

*Mr Carl Bildt
Minister for
Foreign Affairs*

Statement of Government Policy

*in the Parliamentary Debate on Foreign Affairs,
Wednesday, 16 February 2011*



REGERINGSKANSLIET

**Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Sweden**

103 39 Stockholm

Article No: UD 11.007



REGERINGSKANSLIET

**Government Offices
of Sweden**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Not to be published before 09.00 on 16 February

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Europe's voice is needed in the world. And Sweden's voice is needed in Europe. The European Union must be a strong voice for freedom and a strong force for peace. Sweden – in the context of European cooperation – has a responsibility to contribute to freedom, peace, security and development in our immediate vicinity and globally.

The Treaty of Lisbon opens up new opportunities for the European Union to promote democracy and human rights around the world. We now have more and better instruments than previously. A stronger Union raises our expectations – and those of the rest of the world – of an attentive, powerful and responsible Europe.

To live up to these expectations, the Union needs strong and committed Member States. Sweden must be at the heart of European cooperation. European foreign policy is our foreign policy. At a time when other Member States are facing major problems at home, our country has the strength to take on further responsibility to advance European positions.

Two decades ago, our part of Europe was transformed by people's demands for freedom on the other side of the Baltic Sea. And since then, step by step, we have been able to build a better Europe for the benefit of everyone.

At the present time, we are seeing how people's demands for freedom on the other side of the Mediterranean are creating breathtaking new opportunities for hundreds of millions of people in Europe's immediate neighbourhood. And our task will once again be to see how we can help, step by step, to build a better future for them all.

The task at hand is in many ways more difficult than the task two decades ago. Europe's magnetic attraction is not as obvious, and Europe as a model in all respects is not as natural.

Egypt is a proud nation whose history is much longer than that of any European country. The economic and social challenges are formidable.

But let us be clear on one point: our commitment to freedom and democracy south of our Union must be just as strong as our commitment to freedom and democracy east of our Union. This is about their freedom – but also about our peace.

With visions, but without illusions, we must now see how we can, step by step, help these countries to build institutions of democracy and the rule of law to safeguard freedom and open societies. And step by step, their economies must be opened up and reformed so as to create growth, jobs and hope of a better future.

The European Union must be the voice of freedom and the power of democracy, not least in parts of the world that are so close to us. Just as clearly as we condemn the new wave of oppression in Minsk, we will welcome the new wave of freedom in Tunis and Cairo. And in the region as a whole.

The European Neighbourhood Policy must be reformed. In the east, the Eastern Partnership is growing stronger, but in the south we have at times been too irresolute. We must have a Neighbourhood Policy that is alive with commitment to open societies and open economies, both towards the east and south.

Sweden has discreetly provided tools to break through regimes' Internet blockades. Freedom of the Internet paves the way for people's freedom.

But much more will be needed.

We have proposed a democracy support mission to Tunisia. And we hope that it will soon be possible to initiate a dialogue with Egypt on the help and support we can provide. The path via a new constitution to free and fair elections is the beginning of a long path of necessary reforms, including economic reforms.

We will have many reasons to return to this.

Over the past year, the European External Action Service has been established as a key tool for achieving an effective and coherent European foreign policy. Sweden will continue to contribute to the development of the External Action Service with a view to pursuing strategically important issues on the global arena.

The Government has previously presented and established Sweden's security policy in the Riksdag. This security policy remains firmly in place.

Membership of the European Union means that Sweden is part of a political alliance and takes its share of responsibility, in the spirit of solidarity, for Europe's security. Sweden will not remain passive if another EU Member State or Nordic country suffers a disaster or an attack. We expect these countries to act in the same way if Sweden is similarly affected.

Security policy challenges will change in the future. One key challenge for the European Union will therefore be to analyse these changes and adapt our tools so that we can continue to play an active and constructive role globally.

New challenges bring to the fore the need for a new and modern European security strategy.

Sweden is taking a proactive role in efforts to strengthen the European Union's capacity to contribute to civilian and military crisis management. One concrete example of our commitment is that we are currently leading the Nordic Battlegroup, which is on standby for the EU. By better coordinating the Member States' resources – our hardware – we can strengthen the EU's overall global capacity, and together with Germany we have taken an initiative to increase the Member States' overall crisis management capacity. But we must also develop and refine our political instruments and analysis capacity – our software – in order to make an optimum contribution to keeping global crises and conflicts in check. This can also contribute to multilateral cooperation within the UN.

