

*Mr Carl Bildt,
Minister for
Foreign Affairs*

Statement of Government Policy

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Statement of Foreign Policy 2009: Sweden and Europe – towards sustainable globalisation

Mr/Madam Speaker,

This year, 2009, will be a year of significant political and economic challenges – challenges that are greater in scale and scope than for a very long time.

These challenges will severely test international cooperation.

At the same time, 2009 will be a year in which Sweden, through its Presidency of the European Union, will bear a special responsibility for meeting these challenges.

This is a responsibility we will shoulder in the firm conviction that the European Union also provides the best platform for Sweden's foreign policy action. This is one of the reasons why Sweden has chosen to be a core member of the European Union.

At a time when the real economy is taking a merciless beating from the global financial crisis, causing great difficulties to growing numbers of people, when political uncertainty and insecurity is increasing in many parts of the world and the climate threat continues to weigh heavily on us – at such a time, international cooperation becomes increasingly vital.

It is *only* through working with others that we can help to turn risks into opportunities, threats into stability and oppression into freedom. It is only through working with others that we can realise the vision of sustainable globalisation.

The Government's objective is to conduct a successful and results-oriented Presidency.

Sweden will take over the Presidency of a European Union that has changed greatly since 1995, when we first joined, and 2001, when we last held the Presidency.

The enlargement from 15 to 27 Member States has helped to consolidate freedom and democracy in Europe and to create stability and prosperity for an increasing number of countries and peoples.

Today the European Union has a population of close to half a billion. It is the world's largest integrated economy, accounting for some 30 per cent of global production, and is the largest trading partner of more than 130 countries. The EU also contributes around 60 per cent of total global development assistance.

The EU is also taking clear steps towards greater political influence globally. The voice of Europe in the world is steadily gaining in strength.

But strength and influence also bring increased responsibility.

The collapse of the financial system in October last year marked the onset of an economic crisis of historic proportions. The crisis is global in nature and it is still too early to fully grasp its political, economic and social consequences.

However, it is already clear that the sharp economic downturn is leading to increased tensions in many parts of the world. The link between economic development and security policy challenges has grown stronger.

History has taught us the danger of responding to global economic crises with protectionism and nationalism. Putting obstacles in the way of globalisation – which over the past few decades has contributed at an unprecedented pace to greater prosperity and freedom worldwide – would be a dangerous and destructive course of action.

Since the collapse of the Soviet empire, many borders have been opened. Let us not now raise new border barriers and build new walls, but instead lay the foundation for a globalisation that is economically, socially, politically and environmentally sustainable.

It is essential to renew the international financial institutions so as to prevent the economic crisis from further deepening and turning into a trade war. Consequently, Sweden will continue to insist on the importance of free trade, greater openness and more economic cooperation.

It remains vitally important to continue to work for a conclusion of the Doha negotiations. The free trade agreements with India, Ukraine, the Gulf Cooperation Council and others that are on the agenda for the Swedish Presidency are also important.

Furthermore, Sweden will seek to achieve increased efficiency in the internal market, with its four freedoms, and will continue to drive for the European Union to become the most open economy in the world.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

The climate issue is one of our foremost priorities and must not be sidelined by the economic crisis. On the contrary, we have a great deal to gain by investing in green technology.

The global climate negotiations and the economic crisis demand forceful and long-term measures for sustainable development. Intensive preparations are required ahead of the UN Climate Conference in Copenhagen. Sweden's objective is for the conference in December to result in a comprehensive global agreement with forceful measures to curb climate change and contribute to stronger and broader international cooperation.

The success of the European Union in agreeing on an ambitious climate package with commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 30 per cent by 2020, assuming an international agreement, lays a good foundation for continued international climate efforts. We expect other industrialised countries to make comparable commitments and other countries too, in particular the rapidly growing economies, to take action to enable the global trend to be reversed.

One important factor in this context is to help developing countries meet the challenges brought by climate change. It is quite obvious that the European Union and other rich countries will need to contribute financially to help developing countries adapt to climate change. Their adjustment is also a matter of combining continued development with low greenhouse gas emissions. The International Commission for Climate and Development appointed by the Government will present its conclusions this spring.

The effects of climate change have an impact on many poor countries. The Government has therefore decided to reserve over SEK 4 billion over a three-year period within the framework of development assistance to improve the conditions for adaptation to a changed climate.

