

Where people can grow
The Swedish Centre Party's Statement of General Policies
Approved in Västervik 19th June 2001

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Introduction

The Centre Party has a strong belief in people's desire and ability to take responsibility and participate. Our desire to renew democracy and politics is based on this belief. This statement of general policies is intended to act as an ideological compass for the journey into the future.

Today's political parties are largely the fruits of the conflicts of interests that developed when Sweden became industrialised. Today, as society changes, the political parties must meet new challenges.

A party that wants to be alive and eager must develop its way of working to the reality of the 21st century. This requires on the one hand openness to different ways of showing ones involvement whilst on the other hand basing this on a foundation of common values that can create a greater whole. An important role for a political party is to be a link between official decision-makers and the involved citizens in the society.

The Centre Party believes in each person's ability to create and take responsibility for them and for others. This is why we feel it is natural that political involvement can take different forms. The Centre Party wants to encourage new initiatives, creativity and enjoyment in order to form a political movement for the 21st century.

The Centre Party wants to represent a political leadership which is clear when it comes to fundamental values and which is at the same time open and welcoming to all those who, in their own way, want to take part and make the political ideas become reality. Dialogue and not least the ability to listen are the most important instruments for leadership. The Centre Party wants to be a forum for a continuous discussion about society and the future, where each person is met with equal respect.

Consequently, this **statement of general policies** has not been drawn up as a reference book for all the questions in politics. It would quickly appear old-fashioned. Instead, it is a compass to hold in your hand, to serve as a guide in the daily work of politics in a changing world. A **statement of general policies**, which has been shaped in discussions with thousands of members of the Centre movement in Sweden. It should be used to stimulate consideration, reflection and discussion.

From the ideas we describe here - about self-determination, quality of life, spirit of enterprise and everyone's equal opportunities - concrete policies are formed in decision making assemblies in municipalities and regions, in the Swedish parliament, in the European Union and internationally. The Centre Party is a party that has shown that it can take responsibility and carry out changes in society. But it is also a party that has a living and open sense of community, that provides the opportunities and tools for people to grow.

The Centre Party's National Assembly
Västervik, 19th June 2001

People are the starting point

The equal worth and rights of everyone are the basis of the Centre Party policies. The ultimate goal is that everyone will be able to grow as a person and have the possibility to realise his or her dreams. Responsibility for one another and nature will be guiding forces as society is shaped.

Characteristic for mankind is the ability to be something more - to break boundaries and develop as a person and fellow being. Everyone has the right to decide for themselves how to realise their opportunities as an independent, moral and creative being. This is a freedom that only may be limited by the same freedom and rights of others.

All people are equal. Each person has the same rights and obligations, regardless of gender, outlook on life, sexual reference, dwelling, ethnic or social background. Freedom and human rights know no boundaries. No cultural boundaries. No national boundaries. No geographical boundaries. The differences of people are an asset.

The Centre Party believes in every person's ability to develop their opportunities and take responsibility both for themselves and for others. The starting point is that all people have a free will and thereby can be held responsible for their actions. Likewise the Centre Party assumes that mankind is a sensible being that develops through experience and education. These ideas are central to humanism, a current of ideas in which our democracy finds support for example. With people's freedom comes the ability and requirement to take responsibility for one's actions. People are born and grow up under different conditions but we must have the same opportunities.

Mankind has a spiritual dimension in the ability to develop 'brotherly' qualities such as empathy, unselfishness and love. With this starting point, the Centre Party's outlook on mankind has its historical foundation in the Christian outlook on life and in the humanistic demand for respect for human dignity. Every person is unique and irreplaceable and human dignity is superior to other values.

Each person is part of a social context. It is in relationships with others that the individual finds meaning and security. These contexts must be cared for and developed so that each person can grow. The value of a spirit of community lies in people giving one another mutual support.

Mankind is also a part of an ecological context. This provides the prerequisites and also the outer framework for mankind's activities. Mankind has a unique position in that no other living creature has the power and knowledge needed to change nature and reshape its world. Consequently, mankind also has a special responsibility for other creatures and for preserving ecological systems. This responsibility stretches over generations. The ability of mankind to alter is not matched by the same ability to see the long-term consequences of its actions. An understanding of our imperfections and humility in the presence of all living things must govern the actions of mankind.

