

*Mr Carl Bildt,
Minister for
Foreign Affairs*

Statement of Government Policy

*in the Parliamentary Debate on Foreign Affairs,
Wednesday, 13 February 2008*



REGERINGSKANSLIET

Government Offices
of Sweden

NOT TO BE PUBLISHED BEFORE
9.00 a.m. ON WEDNESDAY
13 FEBRUARY 2008

**Statement of Government Policy in the Parliamentary Debate
on Foreign Affairs, Wednesday 13 February 2008**

Mr Speaker,

The year that has passed since the Government presented its first Statement of Foreign Policy has essentially been a good year for Sweden and for Europe.

In our own country, reduced exclusion and new growth have provided better opportunities for more and more people. In these respects, we are often seen as a model in the wider world.

We have renewed and strengthened cooperation in the Nordic and Baltic Sea regions.

We have reached agreement in the European Union on a reform treaty that gives all of us together better opportunities for the future. In the global arena, we have assumed a clear leading role in efforts to face the challenge of climate change. We are tearing down old barriers and opening the door to new opportunities.

In all essential respects, the global economy developed favourably last year.

Approximately one third of humanity is living in areas where economic growth lay at around 10 per cent. World trade increased at almost the same rate.

The chances of reaching the important goal of halving world poverty by 2015 are thus considerably better.

Now that 2008 is well underway, there is reason to emphasise the new insecurity that has emerged in important areas. A weakening of economic growth is likely.

Greater demand for agricultural products is generating new opportunities for poor people in rural areas. At the same time there is a risk that rapidly rising food prices will create new instability, not least in fragile societies.

We do not yet know whether the world trade negotiations will lead to success, or whether a new wave of protectionism will take hold.

Europe must prove its worth when it comes to living up to its ambitions in climate and energy policy. This will place great demands on our societies.

If the peace process that has begun in the Middle East fails, this will lead to a serious deterioration of developments in the entire region. But if it succeeds, the chances of peace and development in the Middle East will be significantly better.

Global terrorism and the risk of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction will continue to be a threat to world stability.

Mr Speaker,

Sweden's foreign policy is to contribute to freedom, peace and reconciliation both in our own and in other parts of the world. It proceeds clearly from the values on which our own society is built and from our own interests. Efforts to promote democracy, human rights and sustainable development underlie Sweden's entire foreign policy.

When I stood on this rostrum one year ago, I summarised the tasks of our foreign policy in ten points. As the policies that I described then were policies with an outlook considerably longer than one year, it is natural that I now take my cue from these.

First:

Sweden will take a proactive role in developing the European Union as a global actor, especially in peace and security policy. We want to work to ensure that the European Union is well-equipped through a broad and effective foreign policy to meet the global challenges facing Europe and the world. On this basis we also want to strengthen transatlantic cooperation.

The European Union has a special position in Swedish foreign and security policy.

The Lisbon Treaty means much better chances for the European Union to function as an ever stronger global actor, including in peace and security policy.

The fact that this treaty enjoys broad support in Sweden's Riksdag is clearly a strength. It is our joint hope that it will be ratified by all EU Member States so that it can enter into force at the beginning of next year.

Sweden will play an active role in creating the new instruments for which the treaty now paves the way.

We have initiated a broad discussion about the further development of Europe's common security strategy. It will also be important in 2009 to ensure that mechanisms such as the European External Action Service are developed into effective instruments for the promotion of our common interests.

A more secure and peaceful Europe means improved chances for peace and security for Sweden as well. The link between our security policy and our policy on Europe is as clear as it is important.

A broad national consensus must continue to provide the framework for the development of our security policy. Sweden is not part of any military alliance.

There is broad agreement that the future security of our country is founded on community and cooperation with other countries. There is also a broad consensus that Sweden will not remain passive should another EU Member State or Nordic country be struck by disaster or attack. By the same token, we expect these countries to do the same if a similar crisis were to befall Sweden.

The new European Union treaty obliges the Member States to abide by the principle of solidarity and fair sharing of responsibility when safeguarding Europe's security. The European Union's capacity for peace and security operations in various parts of the world is gradually being strengthened. Our country is contributing, according to its circumstances, to the European Union's security, based on the principle of solidarity; we will continue to play a proactive role in the development of the common European Security and Defence Policy.

