**Sweden has made an unexpected and very quick decision to join NATO, after decades of neutrality. Norway, Denmark and Iceland have been members of the Alliance since the begining. Why now and how come you weren't already in NATO given the extended military cooperation with the Alliance?**

Russia’s illegal, unprovoked and brutal aggression on Ukraine has given rise to a structural and long term deterioration of the European security order and has showed Russia’s wish to resort to the cold war big power logics. This situation brings extensive and lasting consequences for the countries in Europe, including Sweden. For Sweden, this meant that we had to reconsider how to best guarantee the security of our country. These considerations have formally taken the form of deliberations in an interparliamentary working group consisting of all eight political parties in the Swedish Parliament (the Riksdag), led by the Foreign Minister. All political parties agree on the analysis of the new security situation due to Russian aggression. Six of the political parties considered that the new situation required Sweden joining NATO. Also, a majority of the Swedish population has expressed in polls the wish to join NATO. The Swedish Government decided on Monday 16 May to inform NATO of our wish to join. This means that Sweden is changing a 200 year old practice of neutrality policy and non-participation in military alliances. Still during this period, we have of course been accepting the solidarity clause of the EU charter and we have been a partner country to NATO. When NATO was created, Sweden could not join mainly because of Finland, our closest neighbour, having the longest border with Russia. Sweden’s and Finland’s history, security and future are closely linked. While we are taking our individual decisions on our security policy, the fact that Finland and Sweden are taking these decisions at the same time will raise the threshold for military conflicts and will have a deterring effect in northern Europe.

**Did Sweden feel in real danger of being attacked by Russia?**

Clearly, Russia’s aggression in Ukraine shows what Putin is willing and capable of doing. This is a threat to all of us and we have to be prepared for the *possibility* of similar behaviour in our immediate neighbourhood. The decision of joining NATO is part of this analysis.

**The Nordic countries' decision to join NATO will have "serious military and political consequences," Vladimir Putin said. This decision might push V Putin to be even harsher??**

Yes, this has been Putin’s previous rhetoric, which we must be aware of. Putin’s immediate reactions to Finland and Sweden’s decision have been less threatening. He has said that he sees no problem with these countries and that there would be no direct threat to Russia, but that it depends on the military infrastructure that will be put on the territories. Obviously Putin did not expect that his brutal aggression in Ukraine would have as a result that Sweden and Finland would join NATO. But this is part of our right to take our own decisions regarding our security, the same as should be the case for Ukraine. Since we know what Putin is capable of, we also know that we must be prepared for harsher actions but we do not see an immediate military threat.

**Are you afraid that, increasingly isolated, V. Putin will use mass destruction  weapons?**

Nuclear weapons are a key component of Russia's strategic deterrence and Russia has nuclear capability deployed in Sweden’s neighbourhood including in the Baltic Sea region. Of course Putin’s references to nuclear weapons use are worrying. The Russian population is being prepared to tolerate and legitimize such a scenario and the threshold for threats of nuclear weapons use is clearly lower.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said the Nordic countries would be welcomed "with open arms". However, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has said that the accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO would be a "mistake".

Mr Erdogan accuses Sweden of supporting PKK terrorism and refuses to accept Swedish negotiators. How does Sweden respond to this accusation and how does it intend to convince Mr Erdogan otherwise? Is Sweden expecting a quick accession, without any opposition, or could some more difficult negotiations follow?

It is for the NATO members to accept Sweden and Finland as new members, a process that we of course hope will be quick, both to shorten the period of vulnerability to any types of threats as much as possible and to be able to contribute to the NATO:s collective defence as quickly as possible, to the benefit of the Alliance. Sweden would bring considerable capabilities, in terms of fighter aircrafts, radar, submarines and knowledge about Russia, to name a few things. We have understood that Sweden would be considered an additional asset to the Alliance. We are aware of President Erdogan’s words and several contacts have been made between our countries in order to clarify things, including our Foreign minister talking to her Turkish counterpart. We note the views of several other countries, such as the US and Germany and also the Secretary General of NATO, that the issues must and will be solved.

**What changes should Sweden undergo in defense policy after joining NATO? More soldiers, more military bases, more expenses?**

Joining NATO also means contributing to the common budget, which Sweden of course is prepared to do. Sweden has already, before having taken the decision to join NATO, decided to increase the military spending to 2% of GDP. This process has already started and it includes for example additional military capacities and personnel on the island of Gotland in the Baltic sea.

**One of the great difficulties is the dependence of European countries on Russian oil and gas. How is Sweden faring? What sources of electricity and heat does Sweden use for domestic and industrial consumption?**

Sweden has the fortunate blessing of a lot of hydro power. Together with other renewable energy sources and nuclear power, we are on the way to fossil free energy as the source of electricity in Sweden. This means we are not depending on Russian gas and oil for our electricity. Sweden only uses 2% gas for electricity overall and half of that has come from Russia.  8% of all the crude oil that is imported to Sweden traditionally comes from Russia. It will be possible to replace all of this.

**European leaders have different views on how to seek peace. If Boris Johnson, for example, shows utter intransigence, E. Macron says Russia should not be humiliated. What is Sweden's position? Should Russia be defeated militarily or should V. Putin receive an acceptable way out?**

Russia is committing an illeagal and unprovoked aggression on Ukraine and war crimes and other breaches against international humanitarian law are being committed. In Russia, Putin is pushing the country to become even more totalitarian, with increased repression, media oppression and jailing and killing of persons with opposite views. We do not believe that this situation will improve any time soon.

**What geopolitical changes do you think this war will generate? Will the EU, NATO come out of it strengthened or, on the contrary, will the economic crisis erode solidarity?**

The aggression on Ukraine has led to a remarkable unity and solidarity within the EU, that Putin did not expect. Rather, he was hoping to drive wedges between our countries and to sow fear among us. Instead, we have unity in the application of severe sanctions against Russia. Two Nordic countries, Sweden and Finland, stand ready to join NATO. The is related to Putin’s aggression on and his wish to change the European security order, which includes the right of countries to their borders, to freedom and to choose their own security policies. It is an attack on democracy that will have repercussions for Europe, north America and beyond for a very long time. Economic crises is here already also as a result of the covid pandemic and now compounded by the war in Ukraine. Let us remember that this additional burden from war is the fault of Putin. We will all need to prepare for economic challenges ahead and we should focus on finding solutions to some immediate situations such as ensuring the export of grains from Ukraine, that so many countries in the world are depending on. It is great that Romania is helping out with this for example via the port in Constanta.