Everyone wants to be able to shape his or her own life. They strive for external security such as food for the day and a roof over their heads. They also want to experience an inner

security, such as the joy of living, love and a sense of belonging. Security is a pre-requirement for real freedom. Those who feel secure can try their wings, and dare to do so.

As creative beings, people need an outlet for creativity, imagination and curiosity. As a moral being they also need an ethical foundation, to be able to distinguish right and wrong, good and evil. People need something to live off and something to live for.

The Centre Party wants to re-create society as a place where every person can grow. This means a decentralised society characterised by freedom and equality. The Centre Party's outlook on mankind is the foundation for its policies.

The Swedish Centre Party's political ideas - conditions for growth

The ideology of the Centre Party can be summarised in the concept of eco-humanism. It unites humanism's respect for human dignity and its belief in every person's possibilities with ecology's understanding of the conditions nature stipulates for people and society. The Centre Party's outlook on society is characterised by a strong belief in individuals working together. From this basis of ideas the Centre Party's practical policies are shaped. There are a number of central values that characterise the policies of the Centre Party:

- **Self determination**
- **Quality of life**
- **Equal opportunities**
- **Enterprising spirit**

These values are the basis for the Centre Party's desire to decentralise, to spread power and responsibility to individuals and communities. The Centre Party emphasises, like no other party, the requirement for equal living conditions in the whole country. This is best achieved in a decentralised society, characterised by nearness and small-scale enterprises. In order for people in all parts of the world to have equal opportunities it is necessary to bridge the gap between rich and poor countries.

The Centre Party is a party that takes responsibility in decision-making assemblies and turns political ideas into reality.

The whole of this **statement of general policies** describes the Centre Party's view of mankind and society. This chapter is a summary of some important aspects that together separate the Centre Party from other political parties and ideologies.

Trust in the individual - alone and in collaboration

The policies of the Centre Party are based on a strong belief in every person, and his or her own ability to create and take responsibility for themselves and others.

The Centre Party believes in the creative ability of mankind. Creativity lay the foundation for economic prosperity and culture. It is also a pre-requirement for individuals to be able to grow as humans.

The policies of the Centre Party are also founded on a strong belief in people's ability to take responsibility for themselves and others. This is why we want to return power to the people and support people's voluntary collaboration and social networks.

The view of society that identifies the Centre Party is a strong belief in individuals in collaboration. Through history this has been expressed in both political decisions and practical work in the Centre Party movement. This view of society is in contrast to both the anonymous collective of the left and the view of economists of people as customers.

People have different pre-requisites and opportunities. But the Centre Party policies rest on a fundamental belief in each and every person, according to their own pre-requisites, having the opportunity to create, take responsibility and participate - and thereby grow as humans.

This can also be captured in a vision of a 'community where everyone is needed'. The wording captures the vision of a caring society that puts people and their needs first. The starting point is that everyone has the right to feel they are needed. When this is achieved greater value is added to the whole. This vision is in stark contrast to a development where some are needed and others are left over.

There is a difference between individualism and egoism. In individualism rests the desire to decide for oneself, but it can just as easily mean acting for the good of others. Egoism, on the other hand, means selfishness without regard for others. Groups can also practise egoism when they strive for benefits to the detriment of others. Modern society must be built on a mutually dependent individualism, where people feel responsible for themselves and others, for their own society and the world as a whole.

Conditions for growth

Self-determination, quality of life, enterprising spirit and equal opportunities for everyone are important values that together characterise the Centre Party's policies and that shape the conditions for people to grow.

Based on belief in every person's possibilities, a policy must be created by which people are given conditions to grow as humans and realise the best in themselves. Such a policy also leads to an added value being created for the whole, for the whole of society - in the form of growing material standards as well as social values and a better quality of life.

Self-determination

The Centre Party wants to strengthen each person's self-determination or empowerment - to quite simply give them power over their own lives. This requires a policy to counteract large bureaucratic systems and an ambition not to steer peoples everyday life in detail. At the same time policies must strongly defend the individual person's rights in comparison with, for example, large capital interests. Personal ownership is an important basis for self-determination.

The principal of strengthening self-determination must also be applied when making joint decisions. In small groups and contexts it is easier for people to take part and have some influence. The further away power is the more difficult it is to influence it. It is also more anonymous. This is why decisions must be made as close to the people who are affected by them as possible. The voluntary networks of people must deal with their own problems as far as is possible. When this is not enough the Centre Party wants in the first instance to use local democracy. The local, democratic, self-determination will be strengthened in relation to higher decision making levels.