During the first half of this year, Sweden is lead nation for the Nordic Battle Group, which is one of two rapid reaction forces at the EU's disposal.

Plans are underway for Sweden to also be able to contribute to an equivalent European Union rapid reaction force in 2011. In addition, we are examining – in close cooperation with Finland – the possibility of participating in the NATO Response Force. This would mean further deepening our already extensive cooperation with NATO.

International developments demonstrate the increasing demand for various kinds of peace operations within the framework of the United Nations, the European Union and NATO. It remains the Government's ambition to double Sweden's capacity for international peace operations. Between 2006 and 2009 the appropriation for peace-support operations is being raised from SEK 1.5 billion to almost SEK 3 billion.

The Government will soon be presenting a national strategy for Sweden's commitment to peace and security promotion. The aim is to bring foreign policy, aid policy and defence policy closer together so as to improve coordination between them.

Mr Speaker,

To become an increasingly important global actor, the European Union must strengthen its relations with the rest of the world.

It is also in light of this that we attach great importance to relations with the United States. There is close political dialogue between our countries, even on issues where we may have differing viewpoints. Our economic and personal ties are strong. Our new embassy in Washington – House of Sweden – has quickly become an important asset in the promotion of Sweden.

We attach great importance to relations with India and China. The development of ASEAN is creating new opportunities for cooperation. The summit in December 2007 between the European Union and the African Union revealed new perspectives. The summit meeting this spring with Latin America will be an important step in the development of our relations.

Second:

Sweden will continue to be a clear voice for a Union open to European countries that want to and can meet the requirements made by membership. Ultimately this is about peace and freedom in our part of the world in our time.

The gradual enlargement of the European Union is a uniquely successful process. Enlargement has, in a very tangible way, improved the chances for peace and prosperity in our part of the world, and has created a model for peaceful cooperation and integration that gives inspiration to the rest of the world.

Keeping the enlargement process alive and thus holding the door to Europe open for the countries in our vicinity that aspire to become members is one of the Union's most crucial strategic obligations.

Sweden is opposed to new barriers on our continent. We take this stance out of conviction and with the support of the provisions contained in the Treaty of Rome stating that European cooperation is open to all democracies of Europe that want to and can meet the demands that this cooperation places on them.

The membership perspective for all European countries forms the basis of the Union's 'soft power' for peace, freedom and reconciliation.

The Government is working actively in this spirit so that accession negotiations with Turkey and Croatia may continue at the pace that these countries' preparations allow; the Government also gives its full support to other Western Balkan countries in their efforts to move closer to the European Union.

It is our hope that it will now be possible to accelerate the reform process in Croatia in such a way as to make the conclusion of accession negotiations during Sweden's EU Presidency a realistic possibility.

Similarly, we support an accelerated reform process in Turkey.

The view that Turkish membership of the European Union would be of great importance not only to our joint vitality, but also to the Union's global influence and credibility, is one that enjoys the broadest possible support in Sweden's Riksdag.

This year must be the year in which the issue of overcoming the division of Cyprus is given a real place on the agenda. With the continued and gradually deepening division of Cyprus, there is a risk that serious damage will be caused, not only to opportunities for cooperation and stability in the eastern Mediterranean, but also to cooperation between the European Union and NATO.

In collaboration with other countries, we will support above all the important work of the United Nations on this issue.

Sweden continues to be proactive in efforts to strengthen the European Neighbourhood Policy. This policy provides an opportunity for countries from Morocco in the west to Azerbaijan in the east to move closer to the European Union.

For the countries that aspire to EU membership in the future, it is important that the Neighbourhood Policy is not a replacement for but a complement to the membership perspective.

This applies not least to Ukraine. We welcome the fact that Ukraine is continuing on a democratic path, and we are aiming for wider and deeper cooperation between Sweden and Ukraine. Membership of the WTO will pave the way for negotiations on deeper free trade cooperation.

We are also aiming for closer ties in all areas of society with Russia. It is our hope that the remaining obstacles to Russian membership of the WTO can be overcome.

It is clearly in our interest that Russia develop into a modern, successful and democratic state. Unfortunately, the move in a more authoritarian direction that we have seen over the past few years suggests a different kind of development. We are concerned about developments continuing in this direction.

