

SWEDEN



STATEMENT

by

**H.E. Ms. Margot Wallström
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at the

**General Debate of the
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**United Nations
New York**

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- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

President of the General Assembly, Excellencies, Friends in the General Assembly,

More than ever before, we share a common destiny. Your destiny is also our destiny. We can only master the challenges of the future if we face them together. That is why we have the United Nations. That is why we meet in this assembly. Today, we are doing so at a time marked by the destructive force of war and the tragic plight of refugees.

The unspeakable horror of Syria. Girls abducted and enslaved by Boko Haram. Teenagers on the run – looking for opportunities, but never having attended school. Our time is also marked by the return of geopolitical rivalries, and of isolationism. The basic tenets of our co-existence are being challenged. Borders changed through aggression. Proliferation – and testing – of nuclear weapons. The denial of human dignity.

We are revisited by the spectres of xenophobia and aggressive nationalism, autocracy and fear-mongering. Walls are erected.

We must, and we can, respond to this. By empowering people. Strengthening democracy, good governance and the rule of law. Celebrating diversity. By keeping our economies open and pushing for trade, so that we can create decent jobs for all. By committing to arrest climate change, to save our planet. Setting ambitious global goals for sustainable development. By pursuing peace, through diplomacy. Seeking solutions through collaboration.

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President,

High on our global agenda are migration and refugees. 65 million people fleeing from harm. The international community must live up to its commitments. Provide protection for refugees, guarantee the right to seek asylum. This is a global responsibility, to be shouldered in cooperation, addressed in a comprehensive fashion and with shared governance.

The New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants adopted earlier this week is a first step. Many remain. Fundamentally, we need to re-double efforts for resettlement, the most important method to help refugees. And, at the same time, we must harness the positive effects of safe and orderly migration.

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President,

The UN has to adapt to a changing environment. In 71 years, the organisation has achieved a great deal. But it falls short of our expectations. It is time for serious reforms, to make our organisation fit for purpose. To succeed, we need a strong, visionary and courageous UN leadership. Dedicated to change, to turning ambitions into concrete action, to delivering on the recent ground-breaking multilateral achievements on climate change, sustainable development and peace. We need UN member states to heed and lead this call for change.

Prevention of armed conflict must be at the core of UN action. We should make full use of chapter VI of the UN Charter, which remains underutilised. Early warning needs to be followed by early action. The sustaining peace resolution, agreed by this Assembly earlier this year, provides a strong agenda for effective prevention and peacebuilding.

Working with and through regional organisations will make the UN more effective in its quest for sustaining peace. Of particular importance is finding solutions for sustainable financing of regional and sub-regional organisations' peace operations.

Another area requiring determined action is gender equality – the great unfinished business of the 21st century. As a government proudly pursuing a feminist foreign policy, we call for a true shift in the way we approach global gender equality work. Of course, UN Women has a key role. But so do we, as member states. It is ultimately our task to enhance rights, representation and resources for women and girls all around the world. To increase women's participation in peace processes; secure protection against gender-based violence in humanitarian crises; and strengthen women's political and economic empowerment. The UN can lead the way.

By improving the gender balance in the UN system and having a gender-responsive budget of its own – not only recommending it to national governments. By using gender-disaggregated data when dealing with matters of peace and conflict, including in the Security Council – not only advising it for national action plans on 1325.

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President,

The 2030 Agenda is a political roadmap for reform. The Agenda requires the UN to offer comprehensive advice and support to governments on how to shape and develop societies, on issues ranging from tax reform to decent jobs. It also requires the UN to monitor developed countries, while assisting middle-income countries in their efforts to build inclusive and accountable institutions, and sustainable prosperity.

To achieve this, we must strengthen and reform the financing of the UN. All branches of the UN development system should make full use of their respective mandates and specialties, working together and avoiding duplication. Collaborative efforts should be rewarded. This is the only way that the UN, with its limited resources, will be able to have greater impact at country level, and support all member states in achieving the SDGs.