The quality of life

All politics must begin in mankind's longing for happiness and a meaningful existence.

The aim is to give room for people to make their idea of a good life come true.

This is why it must be possible to decide over their time and have the possibility to develop as people. A policy for the quality of life is founded on an all-encompassing view of mankind as a biological, social, spiritual and feeling being.

It is important that society does not only have material goals. Self-determination, security and opportunities for development are important when locally creating continuity and completeness. In this way participation and trust can grow, making it possible to form all-encompassing solutions at all levels in society.

These solutions must have the purpose of forming a socially, economically and ecologically sustainable development. A good living environment, with functioning recycling, is a crucial requirement for the quality of life.

Equal opportunities

The Centre Party was founded as a movement with its roots in a strong conviction for social justice and in a struggle against exclusion and repression. The notion of justice and equal opportunities is still a central idea for the Centre Party.

The Centre Party's view on justice is a matter of equality but not uniformity. Everyone shall have equal possibilities to form his or her own life plans and be able to grow as humans on his or her own terms. This can be expressed as equal opportunities to be different and it means for example that norms and systems must be changed. The subordinate position of women that has existed for thousands of years must be changed. Different ethnic groups are treated unevenly. Depending on which group they find themselves in - sometimes chosen, sometimes enforced - individuals are discriminated against. Every person must be respected for what they are, not for the group that they belong to. This also means that different parts of the country, or the world, shall be given equal conditions for development.

To make it possible for all individuals, both men and women, to grow and take responsibility the gender based power structure that exists in society must be stopped and the patriarchal order removed. For the Centre Party, feminism means a common responsibility for women and men to change society from outside - at individual, community and symbolic levels. This requires measures for settling the accounts with collective injustices whilst at the same time strengthening the individual so that the final choice of life plan can be made. Through a feminist perspective, the conditions can be created for a society where both women and men can develop and where the systems do not divide power and resources according to gender. For women to be able to be empowered it is vital that the view on women as objects is deleted. If women are seen as objects it is hard for them to be citizens, who can take power.

The ultimate goal is to attain freedom for both men and women, including freedom from those norms and structures that shape the social gender role for both women and men. This perspective can be summarised in the idea of centre-feminism.

A policy for equal opportunities must aim for a basic sense of security for all, in order for everyone to experience a sense of freedom.

Enterprising spirit

The development of society depends on people's enterprising spirit and creative abilities. This applies to the economy and businesses as well as to welfare, social care and people's cultural needs.

Policies must not be formulated so that they stifle people's spirit of enterprise with exaggerated regulation or taxation. Neither must policies leave people so insecure that no-one dares to invest or try out new ideas. It is the belief in the creative power of mankind that leads

the Centre Party to strive for giving room for enterprising people and entrepreneurs in all contexts. In this way people can create new vigour and growth.

Responsibility, co-operation and results

The Centre Party is a party that takes responsibility and turns political ideas into reality.

The Centre Party has taken responsibility for realising its policies through participation in government and through leading many municipalities. The Centre Party can co-operate to get results. Politics in a democracy assume an open, factual and practical attitude.

Fundamentalism, prejudice and floating utopias are the opposites of the open society based on continual dialogue and the continual testing of different solutions. Blind faith in central planning, as well as blind faith in quick system changes can throw people into insecurity.

Politics requires a constant balancing between different principles. Classic questions are the balance between freedom and security or between democracy and individual rights. For the Centre Party the answer is seldom one or the other extremity, rather a striving to achieve a sensible balance.

Decentralisation - the possibility of our time

The Centre Party wants to decentralise. This means spreading power, resources and responsibility to individual people and communities. This ambition is more important today than ever before.

The decentralisation of power and resources

The Centre Party's desire to decentralise is founded primarily on the belief in people's ability to take responsibility for themselves and others. Giving people power and confidence to take care of both their own and shared resources is then a central issue.

In order to strengthen personal self-determination and local self-government, decisions must be made as close to people as possible. Decentralisation is thereby an important democratic instrument. Decentralisation is also a matter of justice. It is only then that society's power and resources are spread so that equal opportunities are created for everyone. Naturally certain joint decisions are also required to solve general and shared problems in the state or in international bodies.

In other words, decentralisation is about giving room for people's own initiatives and giving them room to grow. In order to provide conditions for this, the tools - in the form of for example communication, services and education - must be near everyone.

