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<p><b>The Prime Minister's presentation of the Presidency priorities to the Riksdag, 23 June</b></p>
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Mr/Madam Speaker, Honourable Members of the Riksdag,

- In eight days, Sweden will assume the Presidency of the European Union.
- In eight days, we will be presiding over the world's largest integrated economy, with almost 500 million inhabitants.
- In eight days, we will continue the work in Europe to manage the economic crisis, unemployment and climate change.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

We are ready to take on this challenge.

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On 1 July, the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union begins. The responsibility and challenges that go along with this are great. Our task is to act in the interests of the entire EU. And to energetically pursue the issues on the EU agenda. Our ambition is to conduct an open, responsive and results-oriented Presidency, focusing on issues of interest to the citizens of Europe.

Leading the EU is a task not only for the Government, but for the whole of Sweden.

Sweden is expected to lead over 3000 meetings at different levels, most of them taking place in Brussels and Luxembourg. Over one hundred informal meetings will be held in Sweden. Around ten of these are ministerial meetings, while the rest are meetings with third countries, meetings of senior officials, seminars and conferences.

Preparations for the Swedish Presidency have been under way for over two years, and most of that which can be planned is in place. But it will be no easy task. The circumstances of our Presidency are special. There are many challenges, and they are far from simple.

Europe and the world are in the midst of the most serious economic crisis of modern times. We are experiencing declining growth and trade, and increasing bankruptcy and unemployment. At the same time, perhaps the greatest challenge of our generation is managing climate change. Right now, as I stand here talking to you, the ice sheets in Greenland and the Western Antarctic continue to melt and sea levels continue to rise.

Moreover, the coming six months will be characterised by both change and renewal.

We have a newly elected European Parliament that is in the process of appointing a new President and new group presidents. A new European Commission is due to take office some time during our Presidency. There

is also uncertainty as to whether the Treaty of Lisbon will be able to enter into force during our Presidency. We await the referendum in Ireland with interest. The conditions for cooperation will change if the Treaty of Lisbon enters into force. It will fall to the Swedish Presidency to manage these new conditions.

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However, the most important thing is to ensure that we are able to gather the EU together to respond to the challenges that people care about and where strong European cooperation can make a difference.

This is a matter of dealing with the financial crisis together and tackling the rising unemployment that is currently affecting the whole of Europe.

It is a matter of doing our bit together and rallying the whole world to tackle climate change.

These two priorities will also dominate our Presidency.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Our aim is for the EU to emerge from the financial crisis in a stronger position.

The current crisis is a global one. For this reason, we must find both European and global solutions. In the autumn we will continue the work

to remedy the causes of the crisis. We will also do our bit to bring about greater order on the financial markets. People and businesses should never again have to encounter the hardship they are now suffering.

It takes a long time and great strength to recover from bankruptcy. It takes great effort and a strong will to recover from long-term unemployment.

As holder of the Presidency we must continue to push for the EU to implement the recovery plan to stabilise the economy. It will also require continued support and guarantees to banks and other financial companies to get credit flows up and running again.

A football match needs a referee, just as a road junction needs traffic lights. Similarly, the financial crisis has demonstrated that financial markets need improved supervision and stricter regulations.

At the European Summit last week, we agreed on a structure for this work. It is now up to the Swedish Presidency to draw up the rules for the financial market and a new supervisory system for financial companies. We hope to reach a political agreement in this area during the Swedish Presidency.

The crisis has also been attended by increased unemployment affecting millions of people in Europe. We must take action to limit and mitigate the effects of this crisis.

There is a great need to deal with unemployment, both together and in each Member State. Individuals' employability and opportunities to establish themselves on the labour market must be strengthened. An active labour market policy for better adjustment and mobility is needed on the labour market across the entire EU.

More effective matching, skills development and more entrepreneurs are needed, not only to respond to the current crisis, but also to build for the future. We will work for improved access to capital, regulatory simplification and better conditions for smaller companies. Our ambition is to lay the foundations for a new growth and employment strategy: a successor to the Lisbon Strategy.

Only through long-term high employment levels and sustainable public finances can we safeguard our welfare systems in Europe. We will therefore also prioritise a discussion on how the EU can maintain budgetary discipline and formulate an 'exit strategy' from today's growing budget deficits and high debt levels.

