

Talkpoints – Defense Minister Pål Jonson

Swedish National Day June 6, 2024,

- Ambassador Thunborg,
- Secretary Teodoro,
- Excellencies,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,
- Good evening!

- It is my great honor to be a part of the Swedish National Day celebration in Manila and address you this evening.

- Last week, I participated in the Shangri-La dialogue in Singapore, where President Marcos Jr gave an excellent keynote address.

- His speech laid out both the challenges which we are facing,

- and the great possibilities that arise from partnership between likeminded countries around the world.

- Countries like the Philippines and Sweden.

- Our two nations have enjoyed diplomatic relations for 77 years.

- Our partnership has always been characterized by close people-to-people relations,

- flows of trade and investments,

- and engagements for peace, stability, and security.

- We share both interests and values in a number of areas.

- The Euro-Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific regions are more inter-linked than ever before.

- As a trade and innovation-driven economy, Sweden is reliant on the excellence and constant development of our industry,

- and on good trading relations with partners around the world.

- Therefore, safe sea lines of communication and freedom of navigation are core security interest to us.

- Let me say how pleased I am that the free trade negotiations between the EU and the Philippines have resumed.

- More than 40 Swedish companies are present in the Philippines today, and they are active in virtually every sector.

- From infrastructural development and green transition to defense, security, aerospace, cyber and space.
- The IKEA store here in Manila is the largest in the world. This is a case in point, as much as one can be, about our close relations.

- Excellencies,
- Ladies and gentlemen,
- The international system is more than ever before shaped by great power competition and increased rivalry.
- Russia's illegal, full-scale war against Ukraine is not only devastating for Ukraine and its population,
- but it is also a threat to European and global security at large.
- Continued and consistent support to Ukraine is of outmost importance.
- And we very much appreciate the Philippines' principled stance on condemning the Russian aggression.
- On March 7, 2024, Sweden became a member of NATO.
- By our membership, we will be safer and NATO stronger.
- But just as the Philippines we are also deepening our bilateral relations with the United States.
- On the fifth of December I signed our Defence Cooperation Agreement with the US Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin.
- [Just a few months after the Philippines signed the updated Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement]
- Simultaneously, Sweden is enhancing our engagements in the Indo-Pacific.
- In this context, a strong partnership with the Philippines is of paramount importance.
- We have a lot in common.
- We are both dedicated to peace and this is very important to us.
- But we also know that peace comes through strength.
- And that is why both countries are investing heavily in our armed forces. It is an investment into our continued security and freedom.

- Peace and security have indeed for a long time been a priority area in the Swedish-Philippine relation.
- Sweden has since many years actively supported the Bangsamoro Peace Process,
- and our two countries also cooperate extensively on matters such as;
- promoting and defending the UN Charter,
- the rules-based international order
- and respect for international law, including UNCLOS.
- Let me express my deep concern for the repeated dangerous maneuvers against Philippine vessels, that have been taking place in the West Philippine Sea and the South China Sea.
- These acts put human lives at risk, undermine regional stability and international norms, and threaten security in the region and beyond.
- These are not only threats to your national security, but also to our common global security.
- Sweden stands firmly behind the call of the European Union and others for restraint and full respect of international law - to ensure peaceful resolution of differences and a reduction of tensions in the region.
- The UN Charter, UNCLOS, and the Arbitration Award of 2016, as well as other relevant international rules and regulations relating to the safety of life at sea, should be respected at all times.

- Excellencies,
- Sweden is just about to launch its Defence Policy Strategy for the Indo-Pacific. We are looking to enhance defence dialogues with partners in the region.
- I came from Australia yesterday where I met with my counterpart Richard Marles.
- And I will also host the Japanese Minister of Defence Minoru Kihara in Sweden in July.
- Our armed forces are also engaging with regional partners, whilst being mindful of priorities and partners' interests.
- Joining regional exercises, adding LNO to regional commands, and sending officers on higher education in the region are some of the possibilities.
- We also ready to deepen our collaborate in areas such as defence innovation, cyber and space if the Philippines so wishes.
- Sweden can and wants to be a long-term partner to the Philippines in security and defense.

- Our joint Memorandum of Understanding on defense cooperation is an expression of our engagement.
- And I am happy that we recently signed an Implementing Arrangement for defense acquisition.
- And most of all I am glad that our cooperation is closer, deeper and more comprehensive than it has ever been before.
- Thank you!