Diversity

Problems and conditions can be similar when making comparisons between countries, regions and companies. But there are no standard solutions. Each unit must find its own solution based on its own situation. This is why the Centre Party feels that it is good if there is a large

local variation in how problems are solved. Towns, regions and countries will develop differently. As long as this is linked to high demands for justice and equal opportunities it will lead to greater dynamics and a diversity that favours both the individual and society as a whole.

Decentralisation also means recognising the diversity amongst people and seeing the differences between people as an asset. This can mean for example that the gender perspective in politics becomes important in order to make it possible for women to take power on an equal footing.

Good living environment

The decentralised society provides the prerequisites for a good living environment and high quality of life. It is important to have control over your own life and over local resources. When housing and businesses are squeezed together it often causes a loss of freedom and space problems. This limits both the economic growth and the adaptation to nature's natural cycles of use and re-use. A policy that wants to continue concentrating things does not fit in with sustainable development.

The 21st century - the age of decentralisation.

The challenges of this new age point at decentralisation as a political strategy. The recipe for success during the 1900's dealt for the most part with mass production, centralisation and large-scale enterprises. But large and rigid systems are difficult to change in time with the surroundings and their new requirements and demands. The 21st century is characterised more by flexibility, variation and diversity. Important changes in our time, such as the knowledge based economy, information technology, globalisation and more individual values all suggest increased decentralisation. As far as possible, large organisations ought to be dismantled and rebuilt as a network of smaller, self-governing units.

A decentralised society is a more robust society, less vulnerable to strains. A decentralised society is able to meet new challenges and the same time care for the human desire for a sense of community - it is a society where people have the chance to grow.

Freedom and justice in a living democracy

Freedom, justice and democracy are central concepts in almost every political ideology. But these concepts can be interpreted in different ways, which in practice leads to differences in policies. In order to be able to differentiate between different political ideas and parties the meaning of the words must be explained

Freedom

Freedom requires both self-determination and the tools for us to actually use our freedom. Freedom and responsibility belong together. Each person's freedom requires that everyone take responsibility for more than just for themselves.

Free amongst equals.

People are only free amongst equals, when no one ranks higher than anyone else does. In this sense there are far too many who are not free. In general it's a question of power and certain people's power over others. Today, as before, power is shared unevenly. Freeing people is a question of dealing with unequal power relationships. It places demands on everyone as a fellow being to react when others are denied equal opportunities to completely be themselves.

One side of freedom - self-determination

One side of freedom is the right to self-determination. It can only be restricted when it limits someone else's freedom. And such restrictions must be made very carefully so that they do not cause greater problems than those they solve.

Undeniable parts of freedom or the right to self-determination are:

- ? Freedom of conscience. Everyone has the right to choose political, religious and moral outlooks on life
- ? Freedom of expression. Every person has the right to express their views, even those that are contrary to accepted norms and ethical concepts. Freedom of expression can only be restricted by consideration for other, especially important, values. Every restriction shall be regulated in constitutional law and take consideration of the fact that a broad freedom of expression is essential for democracy.
- ? Personal integrity. People have the right to protection of their person and property. They also have the right to a private sphere and to choose how open this one is to others. The personal sphere shall be protected from both individual and public encroachment.

The other side of freedom - real possibilities.

The other side of the concept of freedom deals with having the real possibilities of self-determination. The fact is that real freedom assumes more than just not being oppressed. Alternatives must exist and thereby the freedom of choice. One must also be equipped in order really to be able to make one's own choices and take responsibility for one's decisions. Investments so that more people can take part on equal terms increase the freedom of for example the handicapped or ill. Education is crucial for freedom. Education fosters people as citizens and paves the way for their own upkeep.

An understanding about the different living conditions for people is vital in order to create freedom for everyone. A clear perspective on gender roles is, for example, important for making the existing possibilities available for those that do not correspond to the existing male norm. It requires a general change in society built on respect for every individual.

Freedom for all must come before unlimited freedom for just a few. This in turn requires that people use some of their own freedom for joint decisions. The shared room for action increases and thereby everyone's freedom does too.

Real freedom requires a level of security so that the consequences of a mistake are not disastrous. A safety net of basic security must therefore exist that allows people to dare trying, even if they run the risk failure.

Joint responsibility - solidarity

Freedom and responsibility belong together. Everyone's freedom requires that everyone take responsibility not just for himself or herself. Freedom shall not be restricted by time. This entails a responsibility for future generations. Freedom can not be restricted in space. This means responsibility for all people in other parts of Sweden and in other countries. Freedom is based on mutuality so that people feel responsible for the freedom of others.

