



Press conference in light of Russia's illegal annexation of additional regions in Ukraine

On 30 September, Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson held a press conference in light of Russia's illegal annexation of a further four Ukrainian regions. Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde and Minister for Defence Peter Hultqvist also took part.

“Illegal annexation has no legal force. Like Crimea, these four regions therefore remain within Ukraine's internationally recognised borders. Sweden condemns Russia's actions in the strongest possible terms,” said Ms Andersson.

An eighth package of sanctions is now being prepared at EU level. Sweden and the EU will continue to provide financial, military and humanitarian support to Ukraine for as long as is necessary. Russia's decision to annex additional areas will also be the focus of next week's informal meeting of the European Council.

Ms Linde announced that the Ministry for Foreign Affairs will summon Russia's Ambassador to formally convey Sweden's strong condemnation.

The current caretaker government has full powers to act for the security of Sweden and the Swedish people until the new government takes office. Sweden always has a functioning government in place.



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Sweden does not, and will not, recognise Russia's illegal annexations of Ukrainian territory.

Today, Russia announced its intention of illegally annexing the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia

Sweden strongly condemns Russia's actions, which are a violation of international law, including the United Nations Charter. We have communicated this to Russia's Ambassador today.

Sweden does not, and will not, recognise Russia's illegal annexations of Ukrainian territory. Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, like Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, are part of Ukraine, within that country's internationally recognised borders.

Russia's illegal annexations have no standing or legal force in international law. They do not affect Ukraine's right to defend itself and to reclaim its own territory.

Moreover, Russia's illegal annexations do not affect Sweden's unwavering support for Ukraine. Sweden stands in solidarity with Ukraine and the Ukrainian people. Within the EU, Sweden will continue to advocate further restrictive measures against Russia, and push for increased pressure on Russia to end its unjust war.

Russia's ruthless aggression against Ukraine is the most serious threat to peace and security in Europe since the end of the Second World War. Those responsible will be held to account.

Published 30 September 2022



Prime Minister comments on Wednesday's security policy council meeting

Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson and Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde gave their comments following the meeting of the Government's security policy council on Wednesday 28 September. Head of the Swedish Coast Guard's Operations Department Johan Norrman was also present.

The Government gathered for an extraordinary meeting of the security policy council in view of the leaks in the Nord Stream 1 and 2 gas pipelines in the Baltic Sea.

“It is likely that a deliberate act – in other words, sabotage – caused the leaks, which are located in the Swedish and Danish economic zones. This is thus not a direct attack on Sweden,” said Ms Andersson.

The Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and representatives of the Swedish Security Service and the Military Intelligence and Security Service attended the meeting, along with representatives of the Swedish Coast Guard, the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency and the Swedish Energy Agency. Ms Andersson emphasised that contact with international partners within the EU and NATO and with the United States had been maintained throughout the day.

“The Government and, of course, other countries take a very serious view of this situation, because these explosions must be seen against the backdrop of the security situation. The Government and the relevant authorities are now working flat out to investigate what happened and take necessary measures,” Ms Andersson said.

The Prime Minister also reminded the Swedish people to seek information from credible sources, and not to spread information that does not come from such sources.

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Published 29 September 2022



Likely deliberate act behind leaks in Nord Stream 1 and 2 Baltic Sea gas pipelines

On Tuesday 27 September, Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde and Minister for Defence Peter Hultqvist outlined the Government's views on the explosions that have caused leaks in the Nord Stream 1 and 2 gas pipelines in the Baltic Sea.

The Government considers that a deliberate act is behind the explosions, and takes a serious view of the incident given the security situation. Ms Andersson stated that Sweden is in close contact with Denmark and Germany in particular, but also with the EU, NATO, Norway, Finland and the United States.

“I will be convening the Government's security policy council, and the relevant Swedish authorities are taking all necessary measures. The Swedish Police Authority has also launched a preliminary investigation into possible sabotage. At the same time, I would like to emphasise that this is not an attack on Sweden. The explosions did not take place on Swedish territory, but rather in our economic zone,” Ms Andersson said.

The Prime Minister also urged the Swedish people to be vigilant, to seek information from credible sources and not to spread information about Swedish Armed Forces activities. The current caretaker government has full powers to act for the security of Sweden and the Swedish people until the new government takes office. Sweden always has a functioning government in place.



NATO members sign Accession Protocols for Sweden and Finland at North Atlantic Council meeting

Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde took part in the North Atlantic Council meeting on 5 July 2022 at NATO headquarters in Brussels, where all NATO members signed the Accession Protocols for Sweden and Finland. This enables all the NATO members to proceed with the accession process and ratify the protocols in the next step towards Swedish and Finnish membership. Following ratification by the NATO members, Sweden's accession will be referred to the Riksdag for approval. Sweden and Finland have Invitee status until the accession protocols have been ratified.

“Today's meeting marks an important step towards full NATO membership. Now that the accession protocols have been signed, and during the accession process, we will be integrated into the work within NATO's structures. A great deal remains to be done before we become full members, but today's step is very positive for the security of Sweden and the Swedish people,” said Ms Linde after the meeting.

Ms Linde led the Swedish delegation in the accession discussions at NATO headquarters yesterday ahead of today's signing. Finland's accession discussions were also held yesterday.



