

## **Sweden's Contribution to Peace Building in Afghanistan**

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The starting point for Sweden's presence in Afghanistan is a holistic approach to the current challenges, the problems to be solved and the opportunities to be safeguarded. Our political, developmental and military efforts all contribute the same overriding goal: a secure, stable, prosperous and democratic Afghanistan which fully respects human rights, and where people are enabled to improve their lives.

Afghanistan provides a particularly good example of how closely security and development are linked. Right now, when the need for economic progress and job-creation is extremely urgent, aid organisations are forced to suspend their activities due to a lack of security. While bringing about economic and social development remains the overriding goal, this cannot be done unless the military side provides the security needed.

This also means that governance issues, such as the rule of law, respect for human rights and equality between men and women are central to creating an environment that promotes stability and progress. People who are satisfied with what the local authorities deliver are naturally more resistant to pressure from insurgents. This realisation is also found at the basis of our common vision of a future for Afghanistan that is free from the threats of terrorism, extremism, impunity and organised crime. So, yes, we are all in this together: Afghan and foreign troops, Afghan and foreign development actors. What we need is a multi-pronged and well-coordinated approach to the problems in Afghanistan. Both the Afghan Government and the international community must step up efforts to turn the situation around.

Despite the progress that has been made in fields such as education and health, significant challenges remain. This includes pursuing visible reconstruction efforts, building sustainable, effective and accountable state institutions, disarming illegal armed groups, strengthening human rights and fighting

international terrorism and the production and trafficking of drugs.

This broader picture became clear to me when I went to Afghanistan. It was on one of my first visits as minister for international development cooperation. My experiences there have in many ways inspired my reform agenda for development effectiveness in general, and in some respects the Afghan example has made me rethink the role of development cooperation in conflict and post conflict situations.

This is also why we already two years ago set out to improve our development cooperation with Afghanistan. We did this through a series of measures, most importantly by increasing our total disbursements to the people of Afghanistan, by directing more support to the northern provinces and by applying a more comprehensive perspective on Sweden's presence in Afghanistan. A concrete example of how we have created conditions for increased flexibility and civil-military consultations is the establishment of a local fund which essentially facilitates quick impact projects to be managed at local level.

Now, it is time for us to take the next step, a step to sharpen our focus, accelerate our efforts and enhance consultations between different actors. We do this at a time when a new focus on Afghanistan is to be expected, not the least with a new American president in place.

We cannot underestimate the significance of Afghanistan's future both in a regional and global context.

Let me therefore explain how the Swedish government intends to further strengthen the support to Afghanistan in all fields during the coming years in order to meet these challenges:

We are strengthening our diplomatic efforts. Last week the minister for foreign affairs, Mr Carl Bildt, inaugurated our new embassy in Kabul. With adequate diplomatic representation in the country we have the opportunity to further improve the efficiency of our support.

We are strengthening and increasing our development cooperation, both quantitatively and in content. The government will shortly instruct Sida to draft a new cooperation strategy for

Swedish development cooperation with Afghanistan. In this, we will spell out the political priorities that will govern our future cooperation as well as the increase in our support.

And finally, the government intends to introduce a bill on continued support to ISAF with a view to further strengthen our military commitments.

This is, in sum, an illustration of our conviction that any successful strategy for development in a context like Afghanistan, is dependent on how different actors manage to strive towards the same goal. Diplomacy, development cooperation and support to strengthening the security constitute equally important tools for transformation. And only by interacting closely and strategically, can the output of each effort be optimised.

At the same time it is important not to confuse our different roles. And let us always keep in mind that for development actors, maintaining a civilian identity is also a matter of security.

"More of the same" is not the solution to the challenges that Afghanistan face today. We must do more, that is true, but in some respects we must do things differently. It is obvious that the problems in Afghanistan cannot be solved only by military means. A comprehensive strategy which recognises the links between democracy, security and development must be implemented.

Real change for the Afghan people will require coherence, coordination and consistency - key words for the current international efforts in Afghanistan, where UNAMA has a key role. Too much energy has already been wasted in duplicated, competing and sometimes even divergent efforts.

So let me give you some examples of how this new level of ambition will be expressed in my area of responsibility - development cooperation.