The responsibility for others and the whole is in other words an all-embracing value for the Centre Party. But concrete responsibility increases with closeness. The clearest concrete responsibility for a person is for the self, one's family and one's nearby surroundings. Responsibility is of course at its greatest in the small things, but all people must take responsibility in the bigger things too.

Joint and mutual responsibility is the real meaning of the word solidarity. People's solidarity is the basis for a functioning society. It is important that social norms and networks function and that there is mutual trust between the citizens of society. Then fewer rules and less use of official power will be needed in society.

The Centre Party wants to broaden people's freedom, in Sweden and in other countries, to allow people really to be free.

Justice

The Centre Party wants to break the deep injustices that still characterise our world, with the aim of giving people equal opportunities to steer their own situation. It is a matter of equal opportunities to be different, not of uniformity.

Equal opportunities to be different.

People in the world are born and grow up under very different conditions. This is chiefly the result of great injustices. It applies even in Sweden. The Centre Party wants to clear away inequalities that exist as a result of social background, geographical position or congenital condition.

Justice is, in other words, a matter of equal possibilities for everyone, not a matter of these possibilities being used in the same way and achieving the same result. An equality perspective of justice means that people shall be treated in the same way and have the same

access to the largest possible range of basic rights. This also means the right for the individual to decide over these rights. The Centre Party conducts a policy for equality but not for uniformity. On this understanding, inequalities can only be accepted if they lead to better results for those, who are worst off.

Differences in the form of, for example, income or properties that occur due to one's own choices or greater input can not be regarded as injustices. Differences that occur because someone has unlawfully or unjustly used their opportunities shall always be opposed. In an ideal situation the individual's road from opportunity to result will be decided by their ambitions, own choices and conscious risk taking.

Removing built-in injustice

Justice is a matter for every individual person. A policy for justice must naturally clear away built-in injustices that create different conditions for different groups depending on for example gender, age, ethnic background or where you live. This is necessary in order to liberate the individual.

Formally, all people in most of the developed states governed by law have equal opportunities. Unfortunately this is not the case in reality. Women are discriminated against because of their gender. Most of those with immigrant backgrounds bear witness to the fact that they have at one time or other been discriminated against because of their origin. Disabled people are often denied the practical possibilities of participating. Young people meet arbitrary age limits and discrimination. Through the whole history of the Centre Party, the demand for justice in the form of equal conditions for people in different regions and towns has been central. The tension between the centre and the periphery is an important cause of injustice. A centralised perspective is blind to different perspectives on the periphery.

It is a mistake to believe that Sweden is a land of equality with the same opportunities for all citizens. Taken together, individual and insulting events form a whole, which reveals built-in injustices towards, who do not meet up to the existing, often unspoken, norm. Unequal conditions do not just depend on discriminating regulations, or too few rules, they are to a greater extent a result of attitudes and stereotyped ideas.

The Centre Party shares the feministic criticism of the unjust conditions between women and men. The work for equality can not be restricted to giving the same opportunities to act in a society where men have formed the norms and rules of play. Instead it is a matter of changing the basic patterns in society and the power relationship between the sexes in order to create new structures on both women's and men's terms. The aim must be to liberate individuals from the invisible handcuffs that today lock them to the prevalent norms and attitudes with men as the superior. The change of attitude must start early in life, in the home, in pre-school and in association life.

Other built-in injustices in society must be attacked in the same way. The discussion must be led to deal with power and power relationships, about prejudices, norms and social patterns. Striving for uniform solutions must be turned to acknowledge differences and diversity. Justice is not uniformity; it is equal opportunities to be different.

The formal requirement of justice, that equal cases are treated equally and different cases are treated differently is an important starting point for a justice policy. The requirement means for example receiving the same treatment according to law and receiving the same treatment

from the authorities. But it also means that different conditions and special situations, and how they should be compensated for must be included in decisions.

Support to be able to grow under your own power

The Centre Party strives for equal opportunities for people together with people taking individual responsibility. The aim should be that people are able to avoid or break negative dependencies and have support to grow under their own power. This is a principal that works just as well in municipalities as in international co-operation. With this way of looking at things it becomes more pressing to increase people's security and own abilities by investing in, for example education, the possibility to support yourself or democratic influence, rather than simply adjusting the economic conditions afterwards.

