Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde

Statement of Government Policy

in the Parliamentary Debate on Foreign Affairs
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Government of Sweden

Mr/Madam Speaker,

A dark new chapter has begun in the history of Europe. On 24 February, Russia launched an unprovoked, illegal and unjustifiable war against its neighbour – the democratic state of Ukraine.

The Russian threat to the European security order will persist for a long time to come.

We have all seen the images of the brutal atrocities committed by Russian forces.

Civilians murdered and entire cities bombed. Missiles targeting children fleeing. Mothers with newborn babies hiding in cellars, seeking safety from the shelling.

During my visit to the Korczowa refugee reception centre in Poland, I was told about the Russian atrocities; about the mass graves, torture, attacks on children at a railway station, and about sexual abuse.

This invasion shows how far Russia is prepared to go. Russia's war has created a new and more dangerous reality for Europe and Sweden. It is in our security interest that Russia's war does not result in political gains, for reasons including preventing further aggression in the future.

At the same time, a number of global challenges we faced before Russia's invasion of Ukraine still need to be tackled: the climate crisis, growing geopolitical competition, the threat of famine, democratic backsliding and repeated human rights abuses.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Sweden's political, humanitarian, economic and military support to Ukraine is of historic proportions. Not since Stalin's war against Finland in 1939 has Sweden provided weapons during an ongoing conflict in our neighbourhood.

Last week, the Government presented its fourth support package to Ukraine amounting to SEK 1 billion. Ukraine's legal right to self-defence is, in practice, the defence of the territory of all countries. And that includes Sweden.

The EU sanctions were adopted unanimously and at an unprecedented speed and scale. The EU's sixth sanctions package, which our Government has been pushing for, means that 90 per cent of Russian oil imports to the EU will be phased out by the end of the year. Transatlantic cooperation has been crucial regarding support to Ukraine and the sanctions adopted against Russia.

Continued support to Ukraine and continued sanctions against Russia and Belarus are our most important contributions to bringing an end to this ruthless war.

Sweden's national defence capabilities will continue to be strengthened. We will reach two per cent of GDP as soon as practicable and by 2028 at the latest. The re-establishment of regiments, reinforcements on Gotland, reactivation of national military service, defence equipment procurements, and enhanced cyber defence and intelligence capabilities have been necessary. The significant deterioration of the security environment has also highlighted the importance of continuing to deepen Sweden's defence and

security cooperation. This will strengthen Sweden's security both now and in the future.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

On 13 May, the Government presented a security policy report after two months of deliberations involving all the parties of the Riksdag. It is a strength for Sweden that all parties have supported the report's analysis sections, especially on Russia.

Russia's war of aggression has led to a fundamental deterioration of the security environment in our neighbourhood. NATO's response to the war has also brought to the fore that Article 5 of the NATO treaty, the collective defence clause, applies to NATO members only.

It is the Government's assessment that the best way for Sweden to protect its security is for Sweden to join NATO. With Sweden and Finland as NATO members, the security of all NATO countries would be strengthened.

As a member of NATO, Sweden would commit to the Washington Treaty in its entirety, including NATO doctrines. NATO membership may also change the conditions for the export of defence equipment in our national regulatory framework.

We have taken the step to apply for NATO membership hand in hand with Finland, our closest partner. The crisis we are now experiencing has shown how close our two countries are and how interdependent our security is.

Consensus within NATO is required to proceed with Sweden and Finland's applications. Our applications have received broad support from NATO members.

Sweden will contribute to the security of NATO as a whole, including Turkey, in the spirit of solidarity. Our ambition is to make constructive progress on the issues that Turkey has raised.

Sweden condemns terrorism in the strongest possible terms. A new and tougher Terrorist Offences Act enters into force on 1 July and the Government is preparing further tightening of terrorist legislation.

There should be no doubt that Sweden will continue to stand firm alongside other like-minded countries in the fight against terrorism.

Our vulnerability to external threats and attempts to influence will increase until the Accession Agreement enters into force.

In response to this uncertainty, several NATO countries – including the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Spain, Norway and Denmark – have offered the Swedish Government clear assurances of support during the application period. The EU's mutual defence clause, Article 42.7, also plays a significant role in Sweden's security.