Government Offices of Sweden

Op-ed by Ann Linde and Matilda Ernkrans: Stockholm+50: Drafting the narrative for a green future

Opinion piece by Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde and Matilda Ernkrans, Minister for International Development Cooperation in Politico, June 5, 2022.

It's time to take on the responsibility of leadership for a shared green future. But taking responsibility doesn't only mean doing more — it means doing better.

Following two U.N. General Assembly resolutions, and after months of work, the world descended on Sweden's capital last week for Stockholm +50 to discuss the acceleration of efforts to create a healthy planet for the prosperity of all.

Hosted by Sweden and Kenya, the U.N. meeting was more than just a commemoration of the landmark 1972 Stockholm conference — the first world gathering to make the environment a central issue. New complexities in the areas of environment and energy, security and development, and climate and equity mean that isolated responses are simply not good enough. And now is the time for stronger global action that demonstrates the potency of multilateralism.

Along with hundreds of U.N. officials, heads of state, ministers and other government representatives, Stockholm +50 was a gathering that involved civil society – including activists, businesses and scientists – in ways that set new standards for multilateral meetings. And ahead of the meeting in Stockholm, over 50,000 people from all over the world — men and women, young and old, from all walks of life — provided their insights and recommendations.

From this clamor of voices, one message arose loud and clear: the need to

speed up green and fair transitions. If 1972 was the starting point for global efforts to address environmental challenges, Stockholm+50 was about shifting to a faster gear.

The urgency isn't surprising. These are difficult times.

A triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution is already impacting people all over the world. The COVID-19 pandemic is far from over; inequalities and hunger are increasing rather than receding; and through its invasion of Ukraine, Russia's challenging the rules-based global order, causing a humanitarian crisis reaching far beyond Ukraine's borders, deepening the global hunger crisis.

All of this demonstrates the connectedness of our challenges. Human wellbeing and human security depend on a healthy biosphere, requiring broad engagement by responsible governments and vibrant civil society, as well as a functioning international system characterized by adherence to agreed principles, multilateralism and cooperation.

So how do we bring this to life?

Before all else, we must work together. If our aim is human security for all, we'll need integrated analysis and action, and with the Stockholm Hub on Environment, Climate and Security, Sweden's offering a resource for the global community to navigate a complex landscape and make sounder decisions for a safer and more sustainable future. Sweden's newly named ambassador for climate and security will also play a key role as our government moves this agenda forward. We hope that others will follow.

Time is also of the essence. We only have eight years to deliver on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, and even less time to change the course on climate and the environment. There is no time to lose, and we all need to do more and do better.

International development aid can play a catalyzing role here, increasing both public and private financial flows into building resilient societies that are net-zero, nature friendly and zero-pollution. Climate adaptation is a global priority, and scaling up support for the least developed countries so they can adapt to a warming climate is a question of justice and solidarity.

The good news, however, is that the acceleration has already begun, and the transition is full of opportunities for people and our planet.

Visualizing our destination means imagining a world that's safer, healthier and more stable than the one we live in today — but transitions underway are already improving lives, while providing ecological and climate benefits.

In Sweden, for example, a green industrial revolution is emerging with flagships, such as the HYBRIT partnership for fossil-free steel, bringing new jobs and development to its neighborhood. Sweden's also one of the few countries allocating 1 percent of its gross national income to international development aid — with the intention of doubling its climate aid in the years to come as well.

But as Stockholm+50 demonstrated, it's not just Sweden — there's a wealth of such examples from all over the world. And these positive stories must feed the engine of transformation.

Today, on World Environment Day — one of the legacies of 1972 — the outcome of last week's conference brings momentum to our efforts for the months and years to come.

Together, we can change the story of the future.

Published 06 June 2022



Government Offices of Sweden

Formal request for NATO membership signed and presented

On 17 May, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde signed Sweden's formal request for NATO membership, which was then presented to NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on 18 May.

“It's a historic day. It feels significant, it feels momentous. Joining NATO is the right thing for Sweden's security and for security and stability in our part of Europe,” Ms Linde said at the signing.

Sweden's request was presented to Secretary General Stoltenberg in Brussels by Sweden's Ambassador to NATO, Axel Wernhoff. Finland's request was presented at the same time.

Published 23 May 2022



Sweden re-launches research partnership for increased support to the environment, climate and security

A research partnership was re-launched 18 May for the environment, climate and security. Called the Stockholm Hub on Environment, Climate and Security, it combines the strengths of four world-leading Swedish research institutes in the environment, climate and security area. The hub will receive more funding for its continuing work to promote knowledge development and policy dialogue.

The effects of climate change, in combination with environmental damage and declining biodiversity, have major implications for the planet's natural resources and the human environment. More and more people will have to share fewer and fewer resources. Extreme weather events are putting people's livelihoods at risk. Consequently, the risk of conflicts is increasing, and preventive efforts are becoming more important.

“For years, Sweden has prioritised highlighting the links between the climate and security, and we have contributed to important steps being taken in the UN, OSCE and EU. We need to continue to improve our understanding of the links between these issues to prevent geopolitical competition for natural resources and avoid new conflicts,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

“The countries that are most vulnerable and exposed to climate change and environmental damage are often developing countries, even if we are all affected. This research partnership is one step in providing the best support to the most vulnerable countries through evidence-based analysis and

dialogue,” says Minister for International Development Cooperation Matilda Ernkrans.