As set out in the policy for global development, the hallmarks of Swedish development cooperation are to be quality, effectiveness and coherence with other policy areas so as to better contribute to equitable

and sustainable global development. Such a direction is also significant in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of EU development cooperation.

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 central point from which all Swedish development policy proceeds. It ranges from contributing to better conditions for economic growth to promoting democracy and human rights, the development of a strong civil society and good governance.

Sweden is a clear voice for women's rights worldwide. The Government attaches great importance to the work of promoting equality between women and men, including women's sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Sweden will also continue to work on the issue of global food security.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

The stability of the international system rests on respect for international law. Russia's aggression against Georgia and recognition of South Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states represented not only an unacceptable violation of the territorial integrity of another state, but also a blow to the international law that is the very basis of peaceful and stable relations between states.

Safeguarding international law is a cornerstone of Sweden's foreign policy and was pursued vigorously during Sweden's Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe last year, along with issues of democracy and human rights.

It is just as important to safeguard human rights. The Government intends to take a number of initiatives to follow up on the two written communications presented to the Riksdag in 2008: 'Human Rights in Swedish Foreign Policy' and 'Freedom from Oppression', which discussed democracy and human rights in development cooperation.

Efforts to support democratic forces and counter oppression must continue, not least in countries such as Cuba and Burma.

In the case of Belarus, a continued dialogue on increased civil rights is required. The Government takes a very serious view of the way in which

opposition figures in Belarus have recently been arbitrarily deprived of their liberty. The unity government in Zimbabwe inspires hope for an end to misrule in the country. Extensive democratic and economic reforms are now needed to reverse the catastrophic developments there. Provided that the situation develops in the right direction, Sweden and the European Union are prepared to support Zimbabwe through increased development assistance initiatives.

As holder of the Presidency, Sweden will also work for a more visible role for the European Union in the area of human rights. By reacting to oppression and discrimination and safeguarding freedom of speech and thought, the European Union can demonstrate the power of setting a good example.

It is important that the opportunities offered by globalisation benefit everyone, not least those who today live in deep poverty and global exclusion.

This is a demanding task, and there is an obvious risk of the progress that has been made in many African countries in recent years being undermined by the economic crisis.

The Government is therefore an active proponent of developing broad cooperation agreements between the European Union and Africa in order to stimulate trade and economic development, and of implementing the joint EU-Africa Strategy.

We are also increasing our own development cooperation with Africa. It is vital that Europe and other donors fulfil their development assistance commitments, even in hard times. In this respect Sweden will continue to set a good example.

Sweden continues to be a staunch supporter of the United Nations. The UN, with its worldwide membership, has unique legitimacy and is in a unique position to unite the countries of the world behind sustainable solutions to the global challenges of our time.

Effective multilateralism is and remains a guiding principle in Swedish and European Union efforts to tackle global issues such as climate change, arms control and poverty reduction.

It is therefore natural for the Government to continue to work for a stronger and reformed UN. This applies not least to the capacity of the United Nations to implement increasingly comprehensive and complex peacekeeping and state-building operations. The role of women in these efforts must be strengthened, in accordance with Security Council

Resolution 1325. Sweden supports the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations and its efforts to promote dialogue between religions.

Sweden is working to strengthen transatlantic relations. The United States has a unique role to play in bringing about sustainable globalisation. A new administration in the US also brings new prospects to enter into an enhanced phase in transatlantic relations. This is an opportunity we must not miss.

It is also important to continue to strengthen relations with the rapidly growing economies in Asia and Latin America. The challenges of today require global solutions.

The European Union summits to be held with Brazil, China and India during the Swedish Presidency provide important opportunities for us to discuss joint solutions to the climate threat and the financial crisis with these new major powers.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Foreign policy is about meeting long-term challenges, but also about dealing with the unexpected; 2009 may well prove to be the year of crisis management.

For this reason, we cannot rule out the possibility that our Presidency will be largely shaped by unexpected events.

However, we already know that we will inherit the major challenges of last year, including, alongside the political effects of the sharp economic downturn, the growing tensions across the entire area from Palestine to Punjab.

Last year's Annapolis process did not lead to a peace agreement. Instead the ceasefire in Gaza was broken and a war began that has further complicated the already difficult situation in the region.

