

SWEDEN



STATEMENT

by

H.E. Mr. Carl Bildt
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden

at the

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United Nations
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- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

Mr President,
Fellow Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our world is changing rapidly.

The black-and-white photos taken when this organisation was created back in 1945 are testimonies from another era.

That was a time when computers had barely been invented. The internet was decades away.

And it was not always easy for the delegates to the founding conference in San Francisco to establish contact with faraway capitals for instructions.

These days, we have instant access to the global information network.

Tweets are being written as I speak. There are more connected devices than there are people in the world. And development is accelerating in every single respect.

In 2012, we who gather here have all become representatives of the connected nations of the world.

Connectivity carries risks.

Our interconnected financial system is interconnected in this sense as well.

And recently, we have all followed with horror and disbelief how an odious film clip posted somewhere on You Tube could lead to outrage and deadly violence ten thousand miles away.

But the opportunities are vastly more important than the risks.

Globalization, marked by more open societies in a more open world, and facilitated by the enormous advance of science and technology, has been an incredible force for good.

Mobile banking brings financial services to East Africans. Skype reinforces messages from the Arab street. Virtual market places unleash entrepreneurial potential.

More contact, more movement and more trade – a more open world – have already lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty, with more certain to come.

Mr President,

In this world of connected nations, people around the globe – including thousands of Swedes of Syrian origin – are following the tragedy unfolding in Damascus, Aleppo and Homs with the greatest of concern.

We have all been reminded of a simple truth: violence is easy to start, but difficult to stop.

What began as a popular protest has now turned into a civil war which – if unchecked – brings the risk of sectarian fragmentation across the wider region.

We need to do everything possible to prevent that from happening.

We call upon the divided Security Council to put global responsibilities above narrow national interests.

We urge, in the strongest possible terms, the Assad regime to stop killing its own people, and to start respecting its obligations as a member of the United Nations.

And we remind perpetrators of deadly violence and abuse, that they should rest assured that they will be held accountable.

There is no alternative to a political solution.

Together with our European partners, we offer our full support to the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Mr Lakhdar Brahimi.

Syria is a society rich in culture, history and traditions.

Damascus is one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world.

To preserve and protect the mosaic that Syria represents is vital to its – indeed to our – future.

But we must also help all those now so tragically affected by what is happening. A thousand people are being killed every week, according to the latest reports. We are witnessing a human tragedy.

The needs are enormous.

More than 2,5 million people are in need of humanitarian support.

Over a million people are already displaced inside Syria, and there are a quarter of a million refugees in the region as a direct consequence of the current crisis.

The regime must give unhindered access for assistance to the displaced and the suffering, and the countries which have generously opened their borders should be commended and supported.

Sweden – as one of the world's largest humanitarian donors – has contributed massively.

And we stand ready to further increase our support – here, and elsewhere around the world where people in need are suffering.

Mr President,

In this world of connected nations, the human rights of every child, woman and man are a matter of concern for all of us.

The protection and promotion of human rights is one of the central duties of the international community.

Not only is this a question of protecting individual human beings – their life, their freedom, their future – but it is also crucial to promoting peace, stability and prosperity across the globe.

And critical to these efforts are gender equality and empowerment of women.

Because it's right, because it's smart and because it's fundamental to realising the economic and political potential of societies.

Sweden – today the largest financial contributor to the work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights – is a candidate for the UN Human Rights Council for the period 2013-2015.

As a Council member, Sweden would be an active and reliable partner.

We would work with everyone who shares our conviction, reach out to those who disagree, and support those who need it.

But in this area as well, we need to adjust to the world of connectivity.

The human rights and fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights must apply in the world of today.

Sweden will take every opportunity to champion online freedom of expression and the immense development potential that is vested in the internet and the new communication technologies.

Earlier this year, the UN Human Rights Council decided that the rights that apply offline apply online as well, and called upon all States to promote and to facilitate access to the Internet.

This landmark resolution was unanimously adopted in Geneva, and I hope it has been noted here in New York as well.

The fight for the freedom on the net is the new frontline in the fight for freedom in the world.

Mr President,

In this world of connected nations, we share a planet with common development challenges.

The world's poor – indeed all of us – need development that is inclusive, equitable and sustainable.

We have met three of the Millennium Development Goals well ahead of time, but we are lagging significantly behind in others.

And while we accelerate efforts to reduce child mortality and improve maternal health, we have started to look beyond the immediate future.

Sweden welcomes the High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda and looks forward to contributing to its recommendations.

In Rio, world leaders launched a process towards Sustainable Development Goals.

It's up to all of us to take this agenda forward.

To involve scientists and business. To explore the potential of ICT and innovation. To pursue all three dimensions of sustainable development, and to ensure that democracy and human rights are part of the equation.

As an active partner and major donor, Sweden will do its part.

Mr President,

In this world of connected nations, geography is sometimes of little consequence.

Distances involved might seem enormous.

But the melting Arctic ice cap in the north can still pose an existential threat to small island states in the south.

The Arctic is warming twice as fast as the global average. And right now – as we are gathering here – the Arctic Sea ice cover has receded so much that it has reached a new historic minimum.

There is less ice this autumn than ever before in recorded history.

The impact of climate change is global.

The world is not on track for keeping the increase in global average temperatures to below two degrees Celsius.

We need urgent progress in the negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and effective implementation of globally agreed outcomes.

Sweden calls upon everyone in this hall to do their utmost to contribute to ensuring this occurs, and developed nations should take the lead.

There are severe challenges – and great opportunities.

Technology brings new possibilities. To reduce emissions. To increase growth. To move towards a truly sustainable future.

As the current Chair of the Arctic Council – composed of the eight nations whose landmass extends beyond the Northern Polar Circle – Sweden will make its contribution.

Together, we will set an example of positive co-operation in an area drawing rapidly increasing global attention and where, not long ago, many were predicting competition and conflict.

Mr President,

We live in a new era.

What happens in the Levant, in the Arctic or elsewhere has immediate implications for us all.

In order to deal with the challenges of this era, the connected nations of this world need a strong United Nations.

A United Nations to discuss the issues of today and to seize the opportunities for collective action.

A United Nations where we, these days, convene to say that ridiculing what by others is held sacred is mean and offensive, but that it can never ever be an excuse for violence, destruction and death.

But the United Nations needs to step up to the challenge.

The Security Council must assume its responsibilities, in Syria and elsewhere.

Member States must empower the UN to become better at conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and ensure that the UN can deliver development results effectively and as one.

And it is up to us, the Member States, to meet our international human rights obligations – not just in order to protect the individual human being, but because respect for human rights is also critical to peace and security.

Mr President,

In these times of accelerating global changes, Sweden will remain a steadfast member of this world organization.

And together with our partners in the European Union we will continue to promote an effective multilateral system with the United Nations at its core.

Thank you.