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**Swedish Presidency of  
the European Union**

**Speech by Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt before the European  
Parliament 15 July 2009 in Strasbourg**

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Mr President, Honourable Members,

Let me first of all congratulate you on the election of a new President of the European Parliament. I look forward to cooperate with President Jerzy Buzek during the Swedish Presidency – and onwards.

It is an honour for me to speak before the European Parliament as President of the European Council.

I know that about half of you are elected for the first time. Together you voice the concerns of 500 million Europeans. You are facing great expectations.

I speak to you at a time of great challenge.

EU cooperation has rarely been faced with more difficult challenges. And of such diversity.

In the short term, our ambition is to ensure a smooth transition to a new treaty – the Lisbon Treaty.

Now, and looking a little further ahead, we must continue to deal with the financial and economic crisis.

And beneath the surface lurks the threat of a growing climate crisis, which in the long term is the greatest of our challenges.

One thing is certain. To successfully tackle the many challenges facing the Swedish Presidency, we must work side by side with you – you who work at the centre of European democracy. We hope that you will support us and cooperate with us. And that you are ready to take on the challenge with us.

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When we speak about the history of the EU, we usually emphasise that European cooperation has formed the basis for peace in a Europe so often characterised by the opposite.

My grandfather was a Swedish reservist at the Norwegian border during the Second World War. A war in which Sweden did not participate. And the closest he came to the war was to catch a glimpse of it from time to time – from a safe distance.

That is how Sweden's relationship with Europe was for a long time. Contemplating it from a distance.

When Europe was in ruins after the Second World War, Sweden remained untouched. We were rich in economic terms – but poor in terms of European community.

Twenty years ago, the barbed wire between Austria and Hungary was cut. The Berlin Wall was torn down. And Europe changed almost overnight.

A number of countries then began the journey that led to representatives of 27 countries sitting here in this room today. Sweden was one of them.

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Those who start late need time to catch up. And during the late 1980s, Sweden's political interest in Europe began to mature.

The realisation of Sweden's closeness to and dependence on Europe slowly developed. In the work to lead Sweden into the European project; to accept openness, globalisation and free trade, Carl Bildt played a decisive role. Driven by a firm conviction that Sweden belonged in Europe.

Eighteen years ago, we submitted our application for membership of the European Union.

Finally, we had matured in the conviction that people's daily lives and our future were best shaped in cooperation and community with others. That we had something to contribute – and a lot to learn.

We were no longer afraid of cooperation. We dared to be a part of Europe.

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These years that were so revolutionary for Sweden, from the mid-1980s onwards, ran parallel with the development of my own political career. I, along with many of my generation of Swedish politicians, felt a great longing for Europe.

I remember how I, as a young, newly elected Member of the Swedish Parliament, was invited to visit the European Parliament. A sign of the

Parliament's openness and accessibility – despite the fact that Sweden was not a member of the Union.

Several years later, in 1997, after Sweden had joined, I was involved in setting up the EPP Group's youth organisation – Youth of EPP – and I was its first President.

Now, I was able to see how European cooperation worked in practice: together we sought European solutions to European problems. And we not only got to know one another, but also one another's histories and cultures.

This also got me to know many of Europe's capitals. And I have lost count of the number of churches in Europe I have visited as a result.

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In 20 years, Sweden has gone from looking on from a distance to playing an active role in European cooperation. This has in turn influenced the Swedish people.

Ten years ago, one in three Swedes thought membership of the EU was good for our country. An equal number thought the opposite. Today, this has changed. Almost two in every three Swedes think that EU membership is good for Sweden.

In the European Parliament elections in June, over 45 per cent of the Swedish people went to vote. This is eight per cent more than in 2004. And higher than the European average.

Today, Sweden is a country that appreciates and has a positive view of EU membership.

We woke up late, but we have worked hard to catch up. This is a victory for all of us who believe in European cooperation.

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Mr President, Honourable Members,

We are facing one of the biggest challenges of our generation. A societal problem that, unlike many others, grows slowly – and only in the wrong direction.

Our world has a fever. The fever is rising – and it is up to us to react.

The ice sheets of Greenland are shrinking by more than 100 square kilometres every year. The ice sheet in West Antarctica is melting at an increasing rate. We know that the shrinking Greenland ice sheets alone can lead to a rise in sea levels of up to two metres.