In a situation like that in Afghanistan, where a great many donors are present, it is important for Sweden to concentrate on what we think we are good at while always securing a strong Afghan ownership. We cannot all simply do what we like best. In the

name of efficiency, we have to adapt to the bigger picture, but also learn from best practices.

This will be very clear in the new strategy for Swedish assistance to Afghanistan, which will be adopted at the beginning of next year for the coming five-year period.

As regards our priorities, we will maintain our long-term commitment to education as a key sector, with special emphasis on girls.

The Swedish Government will also put more emphasis on governance, as we see that Afghanistan's problems cannot be solved without stronger and better governance and respect for the rule of law.

Our approach in the governance sector will have three main elements: 1) promoting democracy and respect for human rights, 2) supporting good governance including anti-corruption efforts and 3) strengthening the position of women in society. Nation-building cannot be based on only half of the population!

Our third main focus will be private sector development in order to increase growth and create employment opportunities.

In setting these priorities, we also recognise the need for flexibility. Sweden has always been keen to be a good donor. For the sake of aid efficiency and long-term sustainability we have chosen to channel our aid, as much as possible, through Afghan structures and through organisations working closely with government institutions.

For me, the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan is an organisation that other development actors could very well model themselves on. The committee's long-term commitment, its uncompromising focus on vulnerable groups and its dedicated efforts to work with local communities and develop their capacity provides an excellent example of development cooperation that truly makes a difference.

I do admit that there is a need, especially for a donor like Sweden with a clear vision of what development cooperation at its best can achieve, to be able to point to the results of our contribution. In this context, I am proud to announce that an Afghan bar association is now up and running! This organisation of lawyers,

which we have helped to mid-wife, will be one building-block in establishing the rule of law in Afghanistan.

In financial terms, this was a relatively insignificant part of our contribution to Afghanistan; which goes a long way to prove that there is not always a correlation between actual results and money spent. It is also a question of focusing our efforts geographically, strengthening our support to democracy and human rights, improving cooperation between different actors in Sweden, and increasing efficiency by using the right multilateral channels.

Having said that, I am also proud to say that our heightened level of ambition will also be reflected in numbers.

Under the new strategy, our regular development cooperation with Afghanistan will increase from SEK 300 million to the tune of SEK 500 million annually over the coming years. Our humanitarian and NGO-channelled contributions, which amount to approximately SEK 75 million this year, are not included in these figures.

On top of this we are increasing our assistance through the regular budgets of multilateral organisations. Sweden is already among the larger contributors to most of the agencies active in Afghanistan. We should keep in mind, not only in relation to Afghanistan, that in order to get a full view of Sweden's development cooperation one must look not only at our bilateral cooperation as formulated in country strategies, but also at our substantial support to multilateral organisations. As a large donor we have a responsibility to ensure that these organisations contribute to the development of Afghanistan in an efficient and relevant way.

On a more personal level, one thing which has impressed me in Afghanistan is how keen people are to improve their lives. Let us build on this energy, rather than frustrate it! In this respect, Afghan ownership is straightforward, but it is made difficult by some inherent problems, such as corruption and dependency on an illegal economy.

We see this commitment to change in our work in the four northern provinces of Afghanistan, which are covered by the

Swedish-led Provincial Reconstruction Team, and we would like the people in this area to understand that Sweden's engagement goes beyond the security-related effort. That is why the Swedish Government - in line with national priorities - intends to direct a substantial part, 20-25 per cent, of our assistance to these provinces, in close cooperation with the Afghan authorities.

The European Union is an important forum for cooperation and joint efforts. The joint police programme, EUPOL, has had some start-up difficulties but Sweden is supporting the initiative and is putting demands on increased efficiency. But there are also ways to enhance efficiency by working together with a smaller number of like-minded countries. In Afghanistan, the Nordic countries are exploring new avenues to cooperate, complement and combine our activities on the ground.

From the experience we have gathered since 2001 we know that efforts in Afghanistan will need to be sustainable over time, persistent and focussed. Sweden's commitment is both long-standing and long-term. In this context, I would like to thank our hosts, the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan, for their unyielding efforts to bring assistance to the Afghan people, as well as to bring knowledge about Afghanistan to the Swedish people, as demonstrated so well here today.

For the sake of the people of Afghanistan, the children, women and men in Afghanistan, who continue to endure such difficulties, I can assure you that the Swedish government's commitment to support a positive development is strong and lasting.