“Stockholm has become a hub for research on the challenges facing peace and security in the wake of the environmental and climate crisis. This research partnership is aimed at inspiring and supporting Sweden in our leading role in multilateral efforts to find and win support for sustainable solutions together with our partners,” says Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Chair Jan Eliasson.

The Stockholm Hub on Environment, Climate and Security is a partnership between the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI) and the Stockholm Resilience Centre (SRC). Taking part in the re-launch of the partnership were Ms Linde, Ms Ernkrans, Mr Eliasson, the heads of the four institutes, and the heads and high-level representatives of a number of other Swedish ministries, government agencies and institutes, including Sida and the Folke Bernadotte Academy. Ongoing funding will be provided by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

Published 19 May 2022



Sweden and United Kingdom sign political declaration of solidarity

On Wednesday May 11, Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson received UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson at Harpsund for discussions aimed at further deepening their countries' bilateral security and defence policy cooperation.

One outcome of the meeting was that the ministers signed a political declaration of solidarity, which means that the countries have agreed to support each other in times of peace, crisis and conflict.

[Political declaration of solidarity](#)

“We have agreed on a new political declaration of solidarity between Sweden and the UK. This means that if one of us asks for help in the event of a disaster or attack, we will help one another. This may also include military resources,” says Ms Anderson.

The aim of the declaration is to express solidarity in line with Sweden's unilateral declaration of solidarity and the Nordic declaration of solidarity. Both sides wish to express this solidarity following the UK's withdrawal from the EU, which means that it is no longer covered by the EU's joint declaration of solidarity. The declaration will complement today's European and Euro-Atlantic cooperation, but not replace it.

Published 13 May 2022



Sweden advanced priority issues during OSCE Chairpersonship

Sweden's term as OSCE Chair concludes at the end of the year. At a time of major security policy challenges, Sweden has worked during the year to increase the Organization's relevance and advance Sweden's priority issues – such as gender equality and climate change.

“It has been an active Chairpersonship during which we have been able to increase the Organization's relevance, help resolve crises and conflicts, and advance the women, peace and security agenda. We also succeeded in achieving a breakthrough on the issue of climate change and how the OSCE now has a mandate to take action on climate change and security, and identify where climate change may lead to conflict,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

Carrying out the Chairpersonship has required intense diplomatic efforts and focus on the OSCE's important principles and commitments for dealing with conflicts and preventing new ones from arising.

The Chairpersonship has taken action through visits, dialogue, agenda-setting in Vienna, conferences and seminars, and direct contact on various levels. Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde has conducted more than 20 visits this year as Chairperson-in-Office, including to Ukraine, Russia, Moldova and the countries in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. She has visited all countries in which there are ongoing conflicts and has held meetings with all OSCE presences in the region. During all her visits, she has met with civil society representatives, including women's organisations, to hear their views on the situation and to highlight the importance that Sweden as Chair attaches to civil society's role.

Throughout the year, the Swedish Chairpersonship has promoted respect for OSCE principles and commitments, including democracy and human rights, which provide the foundation for sustainable peace and security. Examples

of this are the Stockholm Media Freedom Conference, which resulted in recommendations for how the OSCE participating States can counter the undermining of confidence in the media, and the seminar on anti-Semitism held early this year. Sweden has also highlighted youth issues, not least through active work by the Chairperson-in-Office's Special Representative on Youth and Security. By consistently addressing gender issues, Sweden has helped ensure that they remain on the agenda also after our term as Chair, including in the various OSCE missions and offices in the field and in the formats for conflict resolution. An expert advisory group appointed by Sweden will continue to support the OSCE on issues regarding women, peace and security.

“The Swedish Chair has left a lasting mark on the Organization, not least in the area of gender equality,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

Participants at the concluding Ministerial Council in Stockholm on 2–3 December included some 50 foreign ministers. This unusually high number of high-level participants is a testament to the importance of the OSCE and Sweden's success in increasing the Organization's relevance.

“I am proud that in 2021, Sweden has been able to stand up for our common security and our commitments in the OSCE – for stronger security policy cooperation at a challenging time,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.

Published 29 December 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

Minister for Foreign Affairs to host OSCE Ministerial Council in Stockholm

On 2–3 December, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde will host 56 of her foreign minister colleagues in Stockholm at the annual OSCE Ministerial Council.

The invited guests include foreign ministers from North America, Europe and Central Asia, including Russia and the United States. The Council is the culmination of Sweden's term as OSCE Chair in 2021, which concludes at the end of the year, and comes at a time of major security policy challenges.

The OSCE Ministerial Council is an important opportunity for the foreign ministers from the 57 OSCE participating States to meet and discuss a wide range of issues facing the region. Important recurring challenges include the political crises and unresolved conflicts in the OSCE region, such as the developments in and around Ukraine, the southern Caucasus and in Moldova.

As Chair, Sweden is working to make the Council a catalyst to motivate stronger commitments on priority issues such as women's economic empowerment, climate action and security. Cooperation within the OSCE has an important role to play in identifying solutions to conflicts and crises in the OSCE region that also impact security in Sweden's neighbourhood. The joint principles and commitments that have been undertaken in the OSCE are more important than ever in terms of managing existing challenges and preventing new ones arising.