In the European Union we are now discussing the prospects of beginning negotiations on a broader cooperation agreement once a new president has entered office in Moscow. Such an agreement would have to be based on respect for the fundamental rules and conditions of cooperation between the countries of Europe.

Our ties with the countries in the southern Caucasus should also be strengthened. We recently put forward proposals for a strengthened role for the European Union to support a democratic and stable development in Georgia. After the crisis at the end of last spring, but also the recent presidential election, it is very important that the forthcoming parliamentary election be conducted in line with European norms and standards.

Third:

Sweden will play a proactive role in environmental work at international level. We are working to strengthen EU policy ahead of the negotiations on a global climate policy after 2012.

Changes to our climate represent perhaps the greatest challenge of our time. The European Union summit in March last year gave climate issues a central position. Sweden played a proactive role in this decision.

Together we undertook to make a 20 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, but declared that we were prepared to undertake reductions of 30 per cent under a binding international agreement.

Europe's role as global leader in climate policy is important. Together we are striving for a global post-Kyoto agreement. At the climate meeting in Poznan in Poland this autumn, we hope that it will be possible to lay a sound basis for an agreement in Copenhagen at the end of 2009. As President of the European Union during this period, Sweden will bear a particular responsibility.

However, Europe cannot solve these problems on its own.

Together with the United States, we are working on fresh initiatives for new technology. We are hoping for a more forward-looking US approach with regard to global emission limitations as well.

We have entered into a broad agreement with Brazil on alternative fuels. We are in the process of deepening the dialogue with the growing Asian economies of India, China and other countries on how a global climate strategy can be designed. This issue will be in focus during the Prime Minister's forthcoming visits to China and Japan.

The links between trade, development, environment and climate are clear. The Government has therefore decided to establish an International Commission on Climate Change and Development, chaired by Minister for International Development Cooperation Gunilla Carlsson.

The main task of the Commission is to present proposals on how global development assistance can be climate-proofed. Poor countries are particularly hard hit by climate change, yet they have the fewest resources to manage the consequences.

The Government has also initiated the use of trade policy in helping to counteract climate change. Sweden is actively moving forward the work to open up trade in climate-friendly goods, services and technology. Sweden is in a strong position with regard to environmental technology, which is also providing opportunities for new jobs.

A stronger focus on environment and climate is permeating international development and trade cooperation.

Fourth:

Sweden will be a force for strengthening and improving work in the United Nations, as well as for strengthening the ability of the international community as a whole to conduct peace-building and state-building operations in different parts of the world. Afghanistan, Sudan and Somalia show the breadth of the challenges that must be faced.

The work of the United Nations is of central importance for Sweden. It is only through well-functioning multilateralism that many of the greatest problems of our times can be solved.

This autumn the UN General Assembly will discuss further measures required to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Although the prospects of achieving the goal of halving world poverty by 2015 are good, more initiatives will be required to stimulate development in the very poorest countries.

We still have a situation in the world where one child dies of malnutrition every five seconds. Rural and agricultural development are essential for more reliable food supplies. From this perspective, better profitability in agriculture is one way out of poverty for many people who depend on agriculture for their livelihood. In the cities, however, rising food prices may lead to greater difficulties for the poor.

Mr Speaker,

At this time, Swedish soldiers are set to leave for Chad to participate in the joint United Nations–European Union efforts to protect people and create better conditions for peace in the whole of this region.

This mission is perhaps the most complicated and demanding one that the European Union has ever been involved in. It must also be seen in light of the need to prevent the conflict from spreading and to reduce suffering throughout this vast region, which also includes Sudan, and not least Darfur.

It is an expression of our conviction that Sweden and Europe cannot stand by passively watching crises where communities are destroyed, people's freedoms and rights are violated and innocent people are mutilated and killed.

Building peace often requires considerable time. The fixed-term European Union mission in Chad and the Central African Republic must be followed by more extensive United Nations operations.

The fact that the world organisation is simultaneously implementing its largest peace operation ever in Sudan shows the extent of the challenges in this area.

Sweden is contributing considerable humanitarian support, primarily to Darfur. We are also actively supporting the United Nations and African Union peace efforts led by Jan Eliasson and others.

