

Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde

# Statement of Government Policy

in the Parliamentary Debate on Foreign Affairs  
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## Statement of Foreign Policy 2020

*Mr/Madam Speaker, Honourable Members, Representatives of the Diplomatic Corps, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Sweden's foreign policy is conducted with the aim of creating security in our country and around the world.

The conflicts, climate emergency and refugee flows of recent years show that events far from our national borders also affect us in Sweden.

The world is becoming increasingly unpredictable – and it's getting closer. The ongoing coronavirus outbreak shows how interconnected the world is.

There are those who think we should close the door to cooperation. As if the problems would disappear if we just shut our eyes. I am convinced that we must respond to a troubled world by increasing cooperation and solidarity. International problems require international responses.

People around the world are demonstrating for freedom and justice. The climate movement brings millions of people together on the streets. We have a responsibility to listen to their urgent calls.

Well-functioning international cooperation and international law are the foundation of an international order in which rules and agreements take precedence over the concept of 'might is right'. This order is necessary for Sweden to be safe and secure.

We stand up for diplomacy, dialogue and cooperation. This is how we defend our interests, values and security. This is how we make the world safer.

*Mr/Madam Speaker,*

The EU is our most important foreign and security policy arena. No other actor is a greater guarantor of Sweden's economy, security and peace. Sweden will participate fully in EU cooperation and in shaping it in a way that safeguards Sweden's interests.

The United Kingdom has now left the EU and the time has come to look to the future. Sweden will continue to maintain as close and comprehensive a relationship as possible with the United Kingdom.

We are also strengthening relations with leading Member States, such as Germany and France, and enhancing Nordic cooperation. This makes our region more secure and sustainable. In the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Government is pushing for implementation of the common vision that the Nordic region will become the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030.

A renewed Arctic Strategy will be presented during the year.

For several years, the rule of law and respect for the EU's fundamental values have been undermined in some Member States. Together with the European Commission and other Member States, Sweden takes a clear stand against this trend.

Many people today are concerned that EU enlargement is moving too fast. We take this seriously. At the same time, close relations with the countries of the Western Balkans are important to our common security and economy. We want to find a way forward that unites the EU and that clearly contributes to reform efforts in the Western Balkans. Here, the prospect of eventually becoming a member is important.

The European Commission has previously proposed that negotiations be started with Albania and North Macedonia. Sweden has been prepared to support this.

Sweden supports the proposal for a review of the enlargement process, and it is important that all essential requirements are met before a country can become a member.

*Mr/Madam Speaker,*

Diplomacy is our primary line of defence.

The Defence Commission emphasises the importance of safeguarding our sovereignty and Swedish interests. This means being able to use all the instruments we have at our disposal – political, diplomatic, economic and military – in a coherent manner. This is how we build common security.

I would like to express special thanks to the Swedes taking part in our civilian and military operations in areas such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali and Ukraine. You are making an invaluable contribution to peace and security – internationally and in Sweden.

Europe must take greater responsibility for its own security.

The EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy must be strengthened so as to defend the EU's interests and values around the world.

Our security is strengthened by stability and economic growth in the EU's neighbourhood. We stand by our commitments to support reform processes in Ukraine and other countries in the EU's eastern neighbourhood.

The Eastern Partnership recently reached its 10-year milestone. Sweden will continue to promote the Partnership in the EU.

We also want to show that a southern partnership is possible. Close cooperation with the countries of North Africa is already in place. But this must be enhanced and the EU must provide support for the stability and development of these states.

Sweden's security policy remains firmly in place. Our non-participation in military alliances serves us well and contributes to stability and security in northern Europe. It requires an active, broad and responsible foreign and security policy combined with enhanced defence cooperation – particularly with Finland – and credible national defence capabilities. We will contribute to long-term stability and security in our part of Europe.

Rapid technological advances, not least within cyber security and AI, are creating new challenges in the grey area between competitiveness, trade and security policy.

Sweden's foreign and security policy builds on cohesion in the EU and increased cooperation on a broad front: in the Nordic and Baltic Sea regions, in the UN and the OSCE, and through partnership with NATO. A strong transatlantic link is important for the security of Europe and the United States.

The UN plays an important role for peace and security, development and human rights, and is a central arena for Sweden's response to global challenges. The UN will remain a cornerstone of our foreign and security policy. We support Norway's candidacy for a seat on the United Nations Security Council.

Sweden will not remain passive if another EU Member State or a Nordic country suffers a disaster or an attack. We expect these countries to act in the same way if Sweden is affected. We must therefore be able to both give and receive support, civilian as well as military.

