

Good morning Mr Speaker,

Europe, our values and our way of life are worth defending. Because together, we have built some of the world's best societies in which to live.

Europe is far from perfect, but overall, we have done more right than wrong. We also know that none of our strengths should be taken for granted; rather, good things must be nurtured and defended.

We live in a time when European cooperation is more important than it has been for a very long time. In such serious times, we in Europe must take greater responsibility for our own security, competitiveness and future prosperity. Appeasement and inertia are dangerous.

The full-scale war of aggression on our continent is approaching its fifth year. It will soon be as long as the Second World War.

Russia is directing its attacks against civilian targets – playgrounds, hospitals and schools. Children are losing their lives. Being forcibly removed to Russia. Families are being broken up. It is inhuman brutality. Europe's single most important task is to support Ukraine. It is hugely significant that all Swedish political parties support that task.

On 22 October, ties between Sweden and Ukraine grew stronger. President Zelenskyy and I signed a declaration of intent on the long-term construction of a new Ukrainian air force – an export deal for 100–150 Swedish Gripen – the world's best combat aircraft.

Sweden is one of the world's largest military donors to Ukraine. In absolute numbers, we contribute more than countries such as France, Italy and Spain. Including armoured vehicles, artillery and air defence systems, air base equipment and training.

We are proud to do so, but more countries need to do more.

Because the Ukrainian people are not just defending their own freedom, but ours too. And we will continue to stand with Ukraine. On the side of freedom and democracy. On the right side of history. For as long as it takes.

The EU's 19th sanctions package was adopted on 23 October.

Sweden has pushed for sanctions against Russia's natural gas and shadow fleet, and for revenues generated by frozen Russian assets to be used to support Ukraine.

But the EU needs to accelerate the phasing out of fossil fuels from Russia and ensure that frozen Russian assets are used for Ukraine's long-term financing. Russia must pay for the damage it has caused Ukraine.

Sweden has consistently stood up for the view that the EU should be open to more people, when there are countries that both want to participate and live up to the requirements – a merit-based process. And we deeply regret Hungary's unjust blocking of Ukraine's path to membership.

Mr Speaker,

Cross-border criminality also threatens the security of Sweden and everyone else. Drugs and weapons are smuggled over international borders. Money is laundered, moved and hidden. Murders in Sweden are being ordered from the Costa del Sol.

The Government is taking this seriously and taking necessary measures to fight serious organised crime. Political weakness in facing the gangs ended when this Government took over responsibility for Sweden.

But the EU needs to adopt the same approach as we do at home. The Government is working hard for additional measures to confiscate criminals' assets. We have pushed for the strengthening of the EU Asset Recovery and Confiscation Directive, so that we can gain even better access to the luxury gadgets and status symbols of criminal gangs.

We have ramped up initiatives to take action against gang leaders. This year alone, more than 200 wanted people have been arrested abroad. The message to serious criminals hiding abroad is that we will find you, arrest you and lock you up.

Safety and security within our borders require tighter control of our external borders. Everyone remembers how things were 10 years ago. Sweden received 320 000 asylum seekers in just a matter of years. And today we see the consequences of mass immigration combined with failed integration – in Sweden and the rest of Europe.

The Government has now implemented the largest overhaul of Swedish migration policy in history, resulting in the lowest asylum-related immigration to Sweden since 1985. The overhaul was essential.

We are now negotiating important legislation to bring about quicker and more effective returns. This is necessary because only one in five asylum seekers who are ordered to leave the EU actually do so.

'No' must mean 'no.' The Government will continue to drive this work forward.

Mr Speaker,

Sweden and Europe are facing major investment decisions. Infrastructure, fossil-free electricity, research and development. Rearmament of our defence.

This all costs money.

But resources do not just magically appear. An aggressive agenda for increased growth and better competitiveness throughout Europe is needed.

The Government worked hard during the Swedish EU Presidency laying the foundations for the European competitiveness agenda that is now making rapid progress.

The EU Commission has presented six simplification packages and two more are on the way. The Government has itself presented concrete proposals for simplification in the areas of entrepreneurship, AI and other new technologies.