Sweden is not immune to international terrorism, as the attack last year in Stockholm showed. The emergence of violent extremism is a global issue requiring international cooperation. The Government's written communication from 2008 on a strategy to meet the threat of terrorism will be updated.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Two decades ago, liberation opened the way for renewed cooperation between the Baltic Sea states. The Baltic countries are now members of both the European Union and NATO, and at the start of this year, Estonia adopted the euro as its currency. This is a positive development for the whole of our region.

Our Nordic identity fits within the framework of our European identity. Through Nordic and Nordic-Baltic cooperation, we have more of an impact than we would as individual countries. Ahead of the Swedish Presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers in 2013, we want the Nordic region to continue to be one of Europe's most important green growth regions.

To our north lies another challenge of growing importance. Arctic issues are becoming increasingly important for the international community, not least due to climate change. For Sweden, it is crucial that the sensitive natural environment in this region be protected. In May, Sweden will be taking over the chairmanship of the Arctic Council and will thus have a key role to play in coordinating this increasingly strategic area. In spring 2011 the Government will present a Swedish strategy for the Arctic region.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Europe does not end at the outer border of the European Union. The European perspective in our region is key to democratic and economic development in these countries, and for the Union's own credibility globally.

The Treaty establishes the right for all European states that respect the Union's values to apply for membership of the European Union. And there is a mutual interest in an open Europe. Through cooperation and integration we can enrich our societies politically, economically and culturally, and promote peace and security on our continent. Making visible the political and economic gains to be had from enlargement is all the more important when xenophobic and isolationist currents have found a foothold in many parts of the Union.

We fully support the EU process initiated by Iceland and look forward to Iceland also being able to take a decision on full membership within the next few years.

Turkish EU membership, once all the conditions are met, would strengthen both Turkey and the European Union. Turkey's democratisation process has moved forward. Comprehensive constitutional reform, focusing on the rights of the individual, is within reach after the parliamentary elections this summer.

The process towards a reunification of Cyprus has entered a critical phase. An agreement would help to stabilise the whole of the eastern Mediterranean region. It would also have a positive effect on cooperation between the EU and NATO.

Greater reform efforts in the Balkans are necessary to ensure the integration of the entire region into the EU. The membership perspective is an

important incentive for reforms and promotes stability, economic and social development, and regional cooperation on continued reconciliation.

Croatia will take the step towards full EU membership in a few years' time. Negotiations with the other countries can begin when the set requirements have been fulfilled. Bilateral disputes such as the Macedonian name issue and relations between Serbia and Kosovo must not be allowed to obstruct these countries from advancing towards EU membership. The Bosnian leadership must take its responsibility for introducing necessary reforms to pave the way for the country's continued European integration.

The need for a new and active Neighbourhood Policy is clear. Increased trade, movement across borders and common regulatory frameworks contribute to prosperity and security and inspire democratic development. The framework for the Union's cooperation to the east is the Eastern Partnership, which came about as a Swedish-Polish initiative. The development of the Eastern Partnership in all its dimensions is of central interest to Sweden. Important steps have been taken to promote reforms in the direction of the European Union's fundamental values, but the partnership must constantly develop if it is to remain relevant. The summit in May between the European Union and our eastern European neighbours will be an important opportunity to make new progress.

But democratic development in the region does not always move as quickly as, or even in the direction, we are striving for. One obvious example of this is Belarus, where the brutal attacks during the presidential election were a serious setback to efforts towards freedom, democracy and human rights in Europe. Sweden has been a driving force for vigorous European measures against the regime, and at the same time we have been strengthening support to the country's democratic forces.

There are strong reasons for closely following developments in Ukraine, especially respect for democratic principles, freedom of the media and human rights. Sweden supports the country's European integration and hopes that the negotiations on an association agreement with the European Union can be concluded this year.

The latent conflicts in the southern Caucasus threaten the stability of the entire region and must not be allowed to flare up again. We must therefore continue to lead these countries closer to the European Union within the framework of the Eastern Partnership. The European Union's support for Georgia's territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders is unequivocal.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

The European Union's relations with its strategic partner countries create improved conditions for asserting the values upon which the Union is based. The EU's credibility stems from our coherent voice, our preparedness to stand up for and promote the Union's values as established by the Treaty, and our ability to meet the economic challenges and contribute to freedom, peace and security in our region.

