



Capturing Technology. Rethinking Arms Control.



Federal Foreign Office

Ministers, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all,

Thank you, Foreign Minister Maas, for providing a much-needed platform for discussing global security and emerging technologies, as well as rethinking arms control and nuclear disarmament.

Let me start by putting today's theme in a broader political context. Unfortunately, we are seeing a trend towards weakening multilateralism and the return of nuclear weapons as a major political issue.

This development has several dimensions that we need to take into account, including:

- the gradual dismantlement of the nuclear arms control system, which has served the world very well since the end of the Cold War;
- deadlocked multilateral frameworks, which have become victims of entrenched positions and a severe lack of mutual trust;
- the challenges facing the JCPOA, the situation on the Korean peninsula and the current tensions in South Asia;
- development of new capabilities, including low-yield warheads and delivery systems, which risk an increase in global arsenals for the first time since the mid-1980s; and
- irresponsible political rhetoric suggesting the possibility of using nuclear weapons.

Reversing these negative trends will be highly challenging, not least when they are compounded by the technological dimension we are discussing today. Yet – in view of the increasing global security risks – there can be few more urgent tasks.

This is also why Sweden will put non-proliferation and disarmament at the top of our foreign affairs agenda for the coming years.

Let me now turn to four specific topics on today's agenda: missile technology development, lethal autonomous weapons systems, cyber security and biotechnology.

Firstly, I am particularly concerned about the spread of new developments in missile technologies. Ballistic missile programmes are fuelling insecurities in the Middle East and Northeast Asia, and are posing a threat to international peace and security. At the same time, the trend towards the development of hypersonic missiles is creating new and serious security challenges.

As the current Chair, Sweden has facilitated discussions on how to strengthen the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, and I appreciate Germany's engagement on this issue. When debating how to regulate new missile technology, we must also consider how we can promote non-proliferation.



Secondly, on lethal autonomous weapons systems, Sweden is among those countries that have engaged actively in the discussions in Geneva and elsewhere, and I have commissioned a study by the Swedish International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) into the issue.

We do not yet see fully autonomous lethal weapons systems in the armouries of states. However, given the fast pace of technological development, this is a matter that needs to be prioritised.

Important principles include the full applicability of international humanitarian law to all kinds of weapons systems in armed conflict, including any possible future lethal autonomous weapons systems.

I would also like to highlight that states have an obligation under the Geneva Conventions to conduct legal and technical reviews of any new weapon they develop or acquire for their armed forces.

Given where we currently stand on lethal autonomous weapons systems, Sweden sees a great deal of merit in the proposal put forward by Germany and France to develop and adopt a political declaration. It would allow us to state, and commit to, the points and principles on lethal autonomous weapons systems on which we have common understanding.

Thirdly, on cyber security, let me initially stress that cyber security is not only about the defence of states and the resilience of critical infrastructure. It is also about our long term economic development, freedom of speech and information, as well as the security, integrity and rights of individuals. The security-oriented debate must not be misused to undermine the largely positive effects of a global, open and free cyberspace.

However, new technologies, including those with civilian and non-military applications, can create vulnerabilities and threats. Preventing and countering these threats will have to become an integral part of our foreign and security policies.

I am pleased to see the rapid development of policies and instruments at



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international level, particularly the EU's cyber-diplomatic toolbox and the OSCE confidence-building measures.

Finally, there is arguably no other area of technology where the stakes are as high as in the health sector – both in terms of the enormous potential for benefits to mankind and the terrible consequences of accidents or misuse for nefarious purposes. The pace of development in biotechnology in recent years has only been rivalled by that of computing power.

It is important for us to continue to assess nationally, and at EU and global level, how synthetic biology and related technologies could plausibly be regulated in ways that enhance our common security.

The multilateral instruments protecting us against misuse include the prohibitions in the Biological Weapons Convention and the strengthened legislation and national controls that states are obligated to introduce under UN Security Council resolution 1540.

However, it is important that these instruments keep pace with relevant advances in biotechnology, and I am therefore particularly pleased that Germany took over Sweden's former role as Vice-Chair of the 1540 Committee at the beginning of this year.

Ministers, ladies and gentlemen,

Although many of these issues are highly complex and technical, they do share one thing. They are, at their core, political issues, and must be solved politically.

Something that Foreign Minister Maas has rightly highlighted here – and in Munich – is that the multilateral system and our own engagement are key to finding the solutions we seek. The negative trend of less cooperation on arms control and disarmament needs to be reversed.

In conclusion, let me return to the topic of nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation, which is a clear priority for the Swedish Government. We must all cooperate and do our utmost to reach a successful outcome at the NPT Review



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Conference in 2020. To this end, Sweden has launched a political initiative to pursue an ambitious and realistic approach that can reverse the present negative trend and move us forward.

Our common efforts to strengthen the disarmament regime cannot wait any longer. We must now ask ourselves ‘what is the next step?’ How can we successfully create platforms between nuclear and non-nuclear states? Who can we mobilise to engage in disarmament and weapons control issues? These are questions that need to be discussed at forums such as these.

Foreign Minister Maas,

I sincerely welcome your personal engagement on these issues. I look forward to working together with you, Foreign Minister Blok and others to defend and promote multilateralism.