Sweden is also participating in the international contact group for Somalia, and we will be further strengthening our commitment to the country as soon as the situation there allows.

Sweden supports a solution to the border conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea based on international law, in accordance with the arbitration decision that the parties have undertaken to implement.

The communication on Africa which will shortly be presented to the Riksdag gives a broad, multifaceted view of Africa. As developments in many African countries are now heading in the right direction, our relations with them are being strengthened and are moving onto a more equal footing. The business sector is playing an increasingly important role in our cooperation with countries in Africa.

The picture, however, is fragmented.

While African economies have achieved growth of six per cent and while democracy and respect for human rights have developed in a positive direction in quite a number of countries and there are fewer armed conflicts than there have been for many years, the tragic and disturbing developments in Kenya show how fragile this progress often is. The situation in the severely afflicted eastern Congo is both a humanitarian tragedy and a continued source of regional instability.

Developments in Afghanistan over the past year are a cause of concern. The production of opium has increased to levels that the world has probably not seen for over a century. The security situation, primarily in the country's eastern and southern regions, has deteriorated. The political outlook has become more uncertain.

Sweden is seeking to give the United Nations a stronger coordinating role in the joint peace-support operations in Afghanistan. Political and economic efforts must be

strengthened, but this requires guaranteeing security in the country, through a better combination of domestic and international initiatives.

Sweden's commitments in Afghanistan are long-term and we will be opening an embassy in Kabul this year.

The Government intends to come back to the Riksdag to present the policy for our continued efforts in Afghanistan and to describe how the security and effectiveness of our operations can be increased. We are cooperating closely with other Nordic countries on future policy for our action there.

We shall continue to press for UN Resolution 1325 on women in armed conflicts and their role in work for greater peace and security to be implemented in practice.

Terrorism has created new challenges for joint security cooperation. There is a need for intergovernmental cooperation that can also deal with threats from non-state actors. The Government has presented its overall view of terrorism and its various dimensions in a communication that is now awaiting the Riksdag's attention.

The Government will continue to call for improvement and refinement of the international sanctions instruments. In order to guarantee legal security and respect for international law, and for human rights, Sweden is working together with like-minded countries to improve the review mechanisms within the framework of the UN Security Council.

The Government will continue to work for arms control and disarmament in various forums – primarily those based at the United Nations. In Europe we attach importance to a renewed Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe. The Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty should be ratified by all countries. New initiatives may be needed with regard to preventing the further proliferation of sensitive technologies, such as those in the nuclear field.

Fifth:

Sweden wants to strengthen work for democracy and human rights in all countries. Support for the building of democratic structures in developing countries will be strengthened. We remain committed to democracy and freedom in the eastern part of Europe.

An important objective of our foreign policy is that the circle of democracies become wider. Work to promote freedom and justice also includes efforts in Europe and the countries in our immediate vicinity.

A mere seven hundred kilometres from Gotland lies Belarus, where free elections cannot be held and where citizens are persecuted for their political opinions. The Government's policy towards Belarus seeks to strengthen respect for democracy and human rights in this country and ultimately to help Belarus become integrated into European cooperation and the European community of values.

The Government is therefore now strengthening its commitment to Belarus. We are increasing our development assistance and expect to open a Swedish embassy in Minsk later on this year.

Just as we have welcomed Ukraine's development that has brought about free and fair elections, we have had reason to clearly express our regret that the Russian parliamentary elections in December last year were not conducted in a manner that meets the requirements of democratic elections.

Through the European Union and other channels, we criticised the severe limitations placed on the work of the international election observers. We deeply regret that these continued limitations have not allowed our common institutions in the OSCE to monitor the forthcoming presidential election.

The UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights will celebrate its 60th anniversary this year. The importance of promoting democracy and human rights underlies all Swedish

foreign policy. Our standpoints on foreign policy issues are based on international law. We are working to ensure that the rule of law also applies to international activities. Extensive human rights violations continue to occur in certain countries, including China. Sweden is pursuing dialogue, bilaterally, in the European Union and in the UN system, so as to combat human rights violations in different parts of the world.

We are committed on a broad front to giving support to democratic forces and to contributing to positive change in countries like Cuba and Zimbabwe, where people's freedoms and rights are grossly and systematically violated.