A policy for justice must of course also mean that those, who take responsibility but fail are given new opportunities to try again and grow as humans.

Democracy

The Centre Party believes in participatory democracy where people take part in the decisions and in an ongoing discussion. The Centre Party wants to allow power to grow from below.

Democracy is the only form of government that can realise the concept of people's equal value and rights. In democracy there are equal possibilities to influence joint decisions to choose and be chosen and demand the accountability of leaders. In democracy there is personal freedom. The basis of democratic decision making is anchored in constitutional laws of freedom and rights, that power is exercised within these laws and that people have equal political opportunities.

Democracy can never be taken for granted. Even in a country with a long democratic tradition, democracy has to be recaptured by each new generation. People must be encouraged and educated in participation and responsibility.

Participatory democracy

The Centre Party believes in participatory democracy where people can take part in the daily work of society and influence decisions. The role of the citizen, with rights but also with obligations and responsibilities, is central. The Centre Party wants to deepen democracy and the democratic participation.

This ideal is in contrast to the view of democracy as being something where chosen representatives appear to have the people's mandate to exercise political power in their place. What happens between elections then becomes less important and accountability can only be demanded afterwards, in the next election. Such a view restricts democracy to a kind of service function. The decisions are taken rationally by an elite and the citizens are given service but no participation. People are reduced to being political customers.

The dialogue, a continually on-going discussion between free and equal citizens, is the basis of a living democracy. Its beginning lies in meetings between people. It requires local meeting places and a living cultural life that strengthens people's own self-esteem, their ability to express themselves and participate. The principal of open government should be stronger. The

opportunities of new technology shall be used to increase participation and broaden the freedom of expression. Active input is needed so that everyone can take part in democracy on equal terms. This can for example apply to minority languages or disabled people.

Above all, it is important that people can participate in this dialogue on their own terms. The time when 'free men' only practised democracy must have come to an end. Modern democracy must be an equal democracy whose structure gives women and men of all ages and family situations the opportunity to participate.

Voluntary collaboration is the foundation of democracy

All power must come from below, starting with the individual person and in people's voluntary assemblies. There, in what we call the civic society, we find the informal networks and organisations including associations, co-operatives and sometimes businesses too. There is room for discussion, argumentation and joint action. It's here that involvement, responsibility and mutual trust grows.

In this everyday collaboration between people direct democracy is applied. This collaboration is at the same time an important base for the representative democracy in elected assemblies. The representative, more formal democracy must in turn be a clear and strong expression of public interest. It's here that the distribution between different social sectors and activities occurs.

Power shall grow from below

An imagined, symbolic contract between the members of a local community that takes responsibility for joint concerns ought to be the basis for joint decisions. This means that citizens agree to solve certain questions locally and solve others together in the municipality and that the local democratic level has the responsibility of carrying forward those questions that require decisions at a higher level.

This can be expressed as the Centre Party striving for decisions to be made by delegation from below, where higher levels make decisions and exercise power at the request of lower levels. The model means that greater power remains with the individual or as close to the affected people as possible.

The representative democracy shall be built on a strong local self-government. Only those matters that cannot be solved well locally ought to be dealt with by higher instances; in the municipality, region, state, EU or globally. Sweden's constitution, as well as the EU treaty, ought to be built on the notion of delegation from below.

Recapture local democracy

The municipality is the level in representative democracy that lies closest to citizens. It is here that the best conditions exist for tying together the joint decisions with citizen responsibility. Power becomes intelligible and easier to influence. This is why the municipality must have stronger power than central powers, thereby giving citizens greater possibilities to influence and participate.

Responsibility and authority should be removed from the state to regions and municipalities. The municipal self-determination must be strong and anchored in the constitution.

Municipalities and county administrations should have the legal possibility of preventing central government involvement in the local self-determination.

A municipality ought to be easy to form a general view of. The division of municipalities should be encouraged. If a majority of the inhabitants in an area want to create their own municipality this should be made possible, without the possibility of a veto from the old municipality or the central government. In other cases directly elected organs at a municipal level can be developed.

Several direct democratic features and various forms of self-administration shall strengthen the citizens' participation. Participation and joint responsibility ought to be encouraged as early as childhood and amongst young people in schools for example. Associations and other groups shall be able to take over certain tasks with the support of the municipality.

The local self-determination must be coupled to a clear defence of individual freedom and rights. Democracy means that arbitrary decisions or discrimination never are acceptable.