Sweden's role as Chair of the OSCE in 2021 will be based on our strong engagement for the European security order. Upholding the OSCE's jointly agreed principles and commitments is a major security interest for Sweden.

*Mr/Madam Speaker,*

Everyone has the right to live in safety regardless of where they live. This applies both here at home and in other countries. No one should need to look anxiously over their shoulder on their way home from school or work.

Since autumn 2014, the Government has implemented a range of measures against organised crime, including stricter penalties and more police officers, and has also conducted important crime prevention activities.

But we know that this kind of crime also has links abroad.

We are therefore introducing new initiatives to reinforce law enforcement via our embassies and international cooperation.

We will appoint an ambassador at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs tasked with coordinating the MFA's work against organised crime and supporting Swedish law enforcement authorities.

Our embassies will be instructed to monitor the issue of crime with links to Sweden. Our embassies in places such as the Western Balkans, the South Caucasus and Latin America will be specially tasked with prioritising this issue.

The Government will continue the successful efforts against organised crime in the Council of the Baltic Sea States and within the framework of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council, the EU Eastern Partnership and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Sweden will enhance efforts to stop the flow of weapons and drugs, and take new steps against cross-border crime and terrorism. Europol and Eurojust are central to this work.

*Mr/Madam Speaker,*

Global warming is affecting us here and now.

It is not just a matter of direct consequences of more extreme weather – an unstable climate also disrupts the economy, food security and our welfare and security.

Climate change exacerbates tensions and conflicts. Sweden will continue to show leadership through climate diplomacy that encourages other countries to raise their ambitions.

The EU is a necessary force in global climate action. Sweden will continue to show leadership both in and outside the EU and will be the world's first fossil-free welfare nation. Our climate efforts are ranked the highest in the world. We have doubled our contribution to the Green Climate Fund. We are working at home and internationally for a just transition.

Functioning ecosystems are essential for all life. Forests, wetlands and oceans are home to a rich biodiversity. The marine environment is under enormous pressure from climate change, overexploitation, pollution and eutrophication. The Government wants to see a global target of 30 per cent of oceans designated as marine protection areas.

*Mr/Madam Speaker,*

Democracy around the world continues to be challenged and questioned.

This trend is threatening the foundation of our safety and security. Sweden is therefore increasing its efforts to defend and promote democracy around the world through the Drive For Democracy initiative.

We are building alliances with like-minded countries and organisations that want to help strengthen democracy. The appropriation to democracy aid has been increased.

We are increasing support to ensure open societies, particularly for free and independent media and freedom of the press.

We are defending and promoting the rights of LGBTI people.

We are strengthening our measures to combat corruption, which is one of the worst obstacles to development. All suspicions of corruption in aid are followed up and addressed.

We are boosting the significance of trade as a platform for dialogue on human rights and democracy. Swedish export credits for investment in exploration and exploitation of fossil fuels must cease by 2022.

Increasing antisemitism is a growing concern all over the world and a threat to democracy. The Prime Minister has therefore taken the initiative to hold an international conference in Malmö in October 2020 for Holocaust remembrance and combating antisemitism.

*Mr/Madam Speaker,*

The rights of women and girls are under attack. Conservative forces are trying to restrict the right of women and girls to decide over their own bodies and lives.

Issues relating to women, peace and security, as well as women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, are especially important to stand up for.

To reverse this trend, courageous action is needed at all levels. This is why we are pursuing a feminist foreign policy.

It is gratifying that we have been joined by countries such as Canada, France, Luxembourg and Mexico.

Within the EU, Sweden and France have taken the initiative to improve the effectiveness of the EU's gender equality work, and we are establishing a feminist trade policy.

*Mr/Madam Speaker,*

Around the world, more than 165 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance. The 2030 Agenda provides a roadmap for sustainable development that permeates Sweden's work. Sweden's development assistance is effective and world-class. The Government remains committed to the 1 per cent goal.

War is a catastrophe for people and societies. Children are often the worst affected. Here at home, in the UN and in the EU, Sweden is working to safeguard rights and strengthen the protection of children.

It is important that the EU has a common asylum system that provides legal certainty, is humane and sustainable, and in which all countries take their responsibility. The right to asylum must be protected.

Extreme poverty has been falling since 1990, but inequality is rising.

Inequality is not only unjust and a barrier to economic development – it also creates a breeding ground for tensions and conflict. We have seen examples of this in several major demonstrations around the world, not least in Chile. Greater equality is part of Sweden's foreign policy.

The Global Deal initiative promotes social dialogue and sustainable growth globally. In certain countries, standing up for trade unions and decent working conditions means risking your life. Trade union rights are part of our Drive for Democracy and will be raised in all



Ministry for Foreign Affairs country reports on human rights.