In the autumn of 2007, the Government took vigorous measures to support the democracy movement in Burma. In the European Union, we pressed for the introduction of effective sanctions, and at Sweden's initiative the Union established a Special Envoy for Burma. This work will continue to be given high priority in the future.

Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right and an essential condition for being able to fight all forms of oppression. We are working determinedly for a world in which the freedom to hold opinions and the right to spread one's ideas are guaranteed. During the spring, the Government will present two communications to the Riksdag, one on human rights in foreign policy and the other on democracy and human rights in development assistance. These will describe new initiatives enabling Sweden to contribute further to strengthening freedom of expression.

In far too many parts of the world, the freedom, independence and equality of women still leave much to be desired. Efforts to increase women's power over their lives have a central position in Sweden's global development policy.

The cornerstones of today's Europe are the protection of democracy and respect for human rights. This year Sweden will build further on this foundation through our chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Free and fair elections are fundamental principles in a democracy. The election observers of the OSCE must continue to receive unconditional invitations to perform their task.

The Government is also increasing Sweden's contribution to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We demand that the UN Human Rights Council live up to expectations and become an effective, strong organisation for the human rights of all people.

Sweden welcomes the UN General Assembly's adoption – at the initiative of the European Union and for the first time since 1977 – of a resolution condemning the death penalty.

In the past year the Government has regularly underlined its support in connection with demonstrations for the rights of LGBT people. We will continue to show active commitment to the promotion of respect for these rights.

Human rights and democracy will be given greater emphasis in the design of our development assistance. Stable democracies with functioning political parties are a precondition for sustainable social and economic development.

Sixth:

Sweden will be a clear voice for peace, freedom, international law and reconciliation, not least in the Middle East. We are working for a stronger European role in peace efforts. More specifically, we want to prepare the creation of an independent and functioning Palestinian state living in peace with Israel.

In Annapolis, for the first time in seven years, Israelis and Palestinians made a commitment to try and reach a peace agreement. After years marked by violence and hopelessness there is now a real chance for positive change.

The final status negotiations must lead to a lasting peace and the establishment of a Palestinian state consisting of the West Bank and Gaza. This will also enhance the

security of Israel and security in the immediate vicinity of the European Union. We are prepared to contribute to such a peace process in various ways.

We are working for an end to the isolation of Gaza. The Israeli settlement policy and the building of the separation barrier on occupied Palestinian territory are contrary to international law and constitute an obstacle in the negotiations.

Israel must allow freedom of movement within and between the Palestinian territories, this being a necessary condition for a functioning Palestinian economy. It is also a fundamental condition for reconciliation in the Palestinian territories, for Palestinian unity and for support for the negotiating line taken by President Abbas.

The parties must live up to their commitments under the Roadmap for Peace. It is crucial that the Palestinian National Authority continue to recognise Israel's right to exist and that it respect agreements entered into. It is a fundamental requirement that terrorism be combated. The rocket attacks against Israel must cease.

We continue to see good prospects of deepening relations with Israel. As the largest donor to the Palestinians, the European Union must play a more active political role in the Quartet and assist the United States in following up the parties' commitments. Sweden, which is already one of the largest bilateral donors of aid to the Palestinians and to Palestinian state-building, has pledged to increase its efforts.

Developments in Iran continue to give cause for concern. Human rights are still being violated and freedom of expression is still being restricted.

The European Union actively supports the implementation of the UN Security Council resolutions to induce Iran to comply with its commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Tendencies towards proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and a weakening of the non-proliferation regime must be taken extremely seriously. A world with more nuclear weapons powers is closer to nuclear war. In such a world there is also a greater risk of these weapons falling into the wrong hands.

Sweden supports Iraq in its efforts to achieve stability, security and democracy. The Government will continue to increase its commitment to the country, for example by strengthening Sweden's diplomatic presence in Baghdad.

Sweden is providing extensive support to the work of the United Nations in Iraq, including humanitarian support to internally displaced Iraqis and Iraqi refugees in other countries. We support Staffan de Mistura in his role as the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative in Iraq. The Government welcomes the process of regional cooperation.

Seventh:

Sweden continues to have a strong economic, political and human commitment to development in the Western Balkans. We want to support the European integration of the whole area. We are seeking a clear decision from the UN Security Council that will make it possible to obtain clarification about the future of Kosovo.

