



*October 2014*

# Statement of Government Policy

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Mr Speaker, Honourable Members of the Riksdag,

The Swedish people have voted for a change of government and a new political direction. Today, a new Government consisting of the Swedish Social Democratic Party and the Swedish Green Party stands ready to take on the task.

The state of affairs in Sweden is serious. Unemployment has become entrenched at a high level. School performance is plummeting and major failings are emerging in the welfare system. Gaps are growing and inequality between women and men remains. Sweden is failing to achieve 14 out of 16 national environmental objectives.

What we need now is to come together, and to take joint responsibility.

What we need now are reforms for the future to modernise Sweden.

Our country must be a leading and inspirational force in the world.

A country in which we close gaps and fulfil the promises of freedom we have made to our children.

A country in which we invest together in people and the environment, in knowledge and competitiveness, in security in the present and hope for the future.

It is the firm desire of this Government that Sweden be a global role model, in our development, our equality and our leadership on climate change adaptation. A country whose hallmarks are the equal worth of all people, self-confidence, solidarity and the belief that it is possible to change the future.

We know that this is necessary. We know that this is possible.

And we stand ready to unite Sweden in this desire.

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Mr Speaker,

Work means community and belonging – the power to shape one’s life and future. It is crucial for cohesion in Sweden that more women and men find work.

Economic policy must be steered by a clear employment goal. The number of people in work and the number of hours worked in the economy must increase to such an extent that Sweden’s unemployment rate is the lowest in the EU by 2020.

The new Government is inheriting a worrying public finance situation. Public finance deficits have grown year on year, despite the strengthening economy. These deficits must gradually be driven down so that Sweden stays within its fiscal policy framework. Priorities will have to be set.

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Sweden’s competitiveness must be strengthened. A central government investment plan will be produced. Investments in infrastructure, housing and climate adaptation will increase.

Housing policy is a matter of national importance. The housing shortage will be tackled by increasing construction, not least of rental accommodation. The goal is at least 250 000 new homes by 2020. A ‘housing billion’ to the municipalities will be introduced to increase construction. The availability of credit for new construction will be reinforced. The multi-dwelling blocks built as part of the ‘million homes programme’ will be modernised in a socially and environmentally sustainable way.

Upgrading and expanding the rail network and investments in strategic infrastructure projects will be a priority. A competitive Sweden requires new high-speed lines, expanded underground and light railways, and improved public

transport and roads. A 'road wear charge' will be introduced to finance infrastructure improvements.

The State will take overall responsibility for the maintenance of Sweden's railways. The appropriation for maintenance will be increased.

Through these investments, we will strengthen possibilities to work, travel and live throughout the country. This will create a belief in the future at a time when Sweden needs it most.

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It is time to utilise the energy, skills and creativity of our country's young people. Unemployed young people will be offered a job, a work placement, a trainee job or training within 90 days.

Opportunities for training and development in working life must increase significantly. A new Adult Education Initiative will be undertaken during the electoral period. Arbetsförmedlingen, Sweden's public employment service, will be fundamentally reformed. Discussions will be opened with the social partners on professional development, career change opportunities and an effective rehabilitation system in case of ill health.

Phase 3 will be abolished. Instead, people will be given opportunities for real jobs that benefit society, with real wages, good terms and conditions, and good training opportunities. For people with disabilities that impair their capacity to work, there will be an opportunity for flexible jobs.

People with disabilities must have the opportunity to take part in everyday life on equal terms with respect to participation and accessibility. A national regulatory

framework and an overall structure of responsibility for technical aids will be produced. The new law on inaccessibility as a ground of discrimination will be reviewed and broadened. Barriers to people's participation in society must be torn down: this is a matter of equality and justice.

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Mr Speaker,

Sweden's economic strength stems from our ability to be the best: the fact that we sell outstanding, effective and innovative goods and services on global markets.

Entrepreneurship will be facilitated via reduced sick pay costs, regulatory simplification and investment in export promotion. An innovation council led by the Prime Minister will be established. The conditions for socially and environmentally responsible public procurement will be improved throughout the public sector. A reindustrialisation strategy will be developed.

A modern and active business policy will create jobs throughout the country. The rural economy will be developed through improved infrastructure, access to broadband, proximity to higher education institutions and research, and support to ensure access to shops and public services. Tourism in Sweden and ecotourism will be strengthened. A long-term food strategy will be drawn up to increase food production in Sweden and support increased consumption of Swedish and organic food.