The United States is the European Union's principal strategic partner. Transatlantic consensus strengthens Europe's ability to tackle global challenges. We look forward to transatlantic cooperation that is closer and more operational in all areas, including cyber security. In the long term, we would like to see deeper economic integration between the EU and the US through a free trade agreement.

It is in Europe's interest that Russia develop into a full political and economic partner. Russia must contribute to solutions to the remaining conflicts in our common region. The country's institutions must be modernised for Russia to operate under the rule of law with full respect for human rights and democracy. It is vital that the country be integrated into international cooperation based on mutual commitments, and Sweden supports Russian membership of the WTO.

Asia today holds a clear position as the world's growth engine, with increasing economic and political influence. It is important that the EU conduct a close dialogue with the Asian countries on global issues such as climate change, environmental technology, open and competitively neutral markets, open trade routes, energy and food security and, above all, democracy and human rights.

China, which is at the centre of this dialogue, has undergone radical change. The proportion of very poor people has decreased from 65 per cent to 10 per cent in 30 years. The European Union's relations with China are growing stronger. Through dialogue, Sweden and the EU are able to promote greater respect for human rights and democratic principles in China, where much remains to be done. Continued persecution of dissidents, executions and restrictions on freedom of expression on the Internet give cause for concern.

As the world's largest democracy and country operating under the rule of law, India is a key country for long-term stability and security in Asia. Deepened cooperation with India on global issues such as cyber security, combating terrorism, climate, development and open trade routes is

natural. A free trade agreement between the EU and India would further strengthen relations.

Sweden and the European Union have an interest in broadening the strategic partnership with Brazil and South Africa. As growing economic actors with greater political influence, these countries play an important role both in their own right and as a voice for new perspectives in international cooperation.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Sweden's commitment in Afghanistan is strong and long-term. The broad political consensus on our presence in Afghanistan lays a solid foundation for our initiatives to contribute to peace, security and development, and to help the Afghan people build up their country.

Beginning in 2011, responsibility for security in Afghanistan will be gradually transferred to the Afghan authorities. This will likely affect the northern part of the country, where Swedish-Finnish troops are currently stationed. One way Sweden is helping Afghans take this responsibility is by providing support to UN coordination efforts, while we are also increasing our civilian presence and deepening our development cooperation. Next year, all Swedish initiatives will be transferred to civilian leadership.

Peaceful and democratic development in Afghanistan and its neighbour, Pakistan, is also in Sweden's interest. Terrorist groups with bases in border areas still pose a potential regional and global threat. The European Union has a strategic interest in strengthening its relations with Pakistan, not least through closer trade cooperation.

The situation in the Middle East has reached an impasse. The unresolved conflict between Israelis and Palestinians remains a crucial challenge for the international community. Both parties must refrain from provocative actions. The European Union wants to see a peace agreement on a two-state solution, based on international law, which was made clear by the Council of the European Union in December 2009. Syria and Lebanon must also be included in a comprehensive and sustainable peace agreement.

The European Union has taken the lead in efforts to end the isolation of Gaza, where the humanitarian situation remains serious.

The intentions behind Iran's nuclear programme continue to give cause for concern. The UN and the European Union have decided to extend

sanctions. Sweden gives its full support to the resumed dialogue with Iran, concerning issues such as its nuclear programme. An agreement based on international law and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty that would satisfy the legitimate interests of both sides is completely possible.

Respect for human rights and freedoms in Iran continues to deteriorate. The number of executions has increased dramatically. This is unacceptable. Sweden is working bilaterally and within the framework of the UN and the European Union to reverse this trend. Sweden is one of the initiative-takers for a UN Human Rights Council resolution on the human rights situation in Iran. We propose a special UN rapporteur for these issues. This is an essential requirement.

It is pleasing to see that a new coalition government is in place in Iraq. This creates the conditions for better security for all groups in the country, reduced violence and continued strong Swedish commitment. Sweden has re-inaugurated its embassy in Baghdad and opened a consulate in Erbil in Kurdistan in northern Iraq.

The elections in Burma in November 2010 were neither free nor fair. The release of Aung San Suu Kyi was welcomed, but there are still more than two thousand political prisoners who must be released. Political reforms, respect for human rights and a reconciliation process are needed for Burma to move forward, and Sweden and the European Union are prepared to support a process of this kind.