The effects will be dramatic. If sea levels were to rise by just one metre around the world, one hundred million people would need to move in Asia alone. Worst affected are the people in Bangladesh, eastern China and Vietnam.

But we are also facing other serious consequences. The weather will change and many species of plants and animals could face extinction, even if we keep to the two-degree target set by the UN, to which both the G8 and the Major Economies Forum committed themselves last week in L'Aquila.

Our climate is threatened by our use of and dependence on fossil fuels.

These are the bad news. So what are the good news?

Even if time is short, it is still on our side. But we must act now.

We already have the necessary requirements for the development of renewable energy and the technology for increasing energy efficiency. According to the International Energy Agency, the IEA, more than half of the measures needed to keep below the two-degree target can be taken with technology already existing.

Moreover, measures to combat climate change bring with them very valuable side effects. Effects that, in themselves, warrant the measures.

When we use less energy, we save money. We improve public finances at the same time as households gain more resources.

When we invest in renewable energy and increase energy efficiency, we improve our energy security. We become less dependent on imports from countries that sometimes are both politically and economically unstable.

Investment in the green economy will create new job opportunities and promote growth over the coming decades.

Let me give you a specific example. In January, many EU countries were affected by the gas crisis in Ukraine. Last week, I spoke with President Jusztjenko on how we can try to avoid a similar situation arising again.

At the same time, it is important to be able to turn the perspective. If Ukraine invested in energy efficiency so that the country reached the same level as the Czech Republic or Slovenia, this would translate into energy savings comparable to the country's total gas imports for own use from Russia.

Ukraine could become completely independent of gas imports from Russia while at the same time saving a lot of money – solely by increasing its energy efficiency.

This is how we must find the solutions to the climate issue.

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Twelve years ago, in Kyoto, a coalition of the willing was established. But voluntary action alone is not enough. If we are to reach a global climate agreement, the journey from Kyoto to Copenhagen must go from a coalition of the willing to the responsibility of all.

How can we get there?

Europe must be united and act together. We must show leadership and stand by our promises. Europe has a crucial role in getting others to sign up to a global agreement.

We must put a price on emissions all over the world. We must begin to use national CO<sup>2</sup>-taxes and emissions trading. When we do this, the green alternatives will develop.

If we put a price on the use of fossil fuels without consideration for the impact on the climate, then global warming will continue. Alternatives will not develop, and measures to increase energy efficiency will not be economically worthwhile.

But this is not enough. We must have a broader answer to the “how-question”. It is not enough to limit emissions within a group of countries that voluntarily make reductions – but together only account for 30 per cent of emissions.

Neither is it enough to have solutions that are only based on restrictions in the most developed countries. Because even if the ‘Annex I’ countries reduced their emissions to zero, the developing countries’ rapidly increasing emissions would still bring us over the two-degree target.

Therefore, we must discuss how to finance investments in developing countries. We need to ensure a quick transfer of technology. And we need to make sure that the developing countries also take action to change the direction in which they are heading. In addition, we will also demand clear commitments in the medium term from countries outside Europe.

The responsibility of the few must now become the responsibility of all.

I know that the European Parliament will take responsibility. The Swedish Presidency regards you as our allies. Now we want to write the story of how the climate was saved. And we want to write it together with you.

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Mr President, Honourable Members,

The financial and economic crisis spread like wildfire across the world in a few weeks’ time.

There had been warnings, but for the vast majority it came as a surprise. Particularly its extent and depth. In a globalised world, problems too spread quickly.

The depth of the recession is such that no-one has the miracle cure to quickly tackle it. Coordinated action from the EU is the best tool we have to meet the challenges of the crisis. And there is still a lot that can go wrong.

Given the circumstances, the EU succeeded in showing leadership throughout the trials. We agreed on guarantees and traffic rules to support the banks. We agreed on a common recovery plan to stimulate the economy.

President Sarkozy and the French Presidency played an important role in this work. But I also want to recognise the European Parliament for committing to the task.

Now we need to spend the autumn discussing further measures to get us through the crisis. The economic situation is still difficult, and public finances are now stretched in all Member States.

According to the Commission's forecasts, the public debt in the EU will be in excess of 80 per cent of GDP next year. We cannot close our eyes and pretend that this is not a problem.

In the middle of all this, we must not forget that there are people behind the figures. Who are worried about their jobs. Who are wondering how they will manage to pay their rent or mortgage and still maintain their standard of living. It is up to us to solve this problem.