Published 26 November 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

Co-Chairs' Statement - International Ministerial Conference in Support of UNRWA

Foreign Ministers Ann Linde of Sweden and Ayman Safadi of Jordan co-chaired the International Ministerial Conference in support of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) that took place in Brussels on 16 November 2021.

The conference brought together representatives of over 50 UN member states, international and regional organisations as well as United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, UNRWA Commissioner-General Philippe Lazzarini, several UN agencies and other institutions, both in-person and virtually. The participants pledged political and financial support for a modernised UNRWA fit for its times and for taking steps towards a sufficient, predictable and sustainable funding of the Agency.

Published 18 November 2021



Sweden pushes for economic justice and rights in the OSCE

During the autumn, Sweden intends to present a draft Ministerial Council decision on women's economic empowerment in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). If all 57 OSCE participating States can reach consensus on the decision, it will help to highlight the link between women's economic empowerment and security.

The Concluding Meeting of the 29th OSCE Economic and Environmental Forum was held on 9–10 September in Prague. During the meeting, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde – who in 2021 is also the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office – stated that Sweden intends to present a draft Ministerial Council decision on women's economic empowerment that will be negotiated during the autumn. If the decision is adopted, it will represent a very successful outcome for Sweden's Chairpersonship and provide a good backdrop for the concluding Ministerial Council to be held in Stockholm on 2–3 December. At the same time, taking decisions in the OSCE represents a challenge, as important decisions in the organisation are taken by consensus.

Strong engagement but different views on gender equality issues in the OSCE

The discussions at the meeting in Prague showed that several OSCE participating States are strongly engaged in the issue. Countries from different parts of the OSCE region highlighted different aspects of women's economic empowerment – everything from the significance of gender-sensitive legislation and gender-responsive budgeting to the importance of reducing the gender digital divide. At the same time, the discussions revealed differing views on certain issues, such as the role of women in the family and how the term 'gender equality' should be defined.

Economic gender equality – a clear Swedish priority

Economic gender equality is a central area for Sweden's feminist Government, its feminist foreign policy and during its OSCE Chairpersonship in 2021. This priority was clear in Ms Linde's opening address in Prague, which she held in her capacity as OSCE Chairperson-in-Office. In her address, she emphasised the importance of countries' mainstreaming a gender perspective into their COVID-19 recovery and promoting stronger economic gender equality, as many women have been hit very hard financially during the pandemic.

Sweden's priorities for women's economic empowerment are based in part on Sweden's engagement in a global Action Coalition on economic gender equality which was initiated by the UN. For the next five years, Sweden will have a leading role in the Coalition, together with other countries and actors. Issues that Sweden is pursuing in the Coalition include economic reforms for gender equality, efforts against discriminatory legislation, gender equality in the labour market and feminist trade policy.

Environmental issues also addressed at the meeting

In connection with the meeting, Sweden was also able to highlight the work related to environmental issues carried out during the year. At the instructions of the Swedish Chairpersonship, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) produced a study on how the OSCE's climate security efforts can be strengthened, which the Chairpersonship intends to continue to build on. During the autumn, Sweden will also present a draft Ministerial Council decision on environment and security and on climate and security.

Published 28 September 2021



International cooperation more important than ever

No country can tackle the world's challenges alone: wars and conflicts, climate change, poverty, lack of equality, lack of respect for human rights, nuclear weapons proliferation – unfortunately the list is long. International cooperation is vital – and it makes us stronger. Sweden remains a firm and tireless voice for more – not less – cooperation.

Last year, the UN celebrated its 75th anniversary. The organisation rose from the ashes of the Second World War with a promise to work for peace and prosperity for coming generations.

The work being done by the UN, the EU, the World Bank, the WTO, the OSCE and other multilateral bodies is just as important now, if not more so. Today, we see multilateral frameworks increasingly being called into question. An increasing number of countries believe that they can solve their problems on their own and that cooperation is a burden – or even a threat to their national interests or an intrusion on their national sovereignty.

This negative trend must be reversed if we are to tackle the many global challenges facing us today. Cooperation strengthens nations. Isolation makes them weaker; history shows many examples of this.

“The alternative to multilateralism is unilateralism; where has unilateralism taken the world in the past? And where does unilateralism, fanned by the forces of populism and authoritarianism, risk leading us in the future?” says Ann Linde, Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Sweden stands up for the rules-based international order and we will continue to defend and devote energy to strengthening multilateralism and international cooperation.

“At the core of the multilateral system is the United Nations. Sweden – together with the EU – will continue to advocate for the need to invest in a strong, effective and accountable UN, including by promoting closer cooperation between the EU and the UN,” says Ms Linde.

Throughout the years, multilateral cooperation has resulted in important international agreements, the most recent of which include the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development, the Paris Agreement on the climate and the Sustaining Peace Agenda.

Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde concludes:

“Multilateralism matters to me because it is the only way forward. For my country, Sweden, multilateralism is the guarantee for our security and prosperity. Without a rules-based order and international cooperation, in a world without spheres of influence and where ‘might is right’, our lives would be very different.”

Written by Mats Samuelsson

Published 31 May 2021



Government Offices of Sweden

OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Ann Linde's Special Representatives meet to strengthen conflict resolution efforts

In her role as Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde today hosted a meeting with her Special and Personal Representatives to the protracted conflicts in the region. The representatives are meeting digitally over two days to exchange experiences on conflict resolution and how to make these processes more inclusive.

