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Minister for  
Foreign Affairs*

# Statement of Government Policy

*in the Parliamentary Debate on Foreign Affairs,  
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REGERINGSKANSLIET

**Government Offices  
of Sweden**

## **Check against delivery**

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Sweden's foreign policy contributes to freedom, peace and reconciliation around the world. It rests on the values upon which our open society is built, and on our own interests.

Work to promote democracy, human rights and sustainable development permeates our country's relationship with other countries and with multilateral cooperation.

Our foreign policy has been shaped through broad collaboration and enjoys strong support from the Swedish people and also from this Chamber.

It is a policy that the Government has pursued with consistency, and one that we will seek a mandate to continue in September.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

One hundred years ago, Europe stood on the brink of world war.

The shots fired in Sarajevo signalled the start of a war that would lay waste to states and societies. A war that would devastate Europe and leave millions dead, maimed and grieving. A war that would shape generations and continents.

It would take seventy-five years before this ravaged Europe could unite, and wounds from the past could heal.

When the Berlin Wall fell in 1989, democracy rose from the rubble. When ideological barriers shattered, new links were forged.

A decade ago, the European cooperation that had risen from the ashes of war was expanded as the European Union gained ten new members.

For most of these states, this was the ultimate confirmation that the brutal oppression of the iron curtain had been replaced with the hopefulness of European integration.

The history of Europe – our history – reminds us of the horrors of war and dictatorship, but also of the phenomenal power of cooperation and freedom. And of the duty that our generation – and the next – has to discharge and cultivate.

In May, the citizens of the EU Member States will go to the polls to have their say on the direction of the European Union and the conditions of their own everyday lives.

We have a joint responsibility to ensure that the debate ahead of this election is factual, offering clear visions and distinct alternatives.

And to those voices – in Sweden and in the rest of Europe – who want to dismantle or weaken European cooperation, we want to send a clear message: the historical

responsibility for breaking down European cooperation will be a heavy burden to bear. Weakening European cooperation means weakening the prospects for welfare and development.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Sweden must be an active part of a strong, united and open Europe.

A Europe that stands strong in efforts to promote freedom, peace and democracy, human rights and economic development.

The Government wants to see a deepened and effective internal market in which the remaining barriers in the rapidly expanding services sector and the digital economy are torn down, and the potential offered by more women in gainful employment is realised. In which development of our common regulatory framework contributes to necessary reforms of antiquated structures, and in which individuals are encouraged to take advantage of the possibilities to study, work and stay in other countries.

This is the way to create growth, competitiveness and employment, but also understanding, solidarity and tolerance.

We recognise the seriousness of the global challenges facing our environment and our climate. We must act at national level and take our responsibility, but global problems require global responses. Cooperation within the European Union is crucial in tackling these challenges. Sweden wants the EU to continue to pursue an ambitious policy beyond 2020. The EU should continue to take the lead in the ongoing efforts to bring about a new global climate agreement in Paris in 2015.

Likewise, the Government will continue to work for free trade and open markets, and against protectionism, both within the European Union and with respect to other countries.

We want an EU that looks to the positive effects of migration and is generous in its reception of asylum seekers. Sweden is one of the countries that take in the most refugees. We are working to ensure that more countries do more.

The forces of opposition to this open cooperation – xenophobia and euroscepticism – go hand in hand. We must combat this coalition of narrowmindedness with vigour and conviction.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Europe is growing, both economically and as a union that is open to new members. After years of economic crisis management, we are now witnessing a gradual return to growth.

But many countries still face serious challenges in the form of insufficient competitiveness, substantial national debt and a weak financial sector.

Sweden now wants to push for continued structural reforms to improve European competitiveness via a strategy for growth.

We advocate continued enlargement, with more countries fully included in European cooperation – this contributes to peace, stability and development on our continent.

We must capitalise on the Union's attractiveness and ensure credible scrutiny of the candidate countries without introducing new requirements along the way.

The establishment of closer ties with the EU remains the principal driving force for reform in Turkey.

A new chapter has been opened in the negotiations and a first step towards liberalisation in the visa area has been taken. Further change and reform are needed to strengthen human rights and the independence of the judiciary. The adoption of a new constitution and progress in the Kurdish peace process are important steps along this path.