Sweden will promote free and fair world trade. The Government will work for progressive international trade agreements and dismantle trade barriers, while at the same time standing up for the environment, employees' interests and people's health. Trade agreements must respect

democratic decisions. We will strive for a global order of work and capital that ensures an international economy that benefits all and suppresses no one.

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Swedish wages and conditions must apply to everyone who works in Sweden. The labour market must function better. New technologies and more streamlined working methods must not lead to stress and burnout. The resources allocated to working life research will be increased. Abuse of fixed-term contracts must be stopped. Unemployment insurance will be improved. The ceiling will be raised and work undertaken to ensure that more people can qualify and sign up for such insurance.

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Mr Speaker,

Increasing numbers of Swedish school pupils are leaving compulsory school without the possibility of continuing to upper secondary school. School performance is plummeting in the international rankings. All children must feel safe and secure at school; their thirst for knowledge must be satisfied and they must be challenged. It is time we gave our children the key to the future we know they deserve.

The Government will therefore focus on boosting learning outcomes, increasing equity in education and making the teaching profession more attractive.

More staff will be employed in schools so that teachers have more time for their work and primary school classes can be smaller. A reading-writing-arithmetic guarantee will be developed so that measures can be taken quickly. Children's

groups in preschools will be smaller and out-of-school centres will be strengthened.

A national action for the teaching profession will be launched. Teachers' skills will be enhanced, their administrative burden will be reduced and the educational leadership of headteachers will be strengthened.

The Swedish school system must be cohesive and equitable. Special measures will target schools where the conditions are most challenging. Tax subsidies for those who can afford private homework support will be abolished. Homework support must be given to all pupils, regardless of their ability to pay.

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The challenges facing upper secondary schools today are entirely different to those of just a few decades ago. Today, an upper secondary education is virtually a prerequisite for young people to find a job.

This is why all young people under 18 need to complete upper secondary education. All upper secondary programmes must offer a broad, common knowledge base, contain at least one artistic subject and give pupils eligibility for higher education. The vocational programmes will be transformed into vocational colleges in close cooperation with the social partners, and they will be made more attractive. This is how we will equip the young people of Sweden for modern working life.

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Never before have so many young people sought to obtain a higher education – but all too many are met with a closed door, and all the while global competition is increasing. The



number of higher education places will therefore be increased throughout the country. Standards in higher education will be raised.

Sweden must be a leading research nation. Conditions for young researchers must be improved. Research must be respected as the long-term activity it is and a new research bill will therefore take a ten-year perspective. The proportion of women professors must increase and research appropriations must be distributed in a gender-equal manner. Basic appropriations for research will be given greater priority.

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Mr Speaker,

Climate change is the critical issue of our time. There is a risk that the rise in temperature will have very serious consequences for life on Earth. We are already witnessing a global biodiversity crisis, with one of the largest species extinctions in the history of our planet.

At the international climate summit in Paris next year, crucial decisions for our generation will have to be taken. The time for failure and excuses has long since passed. The countries of the world must stop investing in what is destroying our planet. Climate change is a global security threat. It is time to take responsibility.

Stopping environmental degradation, reducing climate emissions and developing new green technology represent one of the largest challenges for our generation. Investing in a better environment creates jobs and prospects for the future.

Sweden must reduce its emissions at the pace necessary to ensure global sustainable development. For this reason, a climate policy framework will be introduced. During this electoral period, fossil-fuel emissions in Sweden will be markedly reduced.

Support for local climate investments will be introduced, along with a new green car bonus for cars with low climate impact. The national environmental objectives must be met. An environmental objectives council will be established and new and broader indicators for societal development will be drawn up.

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Sweden must lead the way on national legislation to combat hazardous chemicals. Preschools and schools must be toxin-free.

Fisheries and the seas will be protected by establishing more marine reserves. More natural forests will be protected and greater consideration will be given to nature conservation in forests in use. Livestock farming must allow animals to exhibit their natural behaviours, and behavioural disturbances must be prevented. Animal welfare supervision will be strengthened.

The Government will implement more preventive measures to protect our valuable drinking water.

Waste needs to decrease and recycling increase. The responsibility for waste collection will therefore be placed with the municipalities.