The need for democratic and economic reforms in Cuba remains great. Support to the democratic forces must be reinforced and pressure on the regime must be maintained. It is not acceptable to send political prisoners who have been released into exile.

The image of Africa is changing. Six of the world's ten leading emerging-market countries of the past decade are in Africa. Trade and integration are becoming ever more important driving forces. Sweden has strong ties with many African countries and good prospects to promote a cohesive European Africa policy.

Later this year, we will have a chance to discuss common global challenges with ten leading African countries at a Nordic-African meeting of foreign ministers hosted by Sweden.

The referendum in southern Sudan opens the door to peace and reconciliation. The result places considerable demands on parties in both the north and the south to complete the peace agreement of 2005 in a

peaceful manner. An independent southern Sudan is also a major challenge for the international community to help in the work to build up the new state.

Zimbabwe is in a critical phase with general elections ahead. European efforts to strengthen democratic developments in the country must be credible and results-oriented.

Developments in the Great Lakes region have widespread repercussions across the African continent. The extensive human rights violations, not least the systematic sexual violence against women and girls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, must cease. The Government gives special priority to the implementation of United Nations Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, as well as Resolution 1820 on sexual violence in conflict situations, and will take initiatives to further strengthen these efforts.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Sweden and the European Union, together with other donors, have a responsibility to ensure that aid and other development policy tools are continuously adapted to meet the challenges of a changing world. The European Union's overall capacity and joint action need to be further developed to demonstrate responsibility and leadership in development issues.

Sweden must have an ambitious development policy and a generous level of aid that produces results in the lives of poor and unfree people, regardless of the form it takes and who implements it. Transparency is not only of key importance in the fight against oppression and poverty, but also in enabling aid to support this fight as effectively as possible. Work to implement the transparency guarantee in development assistance is being carried out.

The starting point for Sweden's overall development policy is poverty reduction by promoting sustainable and equitable development, human rights, democracy and a strong civil society. With a level of aid that will amount to SEK 35 billion in 2011 – which corresponds to one per cent of GDP – Sweden is one of few countries to live up to the UN aid target. Sustainable aid levels and a continued strong focus on results are two of Sweden's foremost contributions to the achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals by 2015. A special investment in women, children and young people is being made to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals on reduced infant and maternal mortality.

Sweden's development cooperation must be growth-oriented. The poor countries of the past can, in the future, become the growth engines of the world economy.

High food costs and inadequate production continue to create tension throughout the world. This is a challenge that requires foreign policy measures, as well as trade and development policy measures.

In many countries around the world, people are still suffering from hunger and malnutrition. National initiatives are needed in these countries to strengthen both trade and agricultural productivity, as well as purchasing power. The Government is therefore making a special food aid contribution to strengthen these types of measures. We also want trade-disrupting agricultural subsidies to be eliminated and trade barriers in the agricultural sector to be combated.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

International law and respect for human rights are a cornerstone of Swedish foreign policy and a precondition for sustainable globalisation. A shrinking, globalised world requires international rules to manage borderless challenges and flows. Where the rule of law gains a foothold, crimes against humanity cannot go unpunished.

The Government is particularly committed to strengthening the inter-relationship between human rights, democracy and development underpinned by the principles of the rule of law. We want to give human rights a more prominent role in peace and security efforts.

Sweden is standing for the UN Human Rights Council for the period 2012–2015. Membership would offer us an important arena in which to pursue pressing human rights issues globally and contribute constructively to necessary reforms to the work of the Council.

The Government is soon to publish reports by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs that map out respect for human rights in all countries around the world. Sweden is working to encourage the EU to compile open human rights reports along the same lines. It is crucial to lay bare countries' inadequate respect for human rights.

The fundamental right to receive information freely and express one's views is a prerequisite for people to be able to take part in public debate and political life. Sweden is working independently and within the framework of the EU, the UN and the Council of Europe to strengthen the freedoms

of opinion. Additional initiatives in support of democracy and freedom of expression will be taken this year.

Sweden is committed to supporting human rights advocates around the world. Efforts to bring about the release of Swedish-Eritrean journalist Dawit Isaak are continuing.

Freedom of worship is an integral part of an open society. The growing tendencies towards greater intolerance and abuses against religious minorities are cause for concern.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

The ever-increasing unpredictable threat posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons, is one of the most serious security issues of our time.

Sweden welcomes the fact that the NPT Review Conference last year resulted in action plans for disarmament, non-proliferation and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. This year, the European Union will contribute to the preparations for an international conference in 2012 on a zone free of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East.

