

Programme for Sweden's membership of the United Nations Security Council 2017–2018

The United Nations General Assembly has elected Sweden as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the 2017–2018 term. Our election to a seat on the Council is a success for Swedish foreign policy and diplomacy. As an open country that is dependent on the rest of the world, it is in Sweden's interest to contribute to and defend the international order, at the heart of which lie the United Nations and the Security Council. The Charter of the United Nations gives the Security Council primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security.

Sweden's candidacy was based on knowledge of and engagement in international peace and security, as well as belief in dialogue and diplomacy, and respect for international law as a tool. Deepened contacts with many countries around the world have given us a better understanding of today's challenges and how they are perceived, while also providing a basis for our work as a member of the Security Council. Sweden will listen to those concerned, defend those who need to be defended and stand up for what we believe in.

Sweden as a member

As a member of the Security Council, Sweden will be responsible, professional, credible, dialogue-oriented and open. We intend to contribute to fulfilling the Security Council's primary responsibility: maintaining international peace and security. The Security Council agenda is our programme of work. This means pursuing committed and informed policies on the many issues on the Council agenda and also requires us to be prepared to deal with new crises and conflicts.

Under the United Nations Charter, Security Council members act on behalf of the UN Member States. The Council can take decisions that are binding for all 193 UN Member States. Over the next two years, it will be our responsibility to help ensure that these decisions are as sound and effective as possible.

International law, human rights, gender equality and a humanitarian perspective

Sweden's foreign policy is firmly rooted in international law, human rights, gender equality and a humanitarian perspective. The same will apply to our term on the Security Council.

The Security Council is the guarantor of the fundamental rules of the international legal order. Sweden will continue to highlight violations of the prohibition of the use of force enshrined in the UN Charter, of human rights and of international humanitarian law. Respect for all aspects of international law is a foundation of peace and the way out of conflict.

More effective conflict prevention

The Global Goals for Sustainable Development and the new climate agreement adopted in 2015 instilled much-needed resolve in international cooperation. A breakthrough is now needed in peace and security efforts. The UN must be considerably better at preventing conflict and relapse into conflict, at including women in peace processes and at seeing the nexus between peace, security and development, for example with respect to climate change, migration and gender equality. All parts of the UN system must be better at taking an integrated approach to secure lasting peace and development. When conflicts are prevented and ended, people are less vulnerable and less likely to flee.

'Early warning' must be followed by 'early action', not least by the Security Council. Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter is underutilised. A prevention and peacebuilding perspective should inform all UN activities in fragile states. Cooperation with the UN Peacebuilding Commission, in which Sweden is deeply involved, must be improved. Resources must be mobilised according to the task, and consideration given to new security threats.

Active cooperation with the new Secretary-General, António Guterres, will be vital for advancing early warning systems, risk analysis and conflict prevention. Sweden considers this an obvious priority that we have long pursued and will bring with us to the Security Council.

New security issues

The international community is increasingly confronted with new challenges, such as pandemics, natural disasters and climate change. Stronger global cooperation is needed on migration. The entire UN system needs to detect and manage these challenges to international peace and security at an early stage. Acting to strengthen the UN's capability in this area is in line with Sweden's comprehensive prevention approach.

Climate change represents a particular risk. Acute shortage of water, food or energy can quickly create or exacerbate a conflict situation. Analysis and data concerning climate change, environment and health threats are therefore important in the planning and implementation of the UN system's activities in the field.

Effective peace operations

The operational environment and the political mandate of UN operations will continue to change and develop. Today, the demands are entirely different in terms of the ability to handle the wide range of tasks, from promoting security and stability to protecting civilians and peacebuilding. All components – military, police and civilian – play important and mutually reinforcing roles. Sweden's troop contribution to the UN peacekeeping operation in Mali (MINUSMA) and the experiences gained there are an important contribution to the efforts to develop UN operations on the ground.