*Mr/Madam Speaker,*

World trade contributes to lifting entire countries out of poverty and to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

As a member of the EU, Sweden is pursuing a policy for free and fair trade that contributes to sustainable development and creates jobs throughout the country. Every third job in Sweden depends on our trade with the rest of the world.

We are mobilising our efforts with an updated export and investment strategy for the whole of Sweden.

Expo 2020 in Dubai will showcase Swedish companies' competitiveness in innovation and sustainability.

*Mr/Madam Speaker,*

We cannot take a passive stance on the nuclear threat.

Developments are alarming: arms control agreements are being abandoned. Nuclear weapons arsenals are being expanded and modernised.

Disarmament and non-proliferation are central foreign and security policy priorities for the Government.

Through the Stockholm Initiative on Nuclear Disarmament, the Government is contributing to the upcoming Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. This work is now being advanced at a new ministerial meeting in Germany.

As Chair of the International Atomic Energy Agency Board of Governors, Sweden is taking responsibility for non-proliferation. Compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action nuclear deal is central.

Within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, Sweden is pushing for an effective international ban on lethal autonomous weapons systems that are incompatible with the requirements of international law.

*Mr/Madam Speaker,*

Our close relationship with the United States is of central importance to Sweden's security and prosperity.

A functioning international community presupposes an engaged United States. It is troubling that the United States is withdrawing from some forms of multilateral cooperation. The Government is working to ensure that trade relations with the United States work well, and that threats of new trade barriers are not carried out.

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The Government's Russia policy remains unchanged.

Where we have common interests we, like the EU, can and should cooperate with Russia. This benefits our security, and stability in our neighbourhood.

We condemn Russia's aggression against Ukraine and its illegal annexation of Crimea. These breaches of international law challenge the European security order. Sweden supports Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and every country's right to choose its own security policy path.

We are working to ensure that the EU sanctions against Russia are maintained for as long as the reasons for their introduction remain.

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Sweden stands ready to contribute to the easing of regional tensions and to dialogue in the Middle East.

We are continuing our engagement in the global coalition against Daesh. Kurds, Christians and other minorities in the region must be protected.

The Government is keen to have good relations with both Israel and Palestine. Sweden – like the rest of the EU – is working for a solution based on international law in which two states can coexist in peace and security.

The Government has condemned Iran for the shooting down of a civilian aircraft which claimed the lives of 17 people who were resident in Sweden. We demand an independent and transparent investigation.

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We both cooperate and engage in critical dialogue with Turkey. The EU has condemned Turkey's offensive in north-eastern Syria. At the same time, the Syrian regime has ruthlessly bombed its own country to rubble for almost nine years. All licences for Sweden's exports of military equipment to Turkey have been withdrawn.

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The humanitarian, political and economic crisis in Venezuela is worsening day by day. Together with the international community, we are working for a peaceful solution.

Increasing polarisation in Bolivia is serious and has led to escalating violence and vandalism.

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China's increasingly active role in the global arena presents opportunities and challenges. We welcome the Riksdag's consensus on the written communication on our China policy.

We are conducting a frank and open dialogue with China based on our own interests and those of the EU. Human rights and freedom of expression are important aspects of this.

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India is an important global actor and partner for Sweden. It is a significant market that will play an increasingly important role for growth and employment in our country.

At the UN Climate Action Summit in New York, Sweden and India launched the Leadership Group for Industry Transition to ensure a fossil-free future for heavy industry.

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The African continent has a young population. If the many young people there receive access to education and employment, a number of African countries could develop at a rapid pace. But the challenges are also great.

Human rights, democracy and gender equality are priorities in Sweden's Africa policy, along with migration and trade. It is important to support sustainable development in Africa. This can involve girls' schooling and increased access to electricity.

The security situation in the Sahel continues to be very troubling, not least in Mali. The region is characterised by weak states. The situation is a breeding ground for radicalisation.

*Mr/Madam Speaker,*

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs handles many consular cases. These can involve anything from crises and disasters to deprivation of liberty. Most people are helped without publicity, but some cases receive a lot of attention.

The work to help Swedes in distress abroad is always conducted with the best interests of those affected in mind.

*Mr/Madam Speaker,*

In troubled times, with a harsh tone from world leaders and aggressive big-power behaviour, Sweden is showing that another path is possible.

With an open and democratic environment, with tough debates but also a striving for consensus, we are showing that freedom, equality and openness are not yesterday's solutions.

Sweden is, and will continue to be, one of the world's best countries to live in, and we are making a difference around the world. This is something we Swedes should be proud of.