We welcome the fact that membership negotiations have now been opened with Serbia, and we want Bosnia to use the symbolic year of 2014 to take necessary decisions to enable closer ties with the EU. Healing the wounds of war will take time, but we now see former enemies supporting each other in their European integration. European cooperation is a peace project. The establishment of closer ties between Serbia and Kosovo is an important example of this. We now pin our hopes on a solution to the Cyprus issue and the island's reunification.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Our Europe is a global Europe.

The most biting winds of the economic crisis may now have subsided, but political stormclouds are gathering in the European Union's neighbourhood, and in our neighbours' neighbourhoods.

We are deeply concerned about the situation in Ukraine. We condemn all use of violence and urge the country's leaders to seek a way out of the political crisis, together with the opposition.

The EU is ready to support the reform policies that this mismanaged country so desperately needs. By the same token, we are prepared to take measures if the regime instead chooses the shortsighted path of repression and brutality.

We regret the absence of a democratisation process in Belarus, and the setbacks in Azerbaijan. And we note that Armenia has chosen a Russian customs union rather than European integration.

And in country after country in our Eastern European neighbourhood we see unacceptable Russian pressure and threats, based on the faulty logic of the zero-sum game, being brought to bear on those who seek closer cooperation with the EU.

Sweden remains one of the strongest promoters of the Eastern Partnership as an anchor point in these countries' modernisation processes, making clear demands, but also offering preparedness to meet progress with deeper cooperation and increased support.

The Government wants to ensure the prompt signing of the association and free trade agreements with Moldova and Georgia, long-term commitments to continued reform in both countries and visa exemption for Moldovan citizens.

A fully negotiated association and free trade agreement with the EU is on the table and can be signed when Ukraine is ready to follow the path of reform and can benefit from all the opportunities offered by the agreement.

There should be a clear EU perspective for those countries in Europe that implement political and economic reforms. This is laid out in the Treaty on European Union, and it is how we contribute to development in our eastern neighbourhood.

The EU's southern neighbourhood faces a year of extraordinary challenges, but also unparalleled opportunities.

The interim agreement with Iran on a solution to the nuclear issue is a step forward and a testament to the strength that is possible when the international community acts in unison. The work for a long-term, comprehensive agreement must now be intensified, while demands regarding respect for human rights must be stressed. The human rights sanctions will remain in place while the dialogue continues.

The civil war in Syria has claimed the lives of more than 136 000 people, forced more than nine million people to flee and created instability throughout the region.

The parties and the international community now have a joint responsibility to use the negotiations that are under way to provide support for and contribute to a political solution. The violence must cease and humanitarian law, including the right to humanitarian access, must be respected. A political solution must be broad and inclusive.

Sweden has contributed SEK 700 million in humanitarian aid since the outbreak of the conflict, and will contribute at least another SEK 230 million this year. Support is also being given to actors who promote human rights and democracy.

During the past year new hopes have been raised in the peace process in the Middle East, where negotiations on a two-state solution have resumed.

The fundamental elements of the agreement that must be reached are known. Considerable progress is possible, provided that the political will exists.

Both Sweden and the European Union are ready to help support implementation of an agreement.

The political process in Egypt is fraught with increasingly harsh repression. The EU has an important task in preventing human rights offences and promoting democratic development.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Sweden is committed to an EU that strengthens strategic links with other global actors.

We want to see an ambitious transatlantic trade and investment partnership between the EU and the United States by 2015.

Linking the world's two largest economies in this way is good for sustainable growth and employment, for the strength and vitality of this crucial transatlantic link, and for free trade.

We want to see a relationship with Russia that rests on respect for international rules, institutions and principles. Commitments within the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the Council of Europe must be observed and encourage development towards a pluralistic and more democratic Russia. The EU must call attention to the unacceptable human rights abuses, not least against LGBT people, and the increasing repression of civil society.

We want to see a more extensive European partnership with China, involving cooperation, economic exchanges and candid dialogue that includes civil and political rights and freedoms.

And we want the EU to deepen its cooperation with countries such as Brazil, India and South Africa on important issues concerning the climate, research and economic growth.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Our Europe is a Europe with a clear foreign policy vision.

At the European Council meeting in December, a further step was taken towards realising the Swedish proposal on a European global strategy. Work is now being stepped up to formulate the EU's international goals and interests.

The EU is also becoming better equipped for conciliation and conflict management. Yesterday, seven countries signed the statutes to establish a European Institute for Peace, of which Sweden was one of the initiators.

