To increase the opportunities for children and young people to benefit from cultural experiences, the Creative Schooling initiative will be expanded to cover the entirety of compulsory schooling.

We all have a responsibility to preserve our common heritage. Our cultural heritage institutions – archives, libraries and museums – have a particular responsibility. Opportunities to benefit from rich cultural amenities throughout the country must be safeguarded.

Sport is our largest popular movement. We want to pursue a sport policy that creates opportunities for more people to exercise and get involved in sport. We particularly want to emphasise opportunities for children and young people to participate in sport. For this reason, the ‘Boost for Sport’ initiative will be extended and given stable funding via the central government budget.

Sweden will lead the way with regard to good environment and sustainable development, both nationally and internationally. We all understand the seriousness of problems such as climate change, environmentally hazardous emissions and endangered marine environments. We must act at national level and take our responsibility, but we must also understand that global problems require global responses.

Our climate policy means that Sweden must show leadership through action both here at home and internationally. With national measures, we can take the lead and show the way forward for the transformation that is needed throughout the world. We have therefore substantially raised the level of our ambitions for emissions reductions in Sweden. By 2020, emissions are to be reduced by 40 per cent. This is the most ambitious goal in the entire EU.

The Government considers that the measures already taken and announced for the coming years will be sufficient to achieve this goal. The carbon dioxide tax will therefore not be increased during this electoral period over and above its annual adjustment in line with the consumer price index and measures already approved.

The Government's long-term objective is for Sweden to have a vehicle fleet that is independent of fossil fuels by 2030. A 'super green car rebate' for the cars with the lowest emissions will be introduced as a tool to help achieve this. Initiatives will also be undertaken to develop green cars, plug-in hybrids and the infrastructure for them.

Sweden will continue to push for a global climate agreement. A new agreement needs to prescribe more ambitious emissions reductions, and include more greenhouse gases and more countries than the current one. Sweden will also work to ensure that all EU Member States introduce a national carbon dioxide tax.

Sweden's climate aid is being developed, and work to climate-proof development cooperation will continue. Support for climate investments and technology transfers to developing countries is being expanded. Particular support needs to be given to those developing countries that have contributed least to causing the problems, but are hardest hit by them.

Long-term rules are needed to achieve good, cheap and climate-friendly energy. The Government has presented a proactive and ambitious climate and energy policy that unites environmental sustainability, competitiveness and security of supply.

To reduce vulnerability and increase security of supply, we want a third pillar to be developed in the electricity system. This will take the form of thermal power, wind power and other forms of renewable energy. Nuclear power will be an important part of Swedish electricity production for the foreseeable future. It must therefore be possible to optimise or replace existing reactors. However, no government subsidies will be given for new nuclear power stations. Hydro-electric power will also remain a mainstay of electricity production in the future. Sweden will continue its efforts to develop the Nordic and European electricity markets.

Decades of overexploitation have left our waters under great pressure. A successful environmental policy must protect and preserve both vital ecosystems and biodiversity. Initiatives to improve our marine environments will continue. Valuable forest areas will be given long-term protection and effective management. An action plan on hazardous chemicals will be drawn up.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Sweden must be a strong voice for peace, freedom and reconciliation in Europe and the world. We must be a clear force for a common European foreign policy that safeguards and develops democracy, international law and human rights and freedoms.

An open world and an open global economy continue to raise people out of poverty. Not only is sustained globalisation in our own interests, but it also creates global opportunities to move from oppression to freedom, and from poverty to prosperity. Open, tolerant and gender-equal societies increase the freedom

of individuals and create better conditions for economic, social and cultural development.

Sweden must be at the heart of European cooperation. We want a Europe that can be a strong force for open societies in an open world; that can tear down walls and barriers and build confidence and cooperation over the divisions and prejudices of the past.

Sweden must be proactive on issues that are crucial to the development of the EU. The internal market must be deepened in order to continue to build welfare in Europe. Common rules are needed to expedite economic recovery in Europe and prevent new crises. We want an open Europe that welcomes new members. The Neighbourhood Policy, not least in the form of the Eastern Partnership, has an important role to play.

A strong UN is a cornerstone of Swedish foreign policy. Sweden is working for a more effective and efficient UN that is even better placed to tackle the global challenges of the future. This applies not least to climate change. Sweden and the EU will continue to take the lead in this work. During this electoral period, we will also reinforce our initiatives to ensure that the Millennium Development Goals can be achieved by 2015.

In efforts for human rights and democracy there is a particular need for action to further strengthen freedom of expression and of religion.

Changing times bring new challenges. The Internet is bringing the world ever closer together. We will put new strength into efforts to ensure the freedom and security of the Internet.