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Energy policy is crucial in building a sustainable society, and employment in Sweden is utterly dependent on good and reliable access to electricity at competitive prices. The Government will hold cross-party talks in a special commission on energy with the aim of creating a long-term sustainable energy agreement. The Government's starting point in these talks is that nuclear power is to be replaced by renewable energy and energy efficiency, and that Sweden, in the long term, is to have 100 per cent renewable energy.

Renewable electricity production will be further expanded. The target is at least 30 terawatt hours of new electricity from renewable sources by 2020. The technology-neutral certification system for renewable electricity production will be used for this purpose. Support for sea-based wind power and solar power will be strengthened. Nuclear power must

bear a larger proportion of its economic costs to society. Safety requirements will be made more stringent and the nuclear waste charge will be raised. Vattenfall is to take the lead in the transition of the energy system towards a greater proportion of renewable energy.

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Mr Speaker,

Sweden's new Government is a feminist government. Inhibitive gender roles and structures must be combated. Women and men must be given equal power to shape society and their own lives. This is the only way our society and each and every individual can reach their full potential.

Gender equality policy will be given greater weight in the Government Offices. Ministries and government agencies will receive a clearer mandate for gender mainstreaming in all of their activities. Work will begin on gender budgeting in the Budget Bill.

Improvements will be made to the conditions for support provided to women victims of violence by women's shelters and crime victim services. More sexual crimes must be cleared up. The principle of sexual consent is fundamental. Rape legislation will be reviewed in this regard and penalties for aggravated sexual offences will be toughened. The purchase of sexual services abroad will be criminalised.

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The gender pay gap must be reduced. To this end, wage surveys will be carried out every year. Women and men should have the same employment rates. Full time should be the norm in the labour market. Part time should be a possibility.

Measures are needed so that more people are capable of working full-time. The child-raising allowance will be abolished.

To encourage the equal take-up of parental insurance, a third month will be reserved for each parent. Parental insurance will also be reviewed to make life easier for those families that identify themselves as non-nuclear families.

The Government will conduct a review of the gender distribution in the governing boards of listed companies after the annual general meetings in 2016. If the proportion of women on the governing boards of listed companies is not at least 40 per cent by 2016, a legislative proposal on quotas will be presented.

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Mr Speaker,

An orderly welfare system is a must. Children, sick people or elderly people must never be assessed on the basis of profitability. Short-sighted profit motives have no place in welfare. The pursuit of profit must be stopped.

National standards legislation for an orderly welfare system will be introduced to improve quality and considerably limit profits, while guaranteeing diversity and freedom of choice.

Private sector welfare providers must not be allowed to make a profit through lower staff levels. Legislation will be drawn up to prevent selling below market value. The binding law on free choice systems in primary care will be abolished. The Cooperative Societies Act will be modernised so that cooperatives will be better placed to serve as alternative

welfare providers. The legislation will be amended to prevent the sale or privatisation of university or regional hospitals.

The principle of public access to official documents and freedom of communication must apply to all actors in tax-financed welfare. Companies in the welfare sector will be required to openly declare their accounts at the unit level.

The agreement of the Independent School Committee will remain in place. But a school's purpose is to provide education, not to distribute profits to owners. Municipalities will be given significant influence over the establishment of new schools that hinder efforts to combat segregation. The school system must not be a marketplace but a foundation of democracy.

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Mr Speaker,

Sweden must be a world leader in health and medical care. Access to professional staff, the very latest knowledge and the most advanced treatments must be enhanced.

Today's national guidelines will become compulsory to ensure equitable health care. The principle that care is distributed according to need must be upheld. Patients with private insurance must not be able to jump the publicly financed care queue.

A commission for equitable health will be appointed. Efforts to improve public health will be strengthened, for example through a clearer division of responsibilities and improved follow-up. The Government's objective is that avoidable health inequalities will be eliminated within a generation.

More and more young people, especially women, LGBTQ people and people with disabilities, are not faring well in today's society. Health care needs to be strengthened to make it easier to receive help for eating disorders, anxiety and depression. People suffering mental illnesses and people with disabilities must have improved opportunities for care, housing, rehabilitation and employment.

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An active and good life in retirement will be encouraged. More staff will improve the quality of elderly care. A long-term quality plan for Sweden's elderly care will be developed through broad collaboration.

The cross-party pension reform is a prerequisite for a secure pension system. The pensions working group will continue its work.

A system that taxes pensions more heavily than wages is unreasonable. Steps will be taken to remove the gap between pension taxation and wage taxation. It is a question of fairness and respect between the generations.