Sweden and the European Union are working for a rapid end to the isolation of Gaza. It is neither defensible from a humanitarian perspective nor acceptable in political terms. A stable ceasefire and the reconstruction of Gaza require open borders, effective measures against arms smuggling and an end to the rocket attacks against Israel.

In collaboration with the US in particular, the European Union must step up its initiatives for a comprehensive peace in the region. Israel's occupation and settlement policy must cease, a contiguous and viable Palestinian state must be created, terrorism must stop and Israel's right to exist within secure and recognised borders must be respected. The parties must live up to the commitments they have made. Only in this way can sustainable peace and security be established in the region.

The Arab Peace Initiative is a stable basis for negotiations to lead not only to a Palestinian state but also to peace between Israel and the entire Arab world. This would lay a new foundation for development in the region as a whole, as well as for combating terrorism and reducing cultural and political tensions in other parts of the world.

All forms of terrorism, regardless of their origin, must be met through international cooperation, based on respect for international law and human rights. The European Union has an important role to play in this cooperation.

We welcome the fact that developments in Iraq are moving in the right direction, even though the situation is still fragile. Sweden will open its embassy in Baghdad in the early summer.

The disagreement between Iran and the rest of the world regarding the country's nuclear programme must find peaceful resolution. We welcome the signals from the new US administration that they are willing to negotiate, and regard it as natural that Iran should respond with tangible steps designed to foster trust in the country's intentions. A solution to the nuclear issue would – despite any other differences of opinion – open the door to improved cooperation between Iran and Europe.

The risk of further proliferation of weapons of mass destruction remains one of the most serious security threats facing the world. International efforts must therefore be stepped up, with the aim of maintaining and strengthening the non-proliferation regime.

To reduce the risk of the peaceful use of nuclear power leading to the proliferation of sensitive technologies, the initiative to establish internationally monitored facilities for critical parts of the nuclear fuel cycle should be pursued.

At the same time, Sweden emphasises the responsibility incumbent on the nuclear powers of today to reduce their existing arsenals. A new nuclear disarmament treaty between the US and Russia and US

ratification of the CTBT treaty would create considerably better conditions to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the future.

The terror attacks in Mumbai at the end of last year have put relations between the two nuclear powers of India and Pakistan under strain. By promoting dialogue between these countries, the European Union can contribute to reducing the tension in southern Asia.

Developments in neighbouring Afghanistan are deeply worrying. Despite progress following the fall of the Taliban regime, the security situation in parts of the country is very serious. There are major shortcomings in governance and the reconstruction of this ravaged country is progressing slowly.

Unfortunately, the consequences of this situation are both serious from a humanitarian point of view and dangerous from a security perspective. The terrorism and drug production that have their roots in Afghanistan threaten people far beyond the country's own borders.

This is why the Government has decided to strengthen Sweden's civilian and military operations in Afghanistan. It is also why it is important to pave the way for the European Union to take greater responsibility for the wider state-building in the country.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Zimbabwe are countries struck by conflict and humanitarian suffering. Broad international commitment is needed to turn the situation around. By way of example, this year Sweden will contribute to the European Union's maritime operation to ensure that World Food Programme humanitarian transports can reach Somalia.

Relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea are strained, not least because of the border issue. It is important for peace and stability in the Horn of Africa that the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration is respected.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

In this time of great challenges we must ensure effective institutions backed by a firm political will to promote global peace and security.

The European Union's common foreign and security and defence policy has been very successful so far. It has promoted stability and peace in many parts of the world, from the Balkans and Georgia in our own vicinity to Chad in Africa and Aceh in Asia.

As the holder of the Presidency of the European Union, Sweden will have an opportunity to further develop the EU's peace policy. For example, we will press for stronger collaboration between civilian and military operations and for closer cooperation between the European Union and important international organisations such as the UN, NATO and OSCE. Sweden is dedicated to ensuring that the link between security, development and human rights more clearly informs the EU's policy in this area.

In the area of emergency management, close cooperation with NATO is of strategic importance to Sweden. The Government intends to report on Sweden's cooperation with NATO in a written communication to the Riksdag in the spring.

Sweden's security policy remains firmly in place. In our country there exists a broad political will to further develop Nordic cooperation on defence policy. Cooperation of this kind may complement the security policy choices each of the Nordic countries has made. In the longer perspective, better opportunities will also be created to meet new challenges both in defence economics and developments in, for example, the Baltic Sea region and the Arctic.