Action to improve the effectiveness of UN operations is essential. At the same time, the Security Council, which formulates mandates for operations, must consider the capabilities required and the capacity available to carry out the task. Setting clearer priorities in peace-support operations can contribute to both enhancing the UN's credibility on

the ground and more efficient use of resources. UN operations must have clear and realistic mandates.

The sexual violence perpetrated by international troops against civilians, for example in the Central African Republic, is completely unacceptable. The UN must act forcefully to combat sexual abuse in connection with UN operations. Sweden will vigorously pursue demands for an effective zero tolerance policy.

Gender impact

Women, peace and security is a priority area for Sweden as a member of the Security Council. Women's active participation in peace processes is a strategic issue for international peace and security. The normative framework is largely in place, but the follow-up and implementation can and must be better. As a member, we will work to strengthen implementation on the ground in the country-specific situations on the Security Council's agenda.

Strong influence of women is needed in every peace process to create legitimacy, ownership and sustainability. This requires a clear mandate from the Security Council, including for follow-up and accountability. The Council also needs to monitor peacekeeping operations to ensure that their women, peace and security efforts are consistent, integrated and long-term. A representative of a women's organisation may be invited to give a briefing in the Security Council, for example, but the UN must also conduct dialogue in the field.

Data collection must also be developed. Greater use can be made of gender-disaggregated statistics to illustrate how women and men are affected by a conflict. In this way, better data can be collected to inform decisions concerning appropriate measures. The UN also needs adequate resource allocation to pursue the women, peace and security agenda.

Sweden will be actively involved in the Council's Informal Experts Group on Women, Peace and Security.

A more transparent Security Council

Increased transparency, representation and effectiveness are among Sweden's UN policy objectives. This was a key message in our candidacy and will be an important dimension during our term as a member. Our working methods will be characterised by transparency and dialogue in a way that will help build both support and confidence.

Dialogue is vital. It must be maintained with other members of the Security Council, countries on the Council agenda, countries that contribute troops to UN operations, civil society, regional actors and regional organisations. Those concerned must be consulted. Engaging in dialogue does not necessarily mean that you are in agreement.

The use of the veto must be limited – especially in cases of mass atrocities such as in Syria – and ultimately done away with entirely. Sweden supports and participates in initiatives to limit the use of the veto, particularly where there may be a risk of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes.

Cooperation with regional organisations

The UN and the EU work side by side. As an active member of both, Sweden intends to contribute to strengthening cooperation between them. A strong UN benefits from a strong EU – and vice versa.

UN cooperation with regional organisations is important in principle. This applies not least to cooperation with the African Union (AU) in Security Council contexts. Sweden will promote continued development of the extensive cooperation between the AU and the UN, primarily with respect to peace and security.

Sweden will continue to maintain a consistent and concerted Swedish stance in the various international organisations to which we contribute.

The Security Council agenda

The Security Council's work is dominated by country-specific situations. This will also be Sweden's focus as a member of the Council. Our thematic priorities will primarily be pursued in the geographical context. As the Council's agenda is partially driven by events, we must

be prepared for the unexpected. The Council's geographical focus may therefore shift during our term as a member.

Africa

A significant part of the Security Council agenda concerns Africa. The largest peacekeeping operations are on the African continent. The UN also has its broadest presence in Africa, and often plays an operational role for peace and security. The UN's conflict prevention efforts need to be strengthened, while the nexus between peace/security, human rights and development needs to be promoted further. Cooperation between the UN and the African Union is crucial. The Council's agenda for sub-Saharan Africa includes Somalia, Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Liberia, Sudan, South Sudan and the Central African Republic (CAR).

Sweden has a considerable presence in Liberia, where the UN and the Security Council will need to continue to work for peaceful development, even following the possible withdrawal of the UNMIL peacekeeping mission. The UN plays an important role in Somalia, where Sweden has strong and longstanding engagement in support of a sustainable peace process and statebuilding.