As part of the Swedish OSCE Chairpersonship's ambition to strengthen the organization's conflict resolution efforts in the long term, Ms Linde invited the Special and Personal Representatives dealing with some of the protracted conflicts in the OSCE region, and her Special Envoy, to a two-day meeting co-organised with the Folke Bernadotte Academy. The meeting is being held on 3–4 May.

One of Sweden's main priorities for its OSCE Chairpersonship is to contribute to resolving conflicts in the OSCE region. The seminar represents a concrete contribution to this through skills development and experience exchanges for the representatives tasked with taking part in the negotiations to resolve some of the protracted conflicts in the OSCE area. At the meeting – being held for the first time on Sweden's initiative – the representatives will have a chance to discuss common challenges and exchange experiences from their work with conflict resolution. Among the questions that will be discussed are how to make conflict resolution processes more inclusive and what the OSCE can do to strengthen civil society's and women's and girls'

participation and influence in them.

Taking part in the meeting are Ambassador Heidi Grau (Special Representative for Ukraine), Ambassador Annika Söder (Special Representative for South Caucasus), Ambassador Andrzej Kasprzyk (Special Representative for Nagorno-Karabakh) and Ambassador Thomas Mayr-Harting (Personal Representative for Transnistria). Ms Linde's Special Envoy, Kent Härstedt, will also take part in the meetings.

This year marks ten years since the OSCE Ministerial Council decided to strengthen the OSCE's various conflict resolution tools, such as conflict prevention efforts, early warning, dialogue facilitation, mediation support and post-conflict rehabilitation (referred to in the OSCE as 'the conflict cycle'). The Swedish Chairpersonship will highlight this tenth anniversary with a series of meetings and seminars on how to strengthen work on the conflict cycle.

Ms Linde opened the meeting with an initial discussion with all representatives. In the following days, the representatives will continue discussions under the leadership of the Folke Bernadotte Academy. The meetings are being held digitally in accordance with prevailing COVID-19 restrictions.

Published 03 May 2021



Sweden pushes for economic justice and rights

On 8 March, International Women's Day, a stakeholder meeting was held at which Minister for Gender Equality Märta Stenevi and Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde met with more than 40 civil society organisations to get input for Sweden's engagement in a global action coalition on economic gender equality.

The global action coalition on economic gender equality is one of six action coalitions that will promote gender equality and women's and girls' rights as part of the Generation Equality Forum. This initiative was launched by UN Women together with various gender champions with the aim of fulfilling the international commitments made under the Beijing Platform for Action.

“As early as the UN Conference on Women, in Beijing in 1995, Hillary Clinton made the famous statement that ‘human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights’. This is self-evident, but even so it is still far from being realised,” says Minister Stenevi, and continues:

“In this action coalition, Sweden will contribute with its experience from working with economic and social reforms and gender equality policy. We will highlight issues such as individual taxation, parental leave, childcare reforms and gender-transformative budgeting. But above all, we will learn from other stakeholders and strengthen one another in our work – this is why the stakeholders meeting with civil society is so important.”

Sweden shares the leadership of the action coalition with South Africa, Mexico, Spain and Germany, the OECD, the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the civil society organisations Care International, FEMNET, the Huairou Commission, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the Women's Working Group on Financing for Development. Sweden's priorities in the action

coalition are efforts for economic and social reforms for gender equality, efforts against discriminatory legislation, a gender-equal labour market including promoting the initiative Global Deal, and a feminist trade policy.

“To strengthen economic gender equality, women and girls must have greater access to economic resources, work and education. The majority of the world’s poorest are women, and this has increased during the pandemic. That’s why extensive reforms for economic gender equality are needed, as are enhanced efforts to combat discriminatory legislation and norms that obstruct women’s and girls’ access to resources. Only then can we achieve the global goals on gender equality,” says Minister Linde.

The action coalition’s action plan for economic gender equality will be discussed at the Generation Equality Forum in Mexico City, to be held on 29–31 March 2021. The action plan will later be launched globally at the follow-up Generation Equality Forum in Paris, to be held on 30 June–2 July at which President Emmanuel Macron will be the host.

Published 12 March 2021



OSCE Chairperson-in-Office Ann Linde launches advisory group of experts on women, peace and security

The Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde, launched 26 February 2021 a new advisory group of experts on women, peace and security. The group will play an advisory role to strengthen work on the women, peace and security agenda in the OSCE – an important issue for Sweden as Chair of the organisation in 2021.

The first advisory group meeting was held on 26 February under the leadership of its Chair, Lena Ag, Director General of the Swedish Gender Equality Agency. The advisory group's objective is to provide advice and proposals to Ms Linde on how she, as Chairperson-in-Office, in cooperation with her Special Representative on Gender Liliana Palihovici, can work to strengthen the OSCE's implementation of the women, peace and security (WPS) agenda.

Implementation of the WPS agenda is one of Sweden's top priorities as OSCE Chair in 2021. Sweden's efforts will also focus on defending the European security order and the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security, as well as working to resolve the protracted conflicts in the OSCE region. During its term as Chair, Sweden will give considerable emphasis to mainstreaming the WPS perspective into the day-to-day work, and to promoting women's economic empowerment and more inclusive peace and conflict-related processes. The advisory group members' expertise and broad experience from civil society, academia and international organisations will

be a valuable resource for this work.