We must acknowledge that the UN Security Council has proved unable to take a position on the issue of the future status of Kosovo.

However, the present situation is untenable, and despite international law complications the European Union must therefore assume a special responsibility for the status issue and for state-building in Kosovo. After discussions in the European Union and after consulting the Advisory Council on Foreign Affairs, the Government will soon be taking a position on Sweden's future relations with Kosovo.

We aim for a coherent European policy in this process that is as united and as strong as possible. A divided Europe is a weakened Europe.

Sweden will continue to contribute to the commitment of the international community in Kosovo. This applies, not least, to Sweden's participation in KFOR.

It is only through more extensive cooperation in an increasingly strong European framework that the economic and political challenges of the region can be managed.

This applies not least to Serbia. We will continue to work for the European Union to keep the door open for Serbia. As soon as the conditions for doing so exist, Serbia should be given candidate status for EU accession.

We also continue to be strongly committed to Bosnia's development and European integration and are developing our relations with other countries in the region as well.

Eighth:

Swedish development cooperation will be characterised by quality and effectiveness. Poverty reduction in Africa and elsewhere must be seen in a broad perspective that includes support for democracy, human rights, a vigorous civil society, good governance, security and the building of market economy structures.

The overall objective of our development cooperation is to help create conditions that will enable poor people to improve their lives. The fight against poverty in its various manifestations is a key starting point of Sweden's overall development policy.

During this electoral period, the Government is giving priority to three main areas in Swedish development cooperation: democracy and human rights, environment and climate, and gender equality and the role of women in development. By pursuing these priorities, Sweden is also contributing to achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals.

Quality and effectiveness are decisive in ensuring that Swedish development cooperation achieves its goals. The decision to focus bilateral development cooperation on fewer countries – around thirty, as against seventy or so in the past – will play a vital role.

Sweden will focus more strongly on long-term poverty reduction and economic growth in Africa in particular, and on cooperation for reform in former Soviet states and south-eastern Europe.

Our commitment to peace, security and development in a number of conflict and post-conflict countries will be deepened. In countries where a return to war or armed conflict is the greatest threat to poverty reduction, efforts for peace, reconciliation and human rights must be given high priority. Sweden remains strongly committed to the achievement of democratic change in several states with serious democratic deficits.

Functioning public institutions, a vigorous civil society, economic growth, a good business climate and trade are some of the fundamental factors promoting development. During the past year, international efforts to strengthen Aid for Trade have received considerable attention at several international meetings. This is a means for us to support opportunities for developing countries to become integrated into the global economy. Sweden has been proactive in this work.

Gender equality and increased support for women's rights and their role in development are fundamental platforms for effective poverty reduction and sustainable economic growth. The gender perspective therefore has a central place in the Government's communication on Africa and in the new Africa–EU strategy. The HIV/AIDS epidemic also demands special initiatives, with a focus on preventive action.

The Government has also established a new policy area for cooperation on reform in eastern Europe, the aims of which are stronger democracy, fair and sustainable development, and closer relations with the European Union.

The Government has adopted a strategy for our multilateral development cooperation. By examining the relevance and effectiveness of organisations in relation to Swedish development policy goals, an assessment will be made of both the level of support and the actual choice of which organisations are to receive Swedish support.

Sweden has also made major contributions to the World Bank's fund for the poorest countries and the African Development Fund. Swedish donations to these funds now amount to nearly SEK 8 billion for the three-year period 2008–2010. Sweden has also successfully advocated that both the World Bank and the African Development Bank increase their commitment to fragile states and to fighting climate change. In addition, during the autumn the Government decided that over a two-year period Sweden will contribute close to SEK 2 billion to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Ninth:

Sweden will continue to press for greater free trade and competition. The development of trade is an important driving force for good globalisation. We also want to develop our economic relations with the growing economies in Asia. At the same time, European Union members must pull down the remaining barriers to full implementation of the single market.

The Government's policy of favouring enterprise, external openness and technological development strengthens our country's chances of remaining a winner in the increasingly tough competition born of accelerating globalisation. More effective promotion of trade and investment is another favourable factor.