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Coordinated action in close dialogue with the country's municipalities will be launched to find organisational, economic and operational solutions that will ensure good welfare provision throughout the country. The county councils that want to become regions will be given the opportunity to do so.

Administrative policy and agency governance will be given higher priority. Public sector professions need to be strengthened. New management models that create greater freedom for public sector workers will be developed.

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Sickness insurance must help people return to work and support themselves. The ceiling in the sickness insurance system will be raised and the maximum time limit for sickness benefits will be removed. Other time limits will be reviewed. Rehabilitation will be strengthened, along with sickness cover for students. By doing this we will create security for the most difficult times in life.

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Mr Speaker,

Karin Boye once wrote: "Few things say more about a person than their image of life: whether they see it as a road, a battle, a growing tree, or a surging sea."

Everyone must have the right and opportunity to engage in arts and culture, regardless of their image of life. A society needs not only economic growth but democratic growth as well. This requires arts and culture that are open and outspoken, independent artists, poets and public service broadcasters. It requires liberal adult education, non-governmental organisations, libraries – equitable and free access to places where people and the arts can meet. Amateur cultural activities and professional cultural life should be allowed to grow through interaction. Culture and creativity in schools will be strengthened. Free admission to national museums will be introduced.

Non-profit forces in the sports movement and the extensive third sector do invaluable work to engage and activate children and young people. Children and young people should have greater opportunities and pay lower fees to take part in sports, outdoor activities and culture and music schools. A



national strategy for culture and music schools will be developed.

Sweden should be one of the very best countries to grow up in. The Government will begin work to incorporate the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child into Swedish law.

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Mr Speaker,

Racism and prejudices in our society restrict people's lives. They create obstacles and walls. They reduce us to the colour of our skin, our sexual orientation or gender identity, our religion or our origins. This is unacceptable in a democratic society.

Over the last twelve months, people around the country have stood up against racism, for the equal worth of all people. It is through the engagement of many people that we can prevent anti-democratic ideas from gaining a foothold in our country or in our elected assemblies. There must be no place in Sweden for anti-Semitism, anti-Ziganism, Islamophobia and Afrophobia.

The dialogue on democratic principles and the equal worth of all people must be ongoing. Sweden must secure the rights of national minorities. Compulsory and upper secondary schools must combat racism through the work they do on core values. A national knowledge and resource centre for research on racism will be set up. The Government will share the successful models that exist for reducing the recruitment of people to racist organisations.

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Sweden must have a humane asylum policy and be a place of refuge for people fleeing persecution and oppression. Broad support for migration policy is a strength in our country. All of Sweden's municipalities must take joint responsibility for receiving refugees. Reception will be strengthened through additional resources to Swedish for Immigrants and opportunities for newly arrived immigrants to supplement their education.

The agreement on migration policy will remain in place. Broad agreements on migration policy will be sought in the Riksdag.

Sweden will take steps in the EU to create more legal channels for people to seek asylum in the EU and to increase the reception of quota refugees in other countries. More EU Member States must take responsibility for receiving refugees.

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More Swedes born abroad must be able to find work faster. In every step of the reception process, the aim must be finding a job. A national and permanently financed validation system will be introduced. More people will receive assistance if they experience discrimination.

The idea of pursuing an integration policy that is separate from employment, education or welfare policy is outdated. There will be no Minister for Integration. The way into Sweden – and the right to work and welfare – concerns us all.

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Mr Speaker,

This summer we have seen large-scale natural disasters. Climate change means that we may suffer an increasing

incidence of extreme weather events. This will require both climate adaptation and strengthened crisis management capabilities. Responsibility for society's crisis management capabilities will be brought together under the Ministry of Justice.

The Swedish Police have a crucial role in law enforcement and the police service needs to be professionalised further. The merger of the county police authorities and the National Police Board into an integrated national police authority is a fundamental step in this direction.

Efforts to combat organised crime and hate crime will be prioritised and collaboration with customs and the coast guard will be enhanced. Work will begin to make police training into a higher education programme.

The Government will work in Sweden and the EU to strengthen legal certainty and personal privacy, including with regard to data storage. The Data Inspection Board and the Parliamentary Commission on Privacy will conduct a review of existing legislation, taking account of the increasing numbers of private sector actors gathering information on consumers.

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Mr Speaker,

The Government is entering office at a time of great uncertainty. Major conflicts are ongoing in Ukraine, Iraq, Syria and elsewhere.