The advisory group will meet at least four times during Sweden's term as Chair to discuss current items on the OSCE agenda from a WPS perspective. At the end of the year, the group will also present recommendations to the current and incoming OSCE Chairpersonships on how the OSCE's WPS work can be further strengthened.

Published 26 February 2021



Prime Minister met Svetlana Tikhanovskaya

Prime Minister Stefan Löfven received Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, the exiled leader of the Belarusian opposition, yesterday, 18 November.

“Svetlana Tikhanovskaya is a symbol of the Belarusian people’s struggle and the peaceful opposition’s quest for democracy and human rights. It is a reminder of how valuable democracy is, and why we must stand up for it all over the world,” said Mr Löfven in a comment following the meeting.

Ms Tikhanovskaya received strong public support as a candidate in the presidential election in Belarus. The election was neither free nor fair, and was marked by widespread electoral fraud and political oppression. The Belarusian authorities have met peaceful demonstrations with brutal violence, and a large number of critics of the regime and political opponents have been detained. Ms Tikhanovskaya herself has left the country for her own safety.

A united EU has condemned the actions of the Belarusian authorities and introduced sanctions against Belarus, and will continue to support the Belarusian people’s legitimate demands to be allowed to choose the leader of their country through free and fair elections.

Sweden is one of the largest bilateral donors to Belarus, and Sweden’s long-term support has helped strengthen Belarusian civil society. In light of the very serious developments since the presidential election, Sweden’s support to civil society organisations has been further intensified.

During her visit to Sweden, Ms Tikhanovskaya also met with Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde.



Government Offices of Sweden

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Gender Equality attend meeting on international gender equality work in the wake of COVID-19

Some 70 participants from civil society organisations, the social partners and government agencies took part in a digital meeting on 26 August hosted by Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde and Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Lindhagen. Discussions covered the international coalition to work for financial gender equality, of which Sweden is one of the leaders, and international gender equality work in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“All over the world and at all levels, the Swedish Foreign Service has consistently stressed the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on gender equality and human rights and worked to ensure a response and building back that lead to improvements, including in the form of more influence for women and girls,” says Ms Linde.

To support advocacy work, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has developed targeted support for the Foreign Service and ensured that important status reports and impact analyses have been disseminated widely, both within the Foreign Service and among external actors and partners.

“Spring 2020 should have marked the start of a ‘super year’ of anniversaries, mobilisation and progress for global gender equality work. Instead, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the risk of women being subjected to

men's violence and to discrimination and marginalisation, and has led to additional challenges in efforts to advance gender equality," says Ms Lindhagen.

During Wednesday's meeting, the ministers said that two major international gender equality forums had been postponed until 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic and that the focus was now on starting work in six global Action Coalitions to advance gender equality.

On 1 July, UN Women announced who would be included in the leadership teams of the Action Coalitions; Sweden is part of the leadership of the Action Coalition working on economic justice and rights, together with four other countries and a number of civil society and multilateral organisations. The next stage of this work is for the Action Coalitions to enter into dialogue and consultation with a view to developing concrete action plans to be launched in 2021.

Published 01 September 2020



What does the OSCE Chair involve?

On 1 January 2021, Sweden will take over the Chair of the OSCE for a period of 12 months. The assignment is a manifestation of Sweden taking responsibility for the OSCE, and also of multilateralism, peace and the upholding of the European security order.

At the OSCE Ministerial Council in Bratislava on 5–6 December 2019, the organisation’s 57 participating States decided that Sweden would take on the Chair of the OSCE in 2021.

“As Chair of the OSCE, Sweden will continue to work to restore respect for the principles upon which the European security order rests. We will give priority to efforts to strengthen democracy, human rights and gender equality in all relevant forums,” said Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde when the decision was taken.

Background on the OSCE

The OSCE brings together 57 participating States in Europe, Central Asia and North America. The organisation’s mission is to strengthen confidence and cooperation between participating States with the aim of preventing conflicts and also working towards conflict resolution when crises arise.

The OSCE is also the guarantor of the European security order, i.e. the right of states to territorial integrity, prohibitions on the use of force and the right of states to make independent foreign policy choices. The OSCE also has a comprehensive approach to security based on the idea that states that respect democracy and human rights also experience greater security within their borders and are at lower risk of entering into conflict with other countries. Monitoring and promoting respect for human rights among participating States is therefore an important part of the OSCE’s activities.

The OSCE's activities are divided into three dimensions of security:

- Politico-military security issues
- Economic and environmental security issues
- The link between human rights and security

The OSCE originates from the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which was started during the Cold War and made up of a series of meetings in which the participating States worked to reach common commitments on increasing security and maintaining peace in Europe. In 1975, the Helsinki Final Act was adopted, which forms the basis of the European security order, followed by the Paris Charter in 1990. The OSCE was developed into its current form in 1994 when the then ongoing CSCE was expanded to become an international organisation following a decision at a summit in Budapest. Sweden last held the OSCE Chair in 1993.

Decisions are taken through consensus by the Permanent Council, which meets on a weekly basis in Vienna, Austria. The OSCE Ministerial Council, which is made up of the foreign ministers of the participating States, meets once a year for political dialogue and decision-making.