Creating freer trade is a fundamental component of Sweden's foreign policy. This is particularly true in times when protectionist trends seem to be growing in strength. It is therefore natural for the Government to have a key role in driving for constructive action by the European Union in the Doha negotiations. More open world trade will also contribute to growth in developing countries. It will be decided this spring whether an agreement can be reached.

The Government also continues to work in this spirit for further improvement of the Union's single market. A particular challenge here is to harness the growth potential of the services sector. Economic openness is a necessary condition for stronger competitiveness in the European Union. The Government is working for an external

dimension to supplement the Lisbon Strategy. Over the past year this idea has gained increasing support in the Union.

One of the most striking features of globalisation is the return of the countries of Asia. In response, we are developing Sweden's political and economic relations with the growing Asian economies, not least with China and India, as well as with other advancing economies such as Brazil, Mexico, Korea, Indonesia and Thailand.

We are maintaining and further developing the good and close links we have long enjoyed with Japan. The European Union's negotiations on free trade agreements with India, South Korea and the ASEAN countries are very important. We also hope that the Union will be able to complete its negotiations on a free trade agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council and that the Mediterranean free trade process will move forward.

Before the end of last year, the European Union succeeded in negotiating provisional agreements on economic partnership and free trade with a large number of countries in Africa and the Caribbean. This was a success. The work is continuing. The Government is working to make it possible to hold final negotiations on broad pro-development agreements this year.

With regard to the opportunities and challenges of globalisation, the Government's Globalisation Council will deliver regular proposals on how Sweden should deal with these.

Tenth:

Sweden's foreign, development, trade and security policies will work together so as to be better able to contribute both to poverty reduction and to sustainable peace and stability in countries with a history of war, conflict and underdevelopment.

The Government attaches great importance to breaking down the barriers that have previously marked Swedish foreign policy. In today's complex world, it has proved

counter-productive to conduct traditional foreign and security policy, trade policy and aid policy as separate pillars. The implementation of the global development policy, under which the Government works in practical ways to promote consistency between different policy areas, is intended to contribute to fair and sustainable development. The Government intends to present a communication to the Riksdag describing further measures that will be taken to strengthen the connection between different policy areas.

This awareness is also in evidence in the European Union, which in the Lisbon Treaty clearly underlines the need for consistency and for an integrated foreign policy.

Mr Speaker,

Let me add to these ten points the importance we attach as a matter of course to the development of cooperation in the Nordic and Baltic Sea region.

I believe it can be said that cooperation in our part of Europe has never been closer or more extensive – at any rate not since the more harmonious days of the Kalmar Union.

On the basis of common opportunities and challenges, we have also initiated cooperation on defence and security policy issues. Further, we are seeking to achieve cost synergies on a Nordic basis.

Important steps have been taken jointly with Finland. We have held discussions with Norway and Finland, focusing on new challenges and opportunities in the more northerly parts of our region. Denmark and the Baltic countries are equally natural partners for cooperation in various contexts.

We are open to continued and deepened cooperation throughout the region in what is sometimes called ‘soft security policy’, and we also see significant opportunities for deeper cooperation in a variety of peace operations.

The Government has taken an initiative to build a major pan-European research facility, the European Spallation Source (ESS), in Lund, in close cooperation with other Nordic and Baltic countries. ESS will give Sweden a unique opportunity to make the Nordic region visible in Europe as a region for high-quality research and as a place for economic growth.

This year, Sweden is chairing the Nordic Council of Ministers. In this connection we will seek mainly to move environmental and competition issues forward. We will also work closely with our Baltic friends – a relationship of cooperation to which the Government attaches the utmost importance.

The Government has also worked energetically for the European Union to adopt a Baltic Sea strategy during Sweden's Presidency in 2009. Putting the region in a stronger position to grow, fighting organised crime and improving the environment of the Baltic Sea will be key themes of this strategy.

This year we will continue the reform of the Council of the Baltic Sea States that the Government initiated during Sweden's chairmanship last year.

Mr Speaker,

We continue to shape foreign policy aiming for broad political support in this Chamber.

We all have an interest in a Sweden with a clear voice in Europe and a strong commitment to peace, freedom and reconciliation.

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REGERINGSKANSLIET

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103 39 Stockholm
Printed by: XGS Grafisk Service 2008
Article No: UD 08.004