A UN conference in 2017, co-hosted by Fiji and Sweden, will pursue SDG 14 to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources.

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President,

Security is something we must build together. Security is something we share. This notion compels us to contest the false logic of confrontation and geopolitical zero-sum games. Instead, it leads us to emphasise de-escalation and disarmament, mediation and dialogue, conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

This is a cornerstone of Swedish security policy. It is our basic approach to security, both in our close and global neighbourhoods. Indeed, the importance of cooperation increases with the transboundary nature of threats. Internal and external security are more interlinked than ever before.

Therefore, we must improve our common tools for crisis management. Equip the next generation of peace operations with more robust mandates and proper resources. Strengthen cooperation between UN and regional organisations, including the European Union and the African Union. But we cannot ignore the key to achieving peace: political will. Leaders have a huge responsibility to turn the tide and realise the benefits of peace.

And for peace to be sustainable, the root causes of conflict must be tackled. And the rules of our multilateral world order respected. Peace accords are not implemented. Resolutions, mandates and decisions by the Security Council are disregarded. This is unacceptable. This challenges the authority of the Security Council and, indeed, the rules-based international order.

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President,

The Middle East peace process has stalled. The parties are far apart, trust is lacking and the situation on the ground is deteriorating. The occupation must end, international law must be observed and the two-state solution must be revitalised. The Security Council has a huge responsibility. Other initiatives to revive the peace process, such as the Arab Peace Initiative and the French initiative should be supported by all of us. Sweden is honoured to lead the work on involving civil society in the French initiative.

In Europe, Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and military presence in Eastern Ukraine constitute breaches of international law and principles of the European security order agreed by all participating states of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe. All parties must do their part so that Ukraine can regain control over its internationally recognised borders.

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President,

If we want peace, we need to plan for peace and sustain peace—equally critical in the vulnerable aftermath of violent conflict. Indeed, as more areas are liberated from Daesh and other terrorist groups, we must take action to win peace. At the very least, to mitigate and stabilise the situation in liberated areas. To meet this challenge, our tools must be developed and cooperation enhanced.

The UN is central to political processes, delivery of immediate relief and efforts for long-term development, including state-building. I welcome that the UN is now exploring responses for stabilisation. Sweden believes that closer cooperation in this field would be beneficial – between the UN and the EU, politically and on the ground. The EU – enhancing its crisis management capability on the basis of the European Global Strategy – is also improving its capacity to help bridge the civilian stabilisation gap between immediate and long-term needs. We should be ready to provide such comprehensive support to Iraq. Such support will also be needed in the wider Middle East and North Africa over the coming years.

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President,

I wish to thank the General Assembly once again for electing Sweden as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council for the 2017–2018 term. We take your strong support as a vote of confidence in our foreign policy of solidarity and global commitment. We also see it as a call for a Security Council that addresses challenges to international peace and security in a comprehensive, inclusive and transparent manner. We are ready to assume our share of responsibility for the entire Council agenda.

We bring our foreign policy perspectives with us to execute this assignment: preventing armed conflict, sustaining peace, the necessity of including women in peace processes, and an understanding of security that stresses the links to sustainable development. We will continue to talk with, not only about, countries. And we will remain true to our principles. Swedish foreign policy rests firmly on international law, respect for human rights, gender equality and a humanitarian perspective.

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President,

“Today is the last day of the war.”

That is what the Colombian magazine *Semana* wrote on 23 June this year.

More than 50 years of conflict. Hundreds of thousands killed. Millions on the run. Let us pay our respects to the victims. Let us welcome the peace agreement. But let us also remember what is unique about this agreement. The architects were not only the government and the guerrilla. Victims of the conflict, women's organisations and civil society were also involved. Peace does not come about because it is printed in a headline. It happens step by step.

Because of the courage of ordinary people. Organising a meeting to form a political party to voice their demands. Printing a pamphlet or using social media to rally for their cause. When women and girls claim their human rights. When civil society and trade unions grow, making societies and economies more participatory and inclusive. Such is the fabric of lasting peace. And such is the task of the United Nations.

Thank you.