Today, the OSCE is an intergovernmental organisation in which the participating States use political dialogue to demand accountability for breaches of the European security order and human rights commitments within the framework of the comprehensive concept of security. The serious tensions between participating States in terms of ongoing conflicts and views of democracy and human rights have a major impact on possibilities to reach consensus decisions.

What does the OSCE Chair involve?

In 2021, Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde will be Chairperson-in-Office (CiO). The Chair will run for one year, from 1 January to 31 December. As the OSCE is a chair-driven organisation, this means that the Minister for Foreign Affairs will represent the organisation in international contexts and set the direction for negotiations, as well as give the organisation its political guidance (at the mandate of the participating States).

A large part of activities is set by previous decisions that the Chair needs to take account of, which limits the opportunities for political initiatives. The Minister for Foreign Affairs will be supported by the OSCE Chair Secretariat

in Stockholm and the OSCE Delegation in Vienna, which deals with the day-to-day negotiations.

The OSCE Chair plays an important role in the organisation's conflict prevention work and crisis management, and monitors implementation of the field offices' mandates. The OSCE's flagship mission, the Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine, has the key task of monitoring developments in the security situation in the country and reporting breaches of the European security order.

The Chair also appoints a special representative to lead negotiations in the Trilateral Contact Group (Ukraine, Russia and the OSCE), which is discussing a peaceful solution to the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

The role of Chair also entails the responsibility of highlighting and working towards solutions to protracted conflicts in the OSCE region. The organisation plays an important role in confidence-building and mediation in the conflicts affecting Nagorno-Karabakh, Transnistria and South Ossetia and Abkhazia in Georgia. The Swedish Chair wants to work for increased focus on resolving these conflicts, with the European security order, women's participation and the rule of law as the natural starting points.

Preparations for the Chair

Although the Chair does not formally begin until January 2021, the preparatory work has already begun. Since 1 January 2020, Sweden has been part of the Chair Troika together with the outgoing Slovakian Chair and the current Albanian Chair. Since 1 January, as the incoming Chair, Sweden has also been leading work within the framework of the OSCE Contact Group with the Mediterranean Partners for Co-operation. This role involves responsibility for organising a ministerial conference in autumn 2020. This autumn, Sweden will also take over as Chair of the OSCE Budget Committee to lead negotiations on the OSCE's budget ahead of 2021.

In Stockholm, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has established a Secretariat to coordinate work prior to and during the OSCE Chair. The Secretariat works in close cooperation with Sweden's OSCE Delegation and involves all parts of the Government Offices affected by the Chair.

In addition to the work of preparing and conducting the Chair within the Government Offices, the Secretariat also coordinates contacts to achieve broad support for the Chair among civil society, thinktanks and the Riksdag

for example, and conducts a dialogue with international partners about the Chair. The Minister for Foreign Affairs has invited civil society to give their input to the priorities ahead of the Chair. Civil society also plays an important role in highlighting the OSCE's principles and joint commitments.

More detailed priorities for Sweden's Chair will be presented in July 2020. The Swedish Chair programme will be presented at the first meeting of the Permanent Council in January 2021.

There are currently eight people working at Sweden's OSCE Delegation. Ahead of 2021, the Delegation will be reinforced with additional staff to be able to deal with the workload the Chair entails.

Ministerial Council meeting

At the beginning of December each year, the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting is held, usually in the country that holds the Chair. The Ministerial Council is the OSCE's central decision-making body, made up of the foreign ministers of the 57 participating States. In connection with the Ministerial Council meeting, a number of side events take place to highlight important issues; the meeting is also an important opportunity for bilateral meetings.

In addition to the comprehensive preparations needed ahead of the meeting, this is also the opportunity to confirm the Chair priorities through decisions negotiated in the organisation's committees during the year.

Day-to-day work

The organisation's day-to-day work is run by the Permanent Council in Vienna, which is normally convened once a week. In the Permanent Council, which is one of the OSCE's two decision-making bodies, the participating States are represented by their OSCE ambassadors.

The Chair of the OSCE is responsible for planning and coordinating these weekly meetings. The role involves setting the agenda, inviting speakers and practical issues, such as providing interpretation to the OSCE's six official working languages and leading and taking the minutes from each meeting.

The Permanent Council is responsible for four committees, one for each dimension of the comprehensive concept of security and a committee for budget and management issues, as well as various contact groups. They prepare various decisions that are taken by the Permanent Council, the participating States' foreign ministers or, on the rare occasions when a

summit is held, by heads of state and government. The frequency of the committees' meetings varies from weekly to monthly. In 2021, it will be Sweden's responsibility to coordinate and lead the work of the committees.

The Forum for Security Cooperation (FSC), the second of the two OSCE decision-making bodies, also meets once a week in Vienna. The FSC Chair rotates every four months. Sweden last held the Chair in autumn 2018. The FSC deals with military issues linked to security and the organisation's mechanisms and instruments for confidence-building and transparency, aimed at strengthening common security. Regular collaboration and coordination take place between the OSCE Chair and the FSC Chairs during the year.

The OSCE's institutions

The OSCE's three autonomous institutions (the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) and the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM)) are important cornerstones of the organisation's activities in areas such as democracy and human rights.

