

27 August 2010

**Joint center-left agreement on Afghanistan**  
**Social Democratic Party**  
**Left Party**  
**Green Party**

Afghanistan is one of the world's poorest countries. Centuries of war and great-power rivalry have plagued the Afghan people. The average age is low, and infant mortality high. The UN has described Afghanistan as one of the worst countries in the world for women to live. Uncertainty in the region, not least in Pakistan, has aggravated the situation. There is only one solution for sustainable progress, and that is based on political agreement, backed up by massive support from the UN and the international community.

For a great many years, Sweden has had a unique and far-reaching development relationship with Afghanistan. It is vital that the international community does not fail the Afghan people once again. From our center-left perspective, we believe that civil aid to Afghanistan must increase substantially. We propose investing resources from the aid budget into more education, health care, infrastructure and support for the very weak Afghan police force. We would also put particular emphasis on combating corruption, both in Afghan society and in the international aid effort.

Sweden is also one of the 47 nations contributing to the NATO-led security assistance force, ISAF, which was established by a resolution of the UN Security Council. Sweden has contributed militarily since the end of 2001, and has had security responsibility for four provinces in northern Afghanistan since 2006. The mission involves around 500 Swedish and 200 Finnish soldiers working jointly with the Afghan security forces.

Sweden and the other nations in ISAF are in Afghanistan under the authority of a UN resolution to secure a possible route to peace and development. This requires a new strategy. **We will propose a new mandate for the Swedish military mission in autumn 2010, but we will not increase the number of Swedish soldiers, which the Conservative Government considers necessary.** The old military strategy has failed, and it is time to develop a new civil strategy for Swedish support for Afghanistan. **The Swedish PRT in Afghanistan must, therefore, be civilian led from 2011.**

On 18 September, the day before our own election, a parliamentary election is to be held in Afghanistan. This election is vital for the future of democracy. Unfortunately, the presidential election last summer was not an election that moved the cause of democracy forwards.

During the summer, the Kabul Conference adopted a number of concrete timetables for sustainable progress, transferring responsibility for security and combating corruption. At the moment, the process of creating conditions for the transfer of responsibility for security and development totally to the Afghans is at a delicate stage. To strengthen the capabilities of the Afghan army and police, Sweden's contribution over the next few years must focus more on education and joint training.

Early next year, the ISAF will begin the process of successively, province by province, transferring responsibility for security to the Afghan authorities. We in the Center-left group

now take the view that one or more of the provinces for which Sweden currently has responsibility can be transferred early in the next government's term of office. **A Center-left government will, therefore, begin withdrawal during early 2011. Further reductions will take place by stages during the next parliament as the transfer continues.**

**We note with satisfaction that the international Kabul Conference gave unanimous backing to the goal that the Afghan government will lead all military operations throughout Afghanistan by the end of 2014 at the latest. We also welcome the fact that an internationally-agreed end date has been set for the entire ISAF mission.** For this to happen, Swedish military involvement must be phased out well before this date. **A Center-left government will complete troop withdrawals no later than the first half of 2013.**

Given what we know of the situation in the provinces where Sweden is represented, this strategy will be fully achieved. After the transfer, Swedish involvement will focus entirely on civil aid and training for the Afghan security structure. Accordingly, Sweden will gradually reduce its military presence – not increase it as the Conservative Alliance intends.

Our view is in line with many other countries who contribute to ISAF. The USA will evaluate the results of its increased military effort in 2011, and will begin a reduction in its forces next year. During 2011, it will be possible to assess the progress of the transition process, and what the increased civil and military support from the international community has achieved. At that point, Sweden will need a new integrated strategy for our commitment in Afghanistan.

We have now agreed our joint strategy for Sweden's commitment in Afghanistan during the next parliament. The Conservative government must now say whether they seriously intend to increase the Swedish military contribution. As recently as 8 August, in the newspaper Dagens Nyheter, they stated that they want to send more soldiers to Afghanistan. Is the government proposing to increase troop numbers even if Sweden begins to transfer responsibility for security to the Afghan government? Does the government intend to send more Swedish soldiers to Afghanistan when almost every other country is discussing an exit strategy? If this is the case, the Conservative government will isolate Sweden and act against the Kabul Conference's goal of phasing out the international military mission by 2014.