The bilateral declaration of solidarity signed by the Prime Minister of Sweden and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom also aims to enhance security in northern Europe.

Sweden's security policy is based on cooperation with NATO, the EU, the UN and through the strong transatlantic link.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Sweden will not lose its global voice if it joins NATO. We have a long history of standing up for international law, solidarity, disarmament, democracy and gender equality. This will be our future too.

We will continue to promote greater respect for human rights, a rules-based world order and global security, with mediation as a tool and against terrorism.

This is also part of building a safer and more secure Sweden. Diplomacy will remain our first line of defence and national defence capabilities are of fundamental importance.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

We have a number of security policy tools we can use to respond to the deteriorating security situation in Europe. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is one of them.

When Sweden chaired the OSCE last year, we saw accelerating negative developments in Russia and Belarus regarding their willingness to live up to fundamental commitments.

We worked to strengthen the OSCE's role as a platform for dialogue and accountability. One result of this was the Ministerial Council meeting in Stockholm, where 48 foreign ministers held political discussions and made decisions. Sweden will continue to assist the OSCE as part of the Troika until the end of 2022.

The conditions for dialogue and conflict resolution have changed profoundly since 24 February, but the need for dialogue remains. And the OSCE is an important forum for this when circumstances allow.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

We are in the midst of an accelerating climate and environmental crisis. Sweden will lead the climate transition. But the global level of ambition is far from sufficient. Climate change and environmental degradation contribute to increased tensions and conflicts. The climate is of critical importance to our security. We must take climate-related security threats extremely seriously and have therefore appointed an ambassador for climate and security.

Intensive negotiations are currently under way in the EU on the comprehensive package of legislative proposals called 'Fit for 55'. In this context, the Government is pushing for ambitious solutions to reduce the EU's net emissions by at least 55 per cent by 2030 in comparison with 1990 levels.

Last week, Sweden hosted Stockholm+50, the international UN meeting on the environment, climate change and sustainable development. The meeting highlighted concrete solutions and financing models to speed up adaptation and transition, including in developing countries. Politicians from all around the world agreed to move from words to action.

During our term as Chair, the OSCE took a landmark decision concerning the challenges posed by climate change. The OSCE now has a mandate to

work on this crucial security issue. Sweden is also helping to strengthen the OSCE Secretariat to enable a greater focus on these issues.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

The EU is Sweden's most important foreign and security policy arena. In uncertain times, the Member States stand stronger together. We will continue to build increasingly closer cooperation within the EU and with our Nordic and Baltic neighbours. Efforts to realise the vision of the Nordic region as the world's most sustainable and integrated region continue.

Next year, Sweden will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union for the third time, and at a time of fundamental challenges to Europe's security.

As the Minister for EU Affairs outlined for this chamber, our agenda is ambitious. The Government wants to see an EU that can assume greater responsibility for its own security. Work on the Strategic Compass will continue with the aim of deepening security and defence cooperation. At the same time, it is important for the EU to deepen its cooperation with strategic partners outside the EU and that the transatlantic link be safeguarded.

We need to continue to deal with the consequences of the war, deepen our support to Ukraine and work to gradually integrate Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia into the EU. The EU's ability to manage its own neighbourhood is critical to its credibility as a global actor.

The EU's fundamental values must also be upheld. Europe is currently experiencing the greatest refugee crisis since the Second World War. This situation demonstrates how important it is that EU Member States act with solidarity and shared responsibility for refugees.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Feminist foreign policy is needed. Sweden was first. And it is gratifying that a growing number of countries are now following our lead – most recently Germany, Chile and the Netherlands which, like Canada, France, Luxembourg, Spain and Mexico, are also pursuing feminist foreign policy.

Our efforts must be intensified, not least given the backlash against gender equality that we have seen in the wake of the pandemic. Violence against women and girls has increased all over the world.

The pandemic, the climate crisis and the shrinking democratic space are putting us at risk of a global gender equality recession. Feminist foreign policy is needed now more than ever.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

For the fifth consecutive year, we are seeing more countries moving in an authoritarian direction than in a democratic direction. Not only is Russia's aggression against Ukraine a flagrant violation of international law, it is also a clear example of an authoritarian state's attack on a democratic state.

The Government's Drive for Democracy therefore continues with full force. More attention must be paid to the lack of democracy and respect for human rights in the world of work globally.