I shall be putting forward the EU's positions on all these issues at the G8 and G20 meetings.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

We are experiencing more extreme weather conditions than before, with severe storms and drought. Climate change threatens to worsen these

trends. Everyone talks about the importance of reducing emissions and yet global greenhouse gas emissions have not even started to decline.

Together with the financial crisis, climate change is therefore the Swedish Presidency's most important priority. There is no time to lose if we don't want our children to experience drastically worse living conditions than we do.

I sometimes hear the argument that we should not expect countries – in the midst of a deep economic crisis – to be able to afford to take initiatives to prevent climate change. I am against this viewpoint. Countries not only can, but also must be both climate-smart and sparing with resources. Because they both can, and must manage the climate and their public finances.

Let me mention Ukraine as an apt example. If Ukraine were to improve its energy efficiency to achieve the same level as Slovenia and the Czech Republic, it would be almost independent of gas imports from Russia.

The Swedish Presidency will lead the EU in negotiations on an international climate agreement that is expected to be concluded in Copenhagen in December. At the same time, Europe accounts for only 14 per cent of global emissions. Our most important task, apart from keeping the EU together on the climate issue, is therefore to draw the rest of the world into this work.

A number of critical problems must be solved in the international negotiations: industrialised countries' emissions reductions, emissions

limits in growing economies and the funding of adaptation and technology transfer in the developing countries. These are complex issues that we must handle together with the rest of the world, and internally within the EU. Here, let me mention particularly that we have received encouraging signals from the new US Administration, which improves the prospects of an agreement.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

Europe is facing challenges other than the financial crisis and the climate issue.

It is Sweden's responsibility to develop and strengthen EU **cooperation in justice and home affairs**.

Democratic values and individual rights must be protected while facilitating free movement. We need to develop cooperation to prevent international crime. At the same time, we must safeguard the rights of both those who are victims of crime and those suspected of crimes. We must create a more efficient asylum and migration policy, characterised by legal security and openness.

Our objective is to adopt a new multi-annual cooperation programme in this area, the Stockholm Programme. The vision of the Stockholm Programme is a safer, more open Europe where the rights of individuals are safeguarded.

Another objective is to adopt an **EU Baltic Sea Strategy**.

The countries around the **Baltic Sea** are facing common difficulties. One of these is how we are to manage the urgent, serious environmental problems in the Baltic Sea. Another is how we can transform the Baltic Sea region into a stronger engine for growth and development. We hope that our efforts will have an impact on people's everyday lives. We also hope that the strategy can serve as a source of inspiration for other EU regions. There is already talk of an EU strategy for the Danube region.

Relations with the **EU's neighbours** are extremely important. We will continue to work on developing the European Neighbourhood Policy, both the Eastern Partnership and within the framework of the Union for the Mediterranean.

Continuing the **enlargement process** is of strategic importance for our welfare and to ensure peace and progress in a united Europe. It is of central importance that the EU stands by its commitments and the established principles in the area of enlargement. The pace at which closer ties with the EU are made will be determined by the progress of reform in each country.

The **EU's voice in the world is gaining strength**, but we must become better at making use of it. The Swedish Presidency will work to strengthen the EU's role as a global actor with a clear agenda for peace, development, democracy and human rights. Regional issues such as Afghanistan,

Pakistan, the Middle East, Iran and North Korea require global cooperation.

I am looking forward to developing relations with the new US Administration. The prospects of successful transatlantic cooperation have seldom been so positive. To achieve success, we must show that the EU can deliver.

The summits that we are preparing with Brazil, India, China, Russia, South Africa, Ukraine and the USA will be major opportunities to discuss global challenges.

Mr/Madam Speaker,

These and many other challenges will be on the agenda during the Swedish Presidency.

We hope and believe that together we can drive the EU agenda forward in an open, efficient and results-oriented manner during the coming six months.

This is a challenge that we take on with great purposefulness.

Effective European cooperation is perhaps more crucial than ever before.

Today's challenges do not recognise national borders. They require joint, cross-border responses.

Our vision is a strong, effective Europe that has its starting point in people's everyday lives, and sees the opportunities offered by cooperation.

A Europe in which joint responsibility for the challenges of today and tomorrow is the focus.

Thank you Mr/Madam Speaker!