

**“NATO AND SWEDEN: STRONG PARTNERS IN
SUPPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS”
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NATO SECRETARY GENERAL**

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**Your Royal Highness,
Ministers, Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Let me start by saying how very glad I am to be here. I know the Salen conference is a very important contribution to the Swedish debate of foreign and security policy.

Sweden enjoys a world-wide positive reputation. This reputation is thoroughly deserved. Because your country has worked hard to make our world safer, more secure, and more stable.

Over the past two decades, much of that work has been done in partnership with NATO. Indeed, your country is one of NATO's most active and effective partners. I believe this is perfectly natural. Because Sweden and NATO share common values. And a common commitment to the United Nations.

We also share a common interest in strengthening the United Nations' role as the guarantor of international legal order and the rule of law. And in my remarks this afternoon, I want to talk about how we can do this.

I shall start by briefly highlighting the shared principles that provide the foundation for our partnership. I shall then describe how we are putting those principles into practice. And I shall conclude by looking at the potential for making our partnership even stronger, and even more effective – and how we can make our support to the United Nations even stronger and more effective too.

First, the principles.

Swedish politicians have consistently shown their strong commitment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and the role of the United Nations in maintaining international peace and security.

Swedish aid workers have been active all over the world, to bring relief and end the suffering of people affected by conflict and disaster.

Swedish diplomats and soldiers have made many valuable contributions to prevent, manage and resolve crises.

And the Swedish public solidly backs your country's active international engagement in support of the United Nations.

Against this background, it is really no surprise that Sweden and NATO are such close and effective partners. Because our 28 member nations share your attachment to United Nations.

NATO's Strategic Concept reiterates our firm commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and to the Washington Treaty, which affirms the primary responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security.

So Sweden and NATO share the same requirement to fulfil in good faith the obligations assumed by us in accordance with the United Nations' Charter. And we share the agreement to accept and carry out the decisions of the Security Council.

We also share the same commitment to the values of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. And we share the same dedication to build a safer and more secure world.

These shared principles and common values form a very firm foundation for our partnership. And together, we are putting these principles into practice in many parts of the world today.

Our missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan are NATO-led and United Nations-mandated. In these missions, Swedish soldiers have been standing shoulder to shoulder with troops from NATO Allies and other NATO partner countries for many years. Our soldiers have made a tremendous contribution to making Kosovo and Afghanistan safer, making us all at home more secure. We owe these brave, dedicated and selfless members of our armed forces our deepest respect.

Almost two years ago, we saw another concrete demonstration of the effectiveness of Sweden's partnership with NATO. And of how we can deliver real security by working together in support of the United Nations. NATO answered the call by the United Nations Security Council to protect the people of Libya. Many of our partners joined us in responding to that historic call. Your country – and especially the Swedish Air Force – played a significant part in the success of our joint effort.

Sweden has long understood NATO's unparalleled ability to multiply the efforts of individual nations, and to translate them into concrete, cooperative security.

We offer both Allies and partners a unique forum for political consultation on security issues of common concern.

And when it comes to undertaking joint missions and operations, no organisation is better than NATO in getting the military forces of different nations to work together effectively.

Our Alliance is not like a coalition of the willing. We offer political transparency and political oversight. We offer tried-and-tested military command and control. And we offer full participation in the decision-making process.

For all these reasons, by plugging into NATO both politically and militarily, Sweden is able to make an even more effective contribution to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. This has been, and will remain, an enormous benefit of your country's cooperation with the Alliance – for the United Nations, for NATO, and for Sweden.

However, I believe there is potential for us to do even more together - so that we can make our support to the United Nations even stronger, more effective, and more successful, in the future.

I see three areas where our partnership holds particular promise. Afghanistan; military capabilities; and further strengthening the ability of our forces to operate together. Let me say a few more words about each of those three issues.

First -- In Afghanistan, NATO is leading the largest and most ambitious multinational coalition since World War Two. Under a clear United Nations-mandate, fifty nations from all over the world are working to ensure that Afghanistan will never again be a safe haven for terrorists. Sweden has been a major contributor to that common effort. And it is producing positive results.

The transfer of our security responsibilities to the Afghans themselves has gained real momentum. In December, President Karzai announced the fourth group of provinces, cities and districts that will transition to Afghan security lead in the coming months. By the end of next year, Afghans will have full responsibility for their own security across the country. Our combat mission will then be complete. But our commitment to Afghanistan will not cease.

We are preparing a new mission to train, advise and assist the Afghan forces after 2014. We agreed at our NATO Summit in Chicago last May that the new mission will have a sound legal basis, such as a United Nations Security Council Resolution. I am very pleased that Sweden intends to make a significant contribution. And Swedish representatives are already sitting around the table, along with seven other partner nations, as we shape our new mission.

The second area where I see considerable scope for greater cooperation between Sweden and NATO is in developing military capabilities at a time of economic austerity. NATO has adopted a new mindset which we call Smart Defence. It means nations working together to deliver military capabilities that would be too costly for any of them to acquire alone.

Sweden has long understood the merits of cooperating with other nations on capabilities. Together with Finland and ten NATO Allies, you operate three C-17 transport aircraft that are based in Hungary. None of these countries could have afforded to buy such a big plane alone. But together, we can. And you have also joined forces on defence matters with your Nordic neighbours.

Your country is also working with several NATO Allies and partners to enable fighter jets to share munitions from various sources. You are taking part in the development of a system that will help to protect our harbours. And there are also many other Smart Defence projects where you have shown an interest – and where I hope we will see enhanced cooperation.

Having capabilities is one thing. Making effective use of those capabilities is another. Once we complete our ISAF mission in Afghanistan, we must maintain and strengthen the ability of our forces to operate together. So that we remain prepared to prevent the next crisis, or deal with it, if it arises. This is the third area where NATO and Sweden can do more.

In the coming years, with our so called "Connected Forces Initiative", we will be placing even greater emphasis on military education and training, including with our partners. We will also be looking to enhance the role of the NATO Response Force as part of our future exercise programme. And here as well, I see considerable scope for greater cooperation between NATO and active partners such as Sweden.

For example, Sweden and Finland have made clear that they wish to take part in NATO's peacetime preparedness mission in Iceland next year. This will improve our ability to work together and provide additional training opportunities. And as it is sponsored by Norway, your participation will also strengthen cooperation among Nordic states.

There is one final issue that I know is particularly important to you - which was also mentioned by Minister Enstrom - , and that is to develop our understanding of how women are affected by war and conflict, and how they can be part of their resolution. Because it is vital that women play their full role in peace and security. Sweden has played a key role in raising this issue with NATO Allies and other partner countries.

We have already integrated the principles of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security in the training of our forces and we have just started a review of the practical implications of this resolution for NATO-led operations. I am very grateful that this will be led by your Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations. I have no doubt that we will see the same dedicated and professional approach to this subject as we see in all the others areas of Sweden's partnership with NATO.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For many years, your country has demonstrated a strong attachment to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. You have shown a steadfast determination to make our world safer and more secure. And so has NATO.

Like the 28 NATO Allies, you also understand that, in the face of the complex risks and threats of the 21st century, the most effective security is cooperative security in support of the United Nations. This is what has made Sweden and NATO such close and successful partners.

We now have a real opportunity to make our partnership even stronger. To become even better at protecting our shared principles in practice. And to make our support to the United Nations even stronger and more effective. This is an opportunity we must grasp -- together. And with your support, I am sure that we will.

Thank you.

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