

Op-ed.

In July, Sweden will once again hold the presidency of the United Nations Security Council.

We need a global rules-based system for peace and security. The Security Council must be the world's tool for this – and for creating conditions for equitable development, gender equality, and sustainable and inclusive societies. This is in Europe's interest and thus in Sweden's interest.

We need a Security Council whose members – both elected and permanent – can agree and make clear and principled decisions. Sweden continues to assume its share of the joint responsibility and to live up to the confidence that UN Member States have placed in us by electing Sweden to the Security Council.

But the work climate in the Security Council needs to improve. We have recently witnessed some of the worst deadlocks in years. Last year, the veto was used six times – which is more than in any other year during the last twenty years.

When the Security Council cannot reach agreement, the main purpose of the UN system – cooperation for peace, security and development – risks being undermined.

The work of the Security Council must guarantee and enhance compliance with international law based on the UN charter – the same principles that are reflected in the Treaty on European Union and that are so central to Sweden and our own security.

This is a time of global unease. More than 800 million people go to bed hungry every night. The humanitarian needs in countries such as Syria, Yemen and South Sudan are enormous.

Despite the challenges that exist, Sweden's efforts as a non-permanent member of the Security Council are bearing fruit. In February, for example, the Security Council was able to unanimously adopt resolution 2401 on a ceasefire in Syria to enable humanitarian access and medical evacuations.

We have also pushed for the Security Council to break new ground by adopting resolutions underscoring the importance of the participation of young people in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, the link between hunger and conflict, and climate-related security risks. Most of the mandates for UN operations now have stronger wording regarding women, peace and security. And the Security Council's child rights perspective has been strengthened in countries such as Sudan, Mali, Colombia and Somalia.

In addition, our work to safeguard close cooperation between the European members of the Council continues. It *is* possible to make a difference, despite the challenges that exist.

During its presidency of the Security Council in July, Sweden will take responsibility for the entire Council's agenda and continue to contribute to the Council to fulfil its primary purpose under the UN Charter: maintaining international peace and security.

Our work continues to be based on international law, human rights, gender equality and a humanitarian perspective.

I would like to mention some key points of departure for Sweden's presidency:

- **The Security Council must be more effective at responding to the new challenges and threats of our time**, such as the link between climate change and security.
- **The work of the Security Council needs to be permeated by the fundamental insight that matters of peace and security concern everyone.** Research shows that the active participation of women in peace processes improves the sustainability of peace agreements. Work on the women, peace and security agenda must be stepped up and integrated into all geographic meetings of the Security Council.
- **If we protect today's children, we will prevent tomorrow's conflicts.** During our presidency, we will be chairing an open debate on children and armed conflict.
- **Broad cooperation is a prerequisite for peace.** In connection with centenary of the birth of Nelson Mandela, we will hold a meeting to discuss how cooperation between the UN and the African Union can be strengthened. Peace is best pursued in partnership.
- **The Security Council's work does not take place in a vacuum;** it affects millions of people all around the world. We will continue to contribute to inclusive and transparent working methods and enable those who have been affected by the crises of our times to share their perspectives in Security Council meetings. The work of the Security Council must make a difference where it is most needed – on the ground among the millions of women, men, girls and boys living in the shadow of war, conflict and poverty.

So far during our membership of the Security Council, we have achieved a great deal and we will do even more. We will continue to strengthen the voice and participation of women. Ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches those in need. Enhance the capacity to prevent conflicts and sustain peace.

Because we need more international cooperation, not less. This is how we can best respond to the challenges, crises and conflicts of our time.

Margot Wallström, Minister for Foreign Affairs