This year, Sweden holds the Presidency of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, where we will continue to promote Holocaust remembrance and do our utmost to combat antisemitism and antigypsyism.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

The nuclear threat is an increasingly worrying reality. Sweden will remain a strong voice for disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control even as a future NATO member. The common goal is a world free of nuclear weapons.

Within the Stockholm Initiative, Sweden and 15 other countries have proposed 22 concrete and constructive steps for nuclear disarmament and a package of measures to reduce the risk of nuclear weapons use – an area of growing importance.

An increasing number of countries back our proposals. Russia's aggression against Ukraine has made our work more difficult, but all the more important.

We have also directly appealed to the five nuclear-weapons states. A number of the initiative's proposals for steps forward have been accepted. In a joint statement in January, the five affirmed that "a nuclear war cannot be won

and must never be fought". Russia's threat to use nuclear weapons is unacceptable and in glaring contrast to this statement.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Humanitarian needs in the world are increasing dramatically. The pandemic has pushed more than 100 million people back into extreme poverty. Inequality and global gaps are growing.

More than 300 million people need humanitarian aid to survive. Almost 50 million women, men and children are on the verge of starvation. Roughly 100 million people have now been forcibly displaced.

Sweden's development assistance policy is world-leading in terms of both scale and quality. Setting aside funds for people in need of protection in Sweden due to war on our continent does not change this. Sweden's development assistance will continue to be equivalent to one per cent of our gross national income.

Sweden will step up its climate and environmental action. The target of doubling climate aid remains unchanged.

When anti-democratic forces gain ground, Sweden's development assistance will, with unwavering ambition, remain a counterweight. More democratic societies make the world a better place – and increase security in Sweden.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Sweden's foreign policy continues to be global, multilateral and based on international law. The European security order that we defend rests on the United Nations Charter and its principles.

This is also part of building security with others. A solidary world view goes hand in hand with the understanding that Sweden's security is furthered by a more secure and prosperous world.

Sweden continues to invest politically and financially in the multilateral system with the UN at the core. This means support for peacebuilding and conciliation, deep commitment to human rights, democracy and the rule of law, gender equality and broad environmental and climate action.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Russia's aggression also cast the world into a deep food crisis that is hitting those who were already most vulnerable the hardest. Sweden is part of the global response to alleviate its effects. We are a large donor to the World Food Programme and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, which together save lives and improve livelihoods.

Russia must immediately cease blocking Ukrainian grain exports. This blockade is a major cause of the rising global food prices.

The EU is accelerating its initiatives for global food security. Free trade must be protected, and the root causes of hunger and starvation must be addressed. Sweden's efforts for sustainable development and peacebuilding are also critical in this context.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

The COVID-19 pandemic has hindered implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Some of the global progress achieved in recent years, such as improvements in maternal and child health and gender equality, has been undone.

Global hunger and extreme poverty are on the rise for the first time in 20 years. The 2030 Agenda is our roadmap for reversing this trend.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Global challenges require global solutions. The pandemic, the climate transition and harsh sanctions against Russia require more trade, sustainable value chains, new sources of key raw materials, new output markets and strategic partnerships.

It is more important than ever to stand up for free, fair and sustainable trade and its significance for welfare in Sweden and Europe. This is needed at the same time as historically severe sanctions are imposed on Russia.

EU trade agreements with partners around the globe enable us to diversify trade and strengthen resilience ahead of future crises. The multilateral trade

system, based on the World Trade Organization, is fundamental to growth and welfare.

Innovation capacity and expertise is prevalent throughout Sweden, building the future's sustainable goods and services for the global market. By giving the green transition an export boost, we contribute to reducing climate impact globally. We also create the jobs of the future here in Sweden – thereby strengthening Sweden and Europe's competitiveness.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

A war is raging in Europe, and many feel a deep sense of global gloom. Yet, I want to say this: our joint efforts are important.

It may feel like an endless undertaking, but there is hope: through hard work and a clear direction, change is possible. We must not lose hope for peace and a better future. Or as a 14-year-old Ukrainian girl, Daria Chebotariova, wrote in a poem:

"We still believe in a happy future,
Where we will live in harmony and peace.
We'll not forget those who have fallen,
That's why we need to hurry up."