We will continue our efforts for arms controls – including in our own part of the world – and for a world without nuclear

weapons. The further proliferation of weapons of mass destruction must be prevented. North Korea and Iran must respect international obligations and the decisions of the UN Security Council.

We will continue Sweden's tradition of support to and participation in international peace-keeping operations. We will also continue to seek broad parliamentary support for such operations. Our involvement in Afghanistan and Kosovo is broad and long-term.

Sweden is working for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East. We have a strong joint European policy. Israel's occupation and settlement policy must cease, a contiguous and viable Palestinian state must be created, terrorism must cease and Israel's right to exist within secure and recognised borders must be respected.

It will soon be 20 years since Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania re-established their independence. We want to continue to strengthen cooperation in the Nordic and Baltic regions, in all policy areas.

Sweden must have an ambitious development policy that focuses on poverty reduction. Efforts to create generous, effective and open aid are continuing. Democratic development and respect for human rights and freedoms within development cooperation remain a key basic value. The fight for increased gender equality is one of the most important democratic challenges of our time.

The safety and security of our country is based on fellowship and cooperation with other countries. A broad national consensus must continue to provide the framework for the

design of our security policy. This security policy remains firmly in place.

It is clear that our country will not remain passive should another EU Member State or another Nordic country be struck by disaster or attacked. By the same token, we expect these countries to take similar action should Sweden be so affected.

Sweden must have an available, functional and flexible defence that can safeguard our country's freedom and independence, alone and alongside others.

An operational organisation with permanent and contracted units is being created for operations at home, in our region and internationally. To increase functionality and flexibility, resources are being transferred from support and peripheral activities to unit activities. This new organisation is being constructed as and when these resources can be freed up. The Home Guard is being developed into national protection forces. These have a key role in the Swedish defence – their role and capability will increase.

Through our participation in the Nordic Battle Group, one of two EU rapid reaction forces, Sweden is taking responsibility for peace and security within and outside our region. Sweden will command the Nordic Battle Group in 2011. We should also have the ambition of undertaking its command in 2014.

Ahead of the next decision on the long-term direction of policy, for the period beyond 2015, the demands posed by developments in the rest of the world will be studied. Particular consideration will be given to dynamics in our region and in Russia.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

As we continue to take responsibility for Sweden, we do so based on a number of premises. Firstly: the Alliance Government is a minority government. Secondly: the Riksdag Act and Budget Act offer opportunities to maintain the direction of policy, good budgetary discipline and sound government finances. Thirdly: the Government will seek broad-based and responsible solutions in the Riksdag, where it may be natural to hold regular discussions with the Green Party, in the first instance, but also the Social Democratic Party where appropriate.

Our four parties – the Moderate Party, the Liberal Party, the Centre Party and the Christian Democrats – are driven by a conception of Sweden. We want to take responsibility for our country and create good conditions for work and welfare. We want to lay the foundations for a fair society that stands together. A society in which people can feel safe and secure, take their own initiatives and realise their ambitions.

In many respects, Sweden is already leading the way. We who live in this country have much to be proud of. We have much to take care of. But Sweden is not without challenges.

There are people in our society who are unable to realise their potential, who are not seen or who have been sidelined. Even in our country there is injustice and insecurity. Our ability to keep Sweden together depends on how we tackle these challenges. If we continue to take responsibility, show consideration for one another and act with a view to the long term, the Sweden of the future can be a stronger country than ever before.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

We proceed on the basis that people are all different but have the same human dignity. Irrespective of background, gender, skin colour, religion or sexual orientation, everyone must have the opportunity to grow and develop. We believe in people's innate power and desire to take responsibility. We are convinced that increased freedom to shape our own lives gives scope that improves the situation of both individuals and Sweden as a country.

People's power over their own daily lives, the work-first principle, and endeavours to achieve full employment and efficient, tax-funded welfare: these will all remain important dimensions of what we want Sweden to be. This is how we want to take responsibility for the future.

We believe in Sweden and in people. For this reason, we also believe in the future. Together, we can build a better Sweden. Not by setting people against each other, or by creating suspicion among people. A society that stands together and allows people to grow will become a vibrant society – a better, freer and more humane society.

We will continue to take responsibility for Sweden's economy. We will give more people the chance to stand on their own two feet and take pleasure in supporting themselves through their own work. More companies need to start up, stay and grow in Sweden. We want schools in which all children are given the chance to reach their full potential. Medical and social care must

be characterised by accessibility, quality and choice. People must be able to feel safe from violence and crime.

This is the Sweden we want to see emerge from the crisis. A stronger Sweden. A Sweden we can be proud of. A Sweden we must take care of.