We are committed to strengthening the European External Action Service to ensure that the common foreign policy voice is heard more clearly.

Sweden will also continue to contribute personnel to the EU's civil and military crisis management operations.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

In our Europe, the European Union and the Council of Europe work side by side for the values and principles of open societies, wherever these are attacked.

It is a matter of safeguarding an international cooperation framework that is based on international law and the rule of law.

The European Convention on Human Rights plays a central role in counteracting all forms of discrimination and safeguarding human rights. The attempts being made by certain countries to undermine its status must be opposed.

The EU institutions and the Member States must take their responsibility to ensure that fundamental rights are respected. The Government is working actively with other EU members to bring about effective scrutiny of human rights compliance in the member countries.

We are working for a world of equality. A world in which everyone's rights are respected regardless of gender, skin colour, belief or sexual orientation. Freedom of expression and of religion must be further strengthened.

We take an extremely serious view of the UN report on North Korea that has now been presented. The human rights abuses that it describes are so massive that they can be called crimes against humanity. Sweden will work for increased international focus on this deeply inhuman situation.

The common EU position in relations with Cuba includes firm demands for reforms to strengthen human rights. Persecution of dissidents continues and pressure on the regime must be maintained.

Efforts to bring about the release of Swedish-Eritrean journalist Dawit Isaak will continue.

Sweden today is a leading advocate of freedom on the internet – in multilateral negotiations and in the debate with proponents of censorship and restrictions on freedom.

We are following up UN Human Rights Council Resolution 20/8 on the principle that the same rights apply online as offline. Sweden was the initiator of the resolution, and we will remain its foremost advocate.

We are building alliances to safeguard a multi-stakeholder model for internet governance, whereby dictatorships and authoritarian states are not given control over this driving force for individual development and global progress.

And we have launched principles that should help guide the international debate on how the rule of law is to be applied online. Surveillance and accessing data are at times unavoidable in order to combat crime and protect the institutions of democracy, but

the purpose must be to safeguard freedom, privacy and the rights of the individual, not to undermine these values.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Given our national commitment to global multilateral cooperation, it is natural that we promote a European Union that contributes to the UN's work, not least in the everyday lives and reality of vulnerable people.

Sweden welcomes the progress made at the World Trade Organisation Ministerial Conference in Bali, and is ready to move forward on the multilateral trade agenda.

Sweden is ready to contribute military capabilities to peace support operations led by the UN, the EU or NATO.

In the next few months the Government will seek the support of the Riksdag for a substantial Swedish contribution to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

The Government also supports the decision to establish an EU operation in the Central African Republic, which is now being planned.

Sweden is committed to a world free of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, and over the past year has made resources available to destroy Syrian chemical weapons.

Over the past two years, Sweden, together with Mexico, has led the international work towards the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). Our commitment continues, even if our formal mandate has ended.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is the cornerstone of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament efforts. Sweden is working for a successful review conference in New York in 2015.

The UN Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which was adopted in April 2013, is an important step in the fight against the illegal and destabilising trade in conventional weapons. The Government intends to ratify the Treaty in 2014.

We will also take a decision today on contributions to the IAEA supervision of the nuclear agreement with Iran. Sweden strongly advocates a diplomatic solution whereby Iran fully meets its obligations under the NPT.

Security and development go hand in hand.

We are continuing to save lives and alleviate suffering through immediate assistance in crises and catastrophes. We are acting to strengthen the humanitarian response system.



Our contribution to the fight against poverty and oppression is among the most generous.

The Swedish development assistance framework amounts to more than SEK 38 billion and we meet the international 0.7 per cent target, as well as Sweden's own 1 per cent target.

The concerted efforts to meet the Millennium Development Goals have produced results.

The proportion of people living in poverty has halved and the hunger reduction target is within reach next year.

Other Millennium Development Goals are lagging behind. The Government is therefore continuing its focus on health to save the lives of women and children. To this end, the Government is prioritising work on sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as sanitation. Our support to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is increasing, as is support to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Women's security and their influence in peace processes are of paramount importance, and the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 will therefore continue to be key.

Sweden wants to see new universal sustainable development goals that include democracy, human rights, gender equality, climate and the environment, and freedom from violence. And we are demanding continued reform of the UN system to ensure greater transparency, efficiency and results-based management.