But we are very concerned about the slow progress within the EU. When the EU Commission's simplification proposals are met with 1 000 amendments in the European Parliament, it is clearly a sign of obstruction.

For the EU to be a relevant global actor, the pace needs stepping up. The European economy needs simpler rules now.

I therefore urgently call on the parties here in the Riksdag to speak seriously with your party colleagues in Brussels. Sweden must be able to rely on Swedish MEPs to contribute to the simplification of the rules and competitiveness in Europe.

Access to capital is crucial. And the EU has unbelievable potential: Today, EUR 11 000 billion of household financial assets lie dormant in bank accounts or cash. Just a fraction of that amount would have made a difference had it been invested in growing European companies instead.

Sweden is a role model in this respect. Our pension system and investment savings accounts – which are tax free up to SEK 300 000 are part of one of the best capital markets in Europe. The EU Commission now wants more to follow suit.

Sweden has long been a strong voice in the EU for free trade. We are Europe's – and one of the world's – most free trade-friendly countries.

And while the US administration has redrawn the trade policy playing field and increased uncertainty, we see growing interest from other parts of the world in concluding new free trade agreements with the EU.

The EU is now taking important steps in free trade negotiations – with Mexico, Indonesia and the MERCOSUR countries. Negotiations with India are also progressing rapidly.

Mr Speaker,

Sweden has the lowest emissions per capita in the EU. And, according to projections, emissions will be lower in 2026 than when we came to power in 2022. Sweden is a climate policy role model in Europe.

The Government supports an ambitious climate agenda in the EU that goes hand in hand with increased competitiveness. By acting collectively at EU level, we are contributing more to reducing emissions than by acting alone.

The challenge now is to agree on emissions reductions for 2040 – on the path to climate neutrality by 2050.

The Government supports the EU Commission proposal of a 90 per cent reduction in emissions compared to 1990s levels, the target now underpinning the EU's commitment at the COP30 climate summit in Brazil.

However, this requires all countries to get involved and do the work. Otherwise, it is unrealistic.

To live up to the EU's targets for carbon removal in forests and the earth, Sweden would need to dramatically reduce its logging. This would have serious consequences for Swedish jobs and Swedish exports.

EU climate policy cannot be based on Swedish forests being used as carbon sinks for countries with less ambitious climate commitments. Those in Sweden who want that must now answer the following questions:

- How many Swedish jobs will disappear?
- How many Swedish forests will be subject to logging bans?

Those parties in the Riksdag that wish to sacrifice Swedish interests should say so loud and clear.

The path to lower emissions is based on all fossil-free forms of energy playing a role. And nuclear power is very much back on the European energy policy agenda.

In addition to more and more countries expanding their own nuclear power production, this is evident as regulations are developing in a more technology-neutral direction.

Mr Speaker,

As an EU member you commit to democracy and the rule of law – free media, independent courts and an engaged civil society.

Sweden expects all EU members to stand up for that. People should be able to gather together under the rainbow flag without the threat of violence or reprisal. We fight for that freedom every day. And on that issue, I know that the Government has the full support of the Chamber.

The EU must use all the powers at its disposal against countries that compromise or challenge democracy and the principles of the rule of law. This may involve withholding support from the EU budget, and in the long run withdrawing the right to vote in the Council of Ministers.

Mr Speaker,

Elections will be held in Sweden in a year's time. Two options are then at odds with each other on these EU issues as well.

We are pushing for more European regulatory simplification to make it easy for Swedish companies to do the right thing.

We are pushing for a climate policy that reduces emissions without cutting off Swedish rural areas and forestry industry exports at the knees.

We are pushing for a stricter migration policy so that 'no' always means 'no' throughout Europe.

And we will always protect Swedish interests in the EU. Because no one else does.

We live in serious times. But Swedish and European history gives us reason to feel hope for the future. We have overcome war and crises before and come out the other side stronger.

Not on our own and not without making an effort – but together, and by working hard for a better tomorrow.