Thorvald Stoltenberg, former Minister for Foreign Affairs and Defence of Norway, recently presented an ideas report on deeper Nordic foreign and defence policy cooperation. The Government will give positive and careful consideration to its various proposals.

During the spring the Government will present a defence policy bill based on the broad consensus in the Swedish Riksdag concerning the security policy conclusions of the Defence Commission.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Enlargement is still the European Union's primary instrument for creating security, democracy and prosperity in Europe.

Sweden will therefore seek to push for progress in the ongoing accession negotiations with Croatia and Turkey and promote genuine progress in the closer relationship of the Western Balkans with the EU.

We hope that Croatia's accession negotiations can be concluded as soon as possible. Further reforms in Macedonia are paving the way for a start to negotiations.

In mid-December, Montenegro applied for EU membership. The other countries of the Western Balkans – Serbia, Albania and Bosnia – are

considering following suit. In the case of Kosovo, it is important to offer a membership perspective. Sweden's contribution to EULEX, the European Union's Rule of Law Mission, is an important step in supporting closer relations between Kosovo and the EU.

The road to EU membership will require major reform efforts by the countries of the Western Balkans. But with the goal of membership in sight, conditions are being created to enable these countries to direct their political energies towards constructive, forward-looking reform policies and take the definitive step from Dayton to Brussels.

The European Union's credibility as an international actor presupposes respect for the undertakings made in the area of enlargement. This is why the focus will be on enlargement issues during the Swedish Presidency.

In this context, the Government especially aims to underline the strategic importance of Turkey becoming a member of the EU. Closing the door to EU membership for Turkey would be a mistake of historic proportions. We all have reason to intensify our efforts to explain the significance of this step.

Sweden and the European Union support the negotiation process on the future of Cyprus. The reunification of Cyprus would mean increased security, freedom and welfare gains for the entire population of the island and for the region as a whole. Moreover, a reunification would have a decisive influence both on Turkey's closer relations with the European Union and the prospects of improving coordination of NATO and EU peace and stability efforts.

It is of central importance that the EU's neighbours to the east and south develop into stable and open democracies with functioning markets and legal systems.

The European Union's strategic interests, however, go further than this for those neighbours that have European aspirations. These countries should be invited to be part of the internal market and its four freedoms. They must be given the opportunity to adapt to EU legislation in all the important sectors of society so as to become part of a larger and ever more integrated European community.

Last year, the process previously known as the Barcelona Process was further developed into the Union for the Mediterranean, which we hope

will create better conditions for cooperation between the European Union and the other members of the Mediterranean Union.

This year decisions will be taken on the Eastern Partnership, which is based on a joint initiative of the Swedish and Polish governments. This partnership entails an important increase in the level of ambitions for cooperation with Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

The partnership aims to promote substantial European integration in important areas such as legislation, trade and the mobility of people. The Swedish Presidency will have the important task of initiating the implementation of the Eastern Partnership.

We are aiming for broader cooperation with Russia. Negotiations on a new cooperation agreement will continue even though these will be impeded as long as Russia remains outside the World Trade Organisation.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

An EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region is another important issue for the Government during the Swedish Presidency. The European Commission is due to present a draft strategy at the latest in June 2009. A decision will be taken by the European Council before the end of the year. The strategy and associated action plan will be important instruments for coordinating and focusing the urgent measures that need to be taken for the Baltic Sea environment and the growth and competitiveness of the region.

In October, Sweden will take over the two-year Chairmanship of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council. Working closely with the relevant actors at national and regional level, we want to strengthen cooperation for open neighbourly relations, economic growth and sustainable development in northern Europe.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

In 2009 our foreign policy will be put to a very severe test. We will be working in an environment of growing insecurity and tangible threats.

Sweden will also be assuming the Presidency of a union characterised by institutional insecurity. It is possible that the Treaty of Lisbon, which has the broad support of this Riksdag, will be ratified by all Member States this year.

It is a treaty that creates increased opportunities for the European Union to act in unity and more forcefully in the global arena by gathering EU foreign policy instruments in one place.

It may therefore be Sweden's responsibility, as the presiding country, to implement the new treaty, including the European External Action Service. In this case it will be a formidable task that will significantly impact on Sweden's role as the holder of the EU Presidency in autumn 2009.

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