Sweden is making further efforts, and contributing additional funds, to strengthen democracy and human rights globally.

In the next few months, the Government will present a new development assistance policy platform that will lay out the Government's priorities and clarify the governance of Swedish development assistance.

We will also deepen the dialogue with civil society organisations.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Sweden is a candidate for a seat on the UN Security Council for the period 2017–2018.

Our candidacy will, with Nordic support, build on our merits as a committed, generous and principled UN member and will not rely on angling for votes and shuttle diplomacy.

We believe that this is the best way to argue that it is time for a Nordic voice on the Council, and that the international practice of extensive campaigning needs to be reviewed.

Sweden is the sixth largest donor to the UN system. Some 80 000 of our people have served in the UN over the years and we are the third largest humanitarian donor.

Our UN résumé is strong.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Our Europe is a Europe in which each country can make its own security policy choices and in which regional cooperation also thrives.

Our security policy and our declaration of solidarity remain firmly in place.

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

The Defence Commission has presented its security policy assessment and a defence policy report will be presented shortly.

Sweden has a strong and clear sense of its Nordic identity.

We are deepening foreign, security and defence policy cooperation, as presented in a special written communication to the Riksdag.

And as of two weeks ago, Swedish and Finnish aircraft are participating in an air defence exercise under Norwegian command in Icelandic air space.

In parallel, Nordic-Baltic relations are being developed, and the ties between this Nordic-Baltic cooperation and the Visegrad Group of countries in Central Europe are being strengthened.

Our northern neighbourhood continues to be a region for collaboration and seeking common solutions.

Decisions from the Swedish Chairmanship of the Arctic Council will be implemented and Sweden's 2011 Arctic Strategy will be taken forward, not least with regard to sustainable development in the entire Arctic region.

This will create deeper integration in our neighbourhood, new platforms for our foreign policy priorities and strengthened European security.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

The transition from military to civilian operations in Afghanistan continues.

The current military contribution is being wound up and will, in accordance with broad agreement in the Riksdag, be followed with preparedness to contribute to a subsequent training operation.

This year, the Government will adopt a new results strategy in which education and training, gender equality, economic development and employment are in focus.

Sweden has large and wide-ranging commitments in the Horn of Africa. We base our actions on a holistic approach and contribute to the three different civilian and military operations under the EU's regional framework. This essentially involves creating conditions for people in these countries to gradually maintain stability and security using their own capacities.

And on continent after continent we are developing our development assistance relationships, moving from being aid donors to also being partners in trade and knowledge.

Nowhere is this so clear as in Africa.

Conflicts are ripping apart fragile states such as South Sudan and the Central African Republic, and political instability blights the African Great Lakes region.

But in more and more countries, we are seeing economic growth, democratic development and global engagement.

The Government looks positively on Africa's prospects, while being conscious of the fact that considerable development assistance, participation in crisis management operations and support to the African Union are still necessary to meet the remaining challenges.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

As the world changes, we are also seeking new approaches, new partners and new working methods to promote our values and safeguard our interests.

Sweden must have a modern, gender-equal foreign service that is represented on the ground where it is needed.

This is why we are opening embassies in Yerevan, Baku and Doha this year, and establishing a Swedish diplomatic presence in Ghana, Myanmar and Peru. The digital diplomacy initiatives are being followed through.

We are concentrating our export promotion resources on countries where our engagement makes the biggest difference, and are paying particular attention to the creative industries.

And we are working persistently to provide support to Swedish citizens abroad.

We now have modern consular preparedness, including an emergency organisation that enables us to send resources within a matter of hours to areas where Swedish citizens are caught up in an emergency.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

In discussions with internet activists in Cairo, champions of democracy in Kiev and entrepreneurs in Kabul, in meetings with students in Lahore and expatriate Swedes in Laos, and during trips to South Africa and Singapore, but also closer to home to Serbia and the UK, I am strengthened in my conviction that Sweden makes a difference.

We make a difference by being a reliable and principled voice for democracy and freedom, a long-term, generous and accountable aid donor, and a patient and consistent voice for free trade and multilateral cooperation.

We make a difference, in cooperation with others, by improving opportunities for individual people – here in our own country and around the world – to develop and influence their own everyday lives and reality.

And we make a difference, not least, by being a voice for an open and growing European Union with a strong foreign policy.

This is how we have acted so far. And this is how we will continue to act.

Thank you.