The treaty between the United States and Russia on joint strategic arms reduction is an important step towards a world free from nuclear weapons. We continue to push for a reduction in tactical nuclear weapons, which would contribute to stability and security, not least in our own immediate vicinity.

Sweden and the EU will continue to support multilateral nuclear approaches and the ongoing work to establish a nuclear fuel bank under the control of the IAEA. As a member of the IAEA Board as of autumn 2011, Sweden will be better placed to play a constructive role, in particular to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The Government is continuing work on a bill to present to the Riksdag this year on accession to the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Mr/Madam Speaker

Today we are seeing a recovery in the world economy that in many places, however, is still fragile. At the same time many rich countries have strained budgets and limited opportunities to pursue active budgetary policies. In this context, it is fundamental not to restrict trade flows and give in to protectionism but to harness the opportunities of globalisation to promote

global economic growth and financial stability. This also promotes growth and development in poor countries.

Sweden continues its efforts to bring about a prompt conclusion of the Doha Round to provide a greater stimulus to the world economy. Sweden is also taking an active role in EU efforts to negotiate regional and bilateral free trade agreements. Growing international cooperation, not least within the G20, to strengthen the multilateral regulatory framework and reduce the risk of serious backlashes against the global economy is a step in the right direction.

Sweden is an open and trade-oriented country. Sweden's economic growth and strong competitiveness stem from our desire to benefit from globalisation and the flow of goods, services and capital. A well-functioning European single market also strengthens Europe's competitiveness in the world. Sweden's economic stability enhances our opportunities to pursue an active foreign and development policy.

Global challenges require effective multilateral and global forms of governance. A strong and well-functioning United Nations is a prerequisite for effective multilateralism, which is a cornerstone of Swedish and European foreign policy. The need for reforms to improve the UN's ability to meet today's challenges is great. The United Nations Security Council must reflect new global dynamics more effectively than at present.

The devastating natural disasters of recent years that have affected vast regions, with the earthquake in Haiti and the floods in Pakistan as the clearest cases, underscore the need for an effective international system for mobilising support when humanitarian crises strike. As one of the leading humanitarian donors, Sweden is taking an active role in developing coordination in this area. We are also taking steps to strengthen poor countries' resilience to climate change impacts, and the Government is therefore implementing a special climate initiative within the framework of development assistance.

This year, 2011, is an important year as regards environmental and climate challenges. Ahead of the climate negotiations in Durban, a clear political commitment is required, not least to far-reaching emissions reductions, to ensure the two-degree target can be met. Sweden has shown that growth combines excellently with environmental awareness and a green economy, which will be a central theme for the summit on sustainable development in Rio de Janeiro next year.

Secure energy supply has become a key concept within the context of foreign and security policy. Our energy dependence and that of our European neighbours, and

the need for diversification of energy supply, are at the core of the debate. But security of supply is just as much a matter of creating conditions for well-functioning and integrated markets and creating incentives for investments in innovation, energy-efficient solutions and renewable energy.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Globalisation influences our security policy interests. Our societies are becoming increasingly dependent on the various flows of goods, services, capital, people and information that are the core of globalisation.

One of the most important challenges facing Sweden and the international community is to secure and facilitate the flows that give globalisation its power. But we must also be able to combat and control the flows that risk undermining our societies. Organised crime, trafficking in human beings, drug smuggling, illicit trafficking in firearms, piracy and terrorism are some of these.

Safeguarding both freedom and security of the global Internet is a challenge of formidable proportions. Freedom on the Internet is the overriding interest for protecting the good flows that are at the heart of an open society and that provide knowledge, jobs and prosperity. We must protect the freedom of the Internet that totalitarian states and authoritarian regimes want to stifle for fear of losing their information superiority and power.

A free and open Internet also requires secure and functioning networks and that we can protect ourselves against the illegal flows that threaten our security and fundamental values.

This balance requires new thinking, political will and, above all, cross-border international cooperation. Sweden is pushing for freedom of the Internet and cyber security to be included as a natural part of the European dialogue with global partners.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

In the context of European cooperation, Sweden is well placed to make a constructive contribution to addressing global challenges.

Under the new Treaty, the European Union has gained new opportunities to influence developments in the world in keeping with our values and interests. We now must use and cultivate these opportunities for the benefit of a world of peace and freedom.