Cooperation with these three institutions is very important for the country holding the OSCE Chair. This can involve cooperation on agendas and invitations to speakers for conferences, appointing staff or coordinating extra-budgetary projects (projects that take place within the framework of the various institutions but that are financed through voluntary contributions from participating States and not through the OSCE's general budget).

The OSCE's headquarters in Vienna

The OSCE's headquarters (Secretariat) is led by the Secretary General and based in Vienna. Thomas Greminger from Switzerland is currently Secretary General of the OSCE. The Secretariat assists the Chair in issues concerning administration of the organisation and also has expert knowledge in a number of areas – not least concerning protracted conflicts and cooperation on economic and environmental issues. Its geographical departments – South-eastern Europe, Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia – also support the Chair with their expertise.

The OSCE's field offices

The OSCE has 16 field offices or missions in the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Central Asia. The Chair maintains regular contact with the different offices and can provide guidance for activities

within the framework of their mandates. This can involve anything from current events in the region to conferences or recruitment. Once a year, representatives from all of the field offices and missions meet in Vienna for reporting and experience exchange. The OSCE Chair is responsible for planning the meeting's agenda and also leading the meeting.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is based in Copenhagen and comprises 323 parliamentarians from all participating States. The Parliamentary Assembly works on the basis of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security and has divided up its work into three General Committees that reflect the OSCE's three dimensions: Political Affairs and Security; Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment; and Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions. The Assembly draws up resolutions and recommendations aimed at encouraging the political leaders of the participating States to implement their OSCE commitments.

Published 01 June 2020



The fight against COVID-19 and its impact on democracy

How is the fight against COVID-19 affecting global efforts to defend human rights and promote democracy? As part of the Government's Drive for Democracy, Sweden has launched a series of digital meetings to contribute to the global conversation on these issues.

Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde and Minister for International Development Cooperation Peter Eriksson today took part in a digital meeting with representatives of four key intergovernmental organisations:

- Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
- Eamon Gilmore, EU Special Representative for Human Rights
- Christos Giakoumopoulos, Council of Europe Director General of Human Rights and Rule of Law
- Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

The aim of the meeting was to contribute to the global conversation about the risk of the COVID-19 response leading to – or being used as a pretext for – undue restrictions on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. As a next step, meetings with national and international civil society organisations and other countries are planned. Sweden's strong voice in defence of human rights, democracy and the rule of law is not silenced by a pandemic. The Drive for Democracy continues – but in different circumstances and different conditions.



Drive for Democracy takes shape

Strengthened engagement for democracy was announced in the 2019 Statement of Foreign Policy and in the Swedish Foreign Service's strategic vision for the electoral period. Sweden will stand up for democratic principles and support democracy in all contexts. On 21 November 2019, the Drive for Democracy was presented to the Riksdag Committee on Foreign Affairs by Minister for Foreign Affairs Ann Linde and Minister for International Development Cooperation Peter Eriksson.

In brief, the Drive for Democracy makes it clear that Sweden will stand up for democratic principles in all contexts, work to help strengthen democracy, and voice criticism against democratic deficits or risks of backsliding. Like the feminist foreign policy, the idea is for the democracy perspective to permeate the work of the Swedish Foreign Service and cover all foreign policy and Ministry for Foreign Affairs areas of activity: foreign and security policy; international development cooperation policy and international trade and promotion.

The term 'democracy'

Sweden bases its work on a broad definition of term 'democracy', which means much more than free and fair elections. This definition and its components guide the work on the Drive for Democracy.

Citizen participation: a vibrant civil society, national and local elections.

Representative governance: free and fair elections, universal suffrage, independent political parties.

Rights: access to justice, enjoyment of human rights – not least freedom of expression, social and economic rights, and equality.

Separation of powers: well-functioning parliaments, independence of judicial systems, free and independent media.

Independent institutions: predictable execution of decisions, absence of corruption.

Framework of strategic objectives

A special framework of strategic objectives has been drafted to set out the direction of the Drive for Democracy.

Examples of concrete activities within the framework of the Drive for Democracy include the levelling up democracy assistance, the creation of a new network for enhanced dialogue with other countries and actors on democracy and the development of the feminist foreign policy through activities that contribute to improving women's enjoyment of human rights, and increased influence of women in democracy.

The Drive for Democracy also has a particular focus on engaging young people. As a part of this, missions abroad have been asked to hold local discussions on democracy, called Democracy Talks, with young people throughout the world. The ambition is for the participants' ideas and reflections to be funnelled into a larger Democracy Talks event to be held in Sweden in 2021 in connection with the centenary of Swedish democracy.

Priority areas

The following areas may be seen as starting points and inspiration for how the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and missions abroad are to continue working on the Drive for Democracy:

- Promote and strengthen civil society, including human rights defenders. Trade union organisations also play a crucial role in strengthening people's opportunities to influence their everyday lives and must be supported.

- Strengthen free and independent media and democratic voices (such as cultural workers), including on the internet, to combat disinformation.
- Support democratic processes and election authorities.
- Promote the growth of effective and independent institutions, including the absence of corruption.
- Promote equality.
- Strengthen political systems with competing political parties (including parliaments).
- Support the strengthening of respect for the rule of law.
- Promote and protect the enjoyment of human rights by all.
- Strengthen women's political participation.
- Promote young people's democratic engagement.

Published 27 November 2019