Strengthen regional democracy

The Centre Party works for strong regions with bodies directly elected by the people and with their own taxation rights. As well as the tasks that the county administration have carried out the regions ought to assume decision making in those fields that are today dealt with by central government bodies. When decisions are transferred to regions or municipalities this ought to take place in accordance with the principle that decisions are to be taken as close to the citizen as possible.

The aim with developing regional democracy is to achieve increased self-determination and better conditions for vitality and development in all regions. Possible changes of geographical boundaries at the regional level shall occur on initiatives from below and not be steered by the central government.

Democracy stretching across the world

One of the greatest challenges of today is to find forms of democracy, which makes problems that extend over borders possible to deal with. Several of today's organisations have weaknesses both when it comes to openness, limits in competence and the possibility of demanding accountability. Unwieldy decision processes and a lack of resources also hamper many organisations.

The Centre Party strives for a global legal community that prevents states from restricting citizens' fundamental rights and freedom. People should be able to move freely over geographical borders.

In a time of individualisation and globalisation the need increases not only for democratic decisions that stretch over national boundaries but also for a local anchoring of democracy. A local, working democracy is needed in order for the appropriate democratic institutions at a national or international level to be accepted and have the support of the people. All international co-operation should to aim at strengthening the elements of self-determination and participatory democracy.

The idea of delegation from below ought not to just characterise national politics but also the Swedish participation in international organisations. Decisions that are not possible or suitable to make at a national level ought to be delegated to different forms of international co-operation.

The Centre Party recognises the ever more important role of municipalities and regions in the co-operation between peoples.

The European Union

Sweden's membership in the European Union shall be used constructively. The EU should devote itself to those questions that are better dealt with by several countries together than by one country alone, and make decisions about things that the member states themselves are unable to decide about in an efficient way.

In order for the EU to be able to deal with important issues and in order for people not to lose faith in the EU and its abilities, the EU must be changed. It is important that the EU's decision making process and authority is restricted more clearly than before. Power over the treaty shall lie with the member states and changes should be decided unanimously. The principally multilateral character should be maintained and based on delegation from below.

The Nordic co-operation is important in itself and for strengthening the Nordic position in the EU. It ought to continue to develop and be opened for increased co-operation with Nordic neighbour states.

United Nations.

On the global arena the United Nations needs to be strengthened. The world's community must be able to take upon itself the enormous challenge of building a peaceful world in a sustainable way and solve the problems that the world faces. As the biggest threats to man's survival are global, the UN is and will continue to be the most important common body.

The strength of the UN lies partly in the fact that most of the world's states are members, partly in the organisation's broad coverage of security, where both political, military and economic as well as ecological and social dimensions are included.

A society where people can grow

A society where people can grow must be an open society where differences and diversity are recognised and where people can form their own life plans for themselves. A society where everyone can feel they are participating and needed. Policies shall aim at strengthening social networks and people's voluntary collaboration, instead of only focusing on the balance between the public sector and the 'market economy'. The responsibility for everyone's security, for our shared living environment and healthy living conditions is a job for central politics. In our times, the importance of life-long learning and a functioning international co-operation is growing.

The open society

An open society is built on diversity, where the differences between people are recognised and enrich the whole. It is a society under continuous development.

A society basically consists of a number of relationships between people, bound together by solidarity. This is necessary for people to feel secure and find meaning in what they do.

A society where the individual can grow strong must be characterised by diversity and the recognition of differences between people. This is the meaning behind the idea of an open society. In order to correct the injustices, society must combat prejudice and acknowledge people's differences.

The open society assumes a state governed by law with strong institutions and democratic control with good protection for minorities and their views. People shall be guaranteed the right to choose and strive for different life plans, with the reservation that they do not encroach on the opportunities of others.

This means that no one can have the sole right to decide the truth. Society must provide room for a number of different concepts and interests to be expressed. A free and open exchange of ideas is a fundamental value in a democratic state. The open society must be based on critical thinking coupled with openness and tolerance towards different people and views.

An open society is always under continuous development, by new ideas being put forward and tested, assessed and discussed openly and freely.

Social market economy

A social market economy is based on good rules of play, shaped by respect for the environment, social conditions and regional effects.

A market economy built on broad personal ownership and the freedom to make contracts stimulates people to take responsibility. It is the economic model that provides the greatest space for people's freedom, that contributes to making resources available for joint welfare and that contributes to the most efficient division of society's resources.