When millions of Europeans lose their jobs and find themselves excluded from the labour market, our entire welfare is threatened. This in a situation where the pressure on our welfare is already great – when we are living longer, working less and having fewer children.

In 50 years, there will be twice as many elderly people as children in Europe – if the trend continues.

So, what can we do?

We must restore confidence in the financial markets. We must quickly put into place a strengthened supervisory system to prevent similar crises from occurring in the future. The Swedish Presidency is working to achieve agreement in the Council on this before the end of the year and we are hoping for your help to bring this to a quick and successful conclusion.

Our citizens will not accept the repeated use of tax payer's money to save financial institutions that have acted irresponsibly.

We must quickly get ourselves out of the growing public deficits through a coordinated exit strategy and a gradual return to the regulations of the Stability Pact.

Short-term imbalances will otherwise be followed by chronic deficits, which in turn lead to large cutbacks – already a reality in parts of the EU. Some years ago, we experienced this in Sweden. Mass unemployment, social unrest and a rising tax burden then await.

We have to secure a social dimension to European politics, founded on sound public finances and on getting more people into the labour market. This is the very best way to uphold our welfare system.

Three out of ten Europeans of working age are outside the labour market – this is unsustainable. The objective must be an active labour market policy combined with a well-functioning social security system that can be efficiently adapted to changing conditions.

We must strengthen individuals' employability and opportunities to establish themselves on the labour market, and we need to get the unemployed into, or back into, work.

With more people working, there will be more support available to those who are outside the labour market.

But we must also invest in reforms and modernisation and adapt to a new reality. The world outside the EU does not stand still. It is moving forward at a fantastic speed. This is something we must welcome and be receptive to.

A review of the EU's Lisbon Strategy can contribute to a vital reform agenda. We will open discussions on this during the autumn.

Ideas on increased protectionism have emerged in the wake of the economic crisis. The WTO confirms that there has been a substantial increase in the number of measures restricting trade over the past three months.

I therefore welcome the L'Aquila agreement on a relaunch of the Doha Round – to ensure that the countries of the world return to the free trade course that we know will benefit us all in the long run.

The objective must be for the EU to emerge strengthened from the crisis.

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Mr President, Honourable Members,

When I travel around Sweden and talk about EU cooperation, I get few questions about the EU's institutions. More often I get questions about crooked cucumbers and snuff and other issues that people come across in their daily lives.

Nevertheless, the institutional framework is important, as it defines what we can do and in which areas. That is why the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty is so central.

The Treaty will make the EU more democratic, more transparent, more efficient and more influential on the international stage. But more importantly: with the Lisbon Treaty in place, we can close the chapter on an inward-looking phase in the EU's cooperation. The time has come for the EU to look outwards and into the future.

The Swedish Presidency is ready to carry out all the preparatory work to ensure a smooth transition to a new treaty. But this of course presupposes that the Treaty has been ratified by all Member States. Let us hope that this becomes reality within the next few months.

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International crime is growing ever stronger. Criminal networks are no longer limited by borders. We see how trafficking in drugs and human beings is spreading.

This threatens our democratic values. It threatens our citizens.

At the same time, freedom of movement across our borders is one of our union's founding principles. The freedom to study, work and live in another EU country. But new times require new approaches. Which is why, this autumn, we will draw up a new programme in the area – the Stockholm Programme.

The Stockholm Programme sharpens the instruments that safeguard security in the EU and that fight organised crime and terrorism. At the same time it strikes a better balance between these instruments and the measures that uphold the rule of law and the rights of the individual.

The Stockholm Programme also ensures that those who apply for asylum in the EU will be met by a common system that is legally secure. A more harmonised reception and application processing system. A more harmonised resettlement policy.

Many dream of a life and a future in Europe. At the same time, the population in Europe grows ever older. These two realities can be met in a flexible system for labour immigration.

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Mr President, Honourable Members,

Some fifty years ago, six countries laid the foundation for European cooperation. Today, there are 27 of us. We have grown in strength and influence and we have grown in welfare and diversity. Europe has been enriched.

We are thus better equipped to take on both the opportunities and the challenges brought by globalisation. We cannot stand alone.

They are called membership 'negotiations'. But at the end of the day, membership is about sharing a set of common basic values and following common rules.

This is something that those on the outside are now contemplating. From Reykjavik to Ankara, and across the Western Balkans. Cyprus' two leaders have been granted a historic opportunity to together reach an agreement on a solution that would heal an island that has been divided for far too long.