Mali is another key challenge for the Security Council. A clearer focus on the root causes of the conflict is needed, and a peacebuilding perspective needs to be integrated into the work. The Swedish presence has been reinforced through our extensive and innovative troop contribution to MINUSMA.

The UN's largest peacekeeping mission is in the DRC. MONUSCO plays an important part in monitoring developments and taking preventive action. Sweden has a long tradition of active engagement in the Great Lakes region, both bilaterally and as a member of the UN.

Middle East and North Africa

The Middle East and North Africa have been increasingly prominent on the Council agenda in recent years, in part due to the peace processes in the Middle East, and the situation in Syria, Western Sahara, Iraq, Libya and Yemen. The Council's ability to act is paralysed in certain cases, primarily due to deadlocks between the permanent members of the Security Council.

UN engagement in the Middle East and North Africa is also broad, including a crucial role in several of the region's peace processes, extensive humanitarian engagement and support for stabilisation and long-term development. The UN's role in the transition from conflict resolution and humanitarian support to stabilisation and long-term development should be strengthened in the region.

Sweden brings to its membership of the Security Council a longstanding engagement, based on international law, in support of a two-state solution within the framework of the Middle East peace process. In Syria, the Council must take responsible action to resolve the conflict, and maintain the Council's legitimacy and authority. All parties in the conflict have a responsibility to respect international humanitarian law. Sweden's humanitarian engagement gives extra weight to Sweden's action in the Security Council for peace in Syria.

The UN has an important role in preventing conflict and relapse into conflict in both Iraq and Lebanon, and is pursuing important mediation efforts in Yemen and Libya.

Europe

Although the European continent is not the primary focus of the Council agenda, developments in the region and the EU's neighbourhood are a priority for Sweden. Issues under discussion include Ukraine, Cyprus and the Western Balkans (Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo).

The situation in Ukraine is a special case. Sweden – and the entire EU – holds a position of principle, based on international law, with respect to Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and aggression against Ukraine. Sweden will be a consistent voice keeping the issue alive in various ways in the Security Council.

Asia

The UN and the Security Council play an important role in Afghanistan. Sweden supports active UN engagement in Afghanistan. We have a relatively strong presence in the country and many years of engagement.

DPRK's nuclear weapons programme is a key item on the Security Council agenda. The Council's action aims to induce the country to cease the development of its programme and phase it out entirely.

Latin America

The American continent currently occupies a limited portion of the Council's work. Colombia and Haiti are on the agenda. Sweden has a longstanding and deep engagement for peace in Colombia. The parties have conferred several tasks upon us in the revised peace agreement. In the Security Council, we will actively contribute to monitoring and supporting the implementation of the peace agreement.

Combating terrorism is an important issue for the Security Council. Sweden believes that we need a strong UN that acts confidently, based on its mandate, to enable a concerted international community to effectively and legitimately prevent and combat terrorism and violent extremism. The various UN bodies must work together and give concerted support to measures at national and regional level. We must combat funding to terrorism and exchange information on the activities of terrorist organisations. It is just as important to work preventively, particularly with young people. Human rights and democracy must be safeguarded and the fundamental causes of violent extremism and terrorism must be eliminated. Societies' resilience and efforts to combat economic and social disparities need to be strengthened.

Sanctions are an important part of the Security Council's work and a means to safeguard peace and security. Under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, the Council can impose sanctions. Their implementation is then monitored in the 13 Sanctions Committees, in which all Council members take part. Security Council sanctions regimes and sanctions decisions are transposed into EU law. Uniform and legally certain implementation of sanctions is important. They also need to be supplemented and coordinated with other actions of the Council to promote international peace and security. Sweden has a proud tradition in this area, and will lead the Sanctions Committee for Libya.

The Security Council also works to promote non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, including through a special working group (the 1540 Committee).

Sweden will also lead the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. The Group's tasks include examining reports on situations in specific countries and recommending action.