Sweden must be a strong voice in the world for freedom, peace, human rights and solidarity. We must participate actively in international cooperation, to ensure that both the UN and the EU shoulder greater responsibility for resolving these conflicts and providing help to victims.

Russia's annexation of Crimea is a breach of international law. Russia's destabilisation of Ukraine must cease. Developments in our eastern neighbourhood will be one of our greatest challenges. Sweden must work to ensure that the EU assumes greater responsibility for security and development, both globally and in the EU's neighbourhood.

Sweden's voice must always be clear and unambiguous when human dignity is violated. Human rights, international law, international disarmament and work to combat terrorism and weapons of mass destruction must be cornerstones of Swedish foreign policy. Consequently, we want to see a strong and reformed UN, with active pursuit of Sweden's candidacy to the UN Security Council.

The war in Syria and the terror of Islamic State are clear threats to international security. Ethnic cleansing must be stopped. The Iraqi Government and the Kurdish Regional Government are in acute need of humanitarian assistance to manage the situation. The Government supports the United Nations' battle against Islamic State.

The conflict between Israel and Palestine can only be resolved through a two-state solution, negotiated in accordance with the principles of international law. It must guarantee the legitimate demands of both the Palestinians and the Israelis for national self-determination and security. A two-state solution requires mutual recognition and a will to coexist peacefully. Therefore, Sweden will recognise the State of Palestine.

Alongside the peace operations in Mali and off the coast of Somalia, the Government intends to return to the Riksdag during the autumn with proposals on continuing the transition to support operations in Afghanistan. Assistance to Afghanistan must be robust and long-term.

To strengthen our security and improve our environmental protection, our neighbouring regions of the Arctic, Kattogat, Skagerrak and the Baltic Sea must be protected. The Government will take initiatives for a more active policy in our neighbourhood.

Swedish non-participation in military alliances continues to serve our country well. It creates a solid foundation for active accountability for both our own security and the security of others. Sweden will not apply for membership of NATO.

A modern Swedish security policy will instead be built upon increased cooperation in the Nordic region, the Baltic Sea region, the EU and the UN. Sweden will not remain passive if an EU country or Nordic country suffers a disaster or an attack, and we expect these countries to act in the same way if Sweden is similarly affected. Our country must be in a position to both give and receive support, civilian as well as military.

Swedish defence and public support for it must be strengthened. The Government wants to strengthen Nordic defence cooperation – not least Swedish-Finnish cooperation. Broad cooperation in the Riksdag on defence issues is crucial for our country. The proposals of the Defence Commission must be implemented.

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Swedish development cooperation must focus on reducing poverty and injustices in the world, and strengthening the environment and democracy. A new aid policy framework will be drawn up in collaboration with all aid actors. Environmental and climate aid will be increased and enhanced. Initiatives to increase women's self-support and self-determination will be strengthened.

Sweden must be an engaged and constructive member of the European Union. Sweden's priority interests will be actively pursued. More jobs and an orderly labour market, greater gender equality, and forward-looking environment and climate policies are of particular interest. EU crisis management must be developed, both globally and in the EU's neighbourhood.

Equal pay for equal work in accordance with laws and agreements in the country of employment is a principle that must apply throughout Europe. The Government will initiate efforts to bring about a change to the EU treaties, establishing that the free movement of companies cannot be used to circumvent national laws and collective agreements.

All political decisions must take into account human rights, people's democratic participation and poverty alleviation, and strive for global sustainable development.

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Mr Speaker,

I see here before me in this chamber the foremost representatives of the Swedish people.

We represent different interests and ideologies, different parts of the country and outlooks on life. This is a strength for democracy.

It is now up to us to find a way forward for Sweden in a difficult parliamentary situation.

Now we need to look for what unites us rather than what divides us.

Now we need to put the best interests of Sweden before tactics and prestige.

Now we need to unite in a determination to take responsibility for our country.

The Government will take its full share of this responsibility. We intend to be a Government that works together for all of Sweden. We will seek broad agreements in the Riksdag to secure key political reforms.

We are ready. Be it the high level of unemployment, declining school performance, failing welfare or the growing threat of climate change, we are ready to tackle these together.

Because we know that Sweden possesses a wonderful strength.

Our readiness to seek cohesion and cooperation in difficult times has time and again ensured a better society for future generations.

And now we will take on the challenge once again and build a country that can look to the future with hope and expectation.