To those on the inside, allowing the membership process to become an opportunity to solve protracted disputes can be tempting. In such cases, we must find solutions that can benefit both sides and open up a way forward. Otherwise, the progress we have made towards continued European integration will be in jeopardy.

The Swedish Presidency will act to move the enlargement process forward, in accordance with the commitments the EU has made, on the basis of the criteria that apply. We will act as an 'honest broker'.

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Mr President, Honourable Members,

With strength and influence comes global responsibility, a role that we are still striving to shoulder. With this also comes an obligation to use the responsibility for the benefit of all. The EU shall work for peace, freedom, democracy and human rights.

We have an obligation to support the poorest and most vulnerable countries in the world. An obligation to live up to the UN Millennium Development Goals.

We have a responsibility to support the work of the United Nations in other areas as well. To work together with our strategic partners.

To be involved in the world's crisis areas - whether it is the peace process in the Middle East, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, North Korea or the great challenges that can be found on the African continent.

But we also have a responsibility for regional initiatives such as the Union for the Mediterranean and the Eastern Partnership. Initiatives that foster stability and cooperation between neighbouring countries with different sets of conditions.

I am particularly grateful for the proactive role played by the European Parliament regarding cooperation in the Baltic Sea region. As early as in 2005 the parliament presented a proposal for a strategy for the region. We

are now hoping that this initiative can reach its pinnacle with the adoption of a Baltic Sea Strategy at the European Council meeting in October.

The conflicts in the Balkans in the 1990s marked the beginning of the EU's commitment to crisis management. A commitment that is now growing steadily. Today, the EU is participating in around ten crisis management operations all over the world.

These days, the world's problems come knocking at the EU's door. All over the world - not least in our own region - people's hopes for their own development are closely tied to EU cooperation. Let us together live up to those expectations.

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Mr President, Honourable Members,

European cooperation has ensured that peace and prosperity today prevail on our continent. Together with freedom and stability. We have open borders and a social model combining market economy with consideration for one another.

This is the Europe that we share.

But our citizens also want to know that Europe is carried forward by ideas for the future. That the purpose of cooperation is not a thing of the past, but also looks to the future.

That is why we, as elected politicians, have an obligation to tell people our hopes for Europe. Let me tell you how I see the future of Europe:

I want to see a Europe acting forcefully for democracy, peace, freedom and human rights on the global arena. That has the courage to take a stand in foreign affairs. Because there are those among us who have experienced what it is like to live without democracy and freedom, and so we also have the credibility to act.

I want to see a Europe taking the lead in the fight against climate change. That looks beyond the temptation to compete with an industry that does not pay for emissions that destroy our climate. A Europe that changes the incentives so that green technology pays off. So that our children and their children too will be allowed to experience nature as we know it.

I want to see a Europe taking responsibility for the economy. Lending for spending cannot be the only slogan. Nor can we have a situation where "profits are private and losses are public". Let us rebuild public finances again. Regulate for sound financial markets. Secure the economic reforms that we need to ensure growth and an industry that can be competitive also in the future.

I want to see a Europe that continues to develop the European social model. That combines a well-functioning welfare system with growth. With social cohesion. A Europe that, through work, enterprise and sound public finances creates the scope to maintain and develop our welfare models. Focusing on the benefit of all our citizens.

I want to see a Europe not allowing itself to be tempted by the short-sighted crusade of protectionism. That safeguards the internal market that laid the foundations for our EU cooperation. That allows goods and services to flow freely across our borders. For our own benefit, but also for the benefit of the rest of the world.

And I want to see a Europe respectful of diversity, open to the arguments of others and with a strong will to find compromises with the benefit of all in mind. Such a Europe can stand strong throughout the ages.

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Mr President, Honourable Members,

It is an honour for me to stand here, together with you, representing European democracy.

Many have told me that this will be the most difficult Presidency in years. The challenges are many and we must expect the unexpected. Many ask themselves if a country of Sweden's size can shoulder this responsibility.

Not alone. But together we can take on the challenge.

Let us do so with vision and the strength to act. With initiative and courage.

Europe needs it. The people of Europe need it.

The European project is about the dream of solving people's problems together. This is a dream that makes Europe strong.

This year – 2009 - is a fateful year for European cooperation. We now have the chance to take the next step. The Swedish Presidency is ready to take on the challenge. Let us take it on together.

Thank you.