Good rules of play and strong institutions

In order for the good effects of the market economy to be realised, stable and good rules of play are required that take into account the environment, social conditions and long-term growth. A number of important values are not reflected in market prices and are thereby invisible in the national economic calculations. Policies shall aim at creating an ecologically, economically and socially sustainable development. This includes not heaping costs and environmental problems onto future generations. A social market economy needs strong institutions that maintain these rules of play and protect for example the right of ownership and contract freedom.

This chiefly applies to three areas:

- ? Security and social justice. People, who have limited opportunities of different kinds risk falling outside of the division of prosperity that occurs in a free market economy. The economic power in an unregulated economy tends to preserve existing power structures, e.g. between the sexes. The Centre Party wants to create long-term, sustainable security systems that give people a lot of room to influence their own situation.
- ? Environment. When environmental values do not have a price in the market economy, nature is over-utilised. Growth clashes with respect for the environment and does not lead to sustainable development. By letting environmental costs be reflected in the price of goods and services the Centre Party wants to create the conditions for a sustainable ecological development.
- ? Regional development. A policy aimed at concentration also when it comes to economy has created difficulties for people living and working in large parts of the country. The Centre Party wants to promote a policy that gives people in all parts of the country room to use the leverage of the market economy to create good development. This means a policy that stimulates and makes the building of regional clusters easier, a far-reaching decentralisation and tolerance for regional differences.

Trust is an economic asset

The effect of social networks and the interplay between the market economy, the public sector and people's collaboration in everyday life has long been underestimated in economic theory and politics. The quality of this interplay has shown itself to be of crucial importance for shaping successful regions and towns in Sweden and abroad.

A well-functioning market economy is built on a fundamental trust between people, that they are not hampered by a continuous fear of agreements and confidence being broken. In the same way it is important that the players in the market economy have faith in society's institutions. For this reason laws and rules must be felt to be just and easily understood and no one should need to doubt that society has the power to see that they are adhered to.

Strong social networks and many meeting places also form relationships and meetings that promote creativity, the exchange of ideas and dynamics.

Enterprising spirit in a decentralised economy.

A functioning market economy can be recognised by a large selection, diversity and freedom of choice. Creative power requires few regulations, that private and public monopolies are dismantled and that there is a diverse range of activities - public, private and co-operative.

At the same time the market economy's strong players have an inherent, self-destructive, tendency to strive for dominance and limited competition. This is why political efforts are needed with the aim of maintaining diversity, decentralisation and a spread personal ownership, so that people's enterprising spirit and initiatives are given space.

Small businesses and decentralised activities contribute to a better division of growth and a greater ability to adapt in a global economy. Therefore, it is important to stimulate new enterprises and especially encourage small businesses and their growth.

Policies must be designed so that the spirit of enterprise and the desire to take responsibility is encouraged and rewarded. Creative environments are formed by a whole, where people are happy and have the possibility to be creative, where association life and culture is alive. This occurs best when people are involved in the shaping of the environment. The quality of life and self-determination, competition and growth are thereby bound together.

Diversity is important for shaping creative and enterprising environments. This means that the differences between people should be seen as an asset. Both women and men and people with different cultural backgrounds shall be given the possibility to create and make contributions based on their own experiences and abilities.

The importance of work

A meaningful job is important for the individual's self-determination, sense of life quality and participation. It is a question both of looking after oneself and the feeling that one is needed.

Increased mobility and individualisation characterises the work market. Life-long employment at the same firm is becoming less common and the large collective organisations are less important. This sets increased demands on the employer to look after his employees and let them take part of the development. It also places demands on policies to formulate good rules of play so that the new working life and environment is shaped according to the varied requirements of people. Policies shall also place the framework for a functioning job market with balance within and between regions. Reasonable power relationships must be guaranteed between the employer and employee as well as protecting the freedom to negotiate.

People must be given increased power over their own work and time. Both women and men should be able to combine work with responsibility for the family and children. It is a matter of laws and rules but it is also about changing attitudes and points of view in order to give people the possibility to influence their lives and create balance and completeness in life.

Tax for common interests

Society shall deduct tax in order to finance common interests. It shall be done in a way that promotes socio-economic efficiency and sustainable development. This is why for example environmentally damaging activities and the use of non-renewable natural resources will be taxed harder whilst peoples work will be subject to lower tax.

Taxes will be deducted according to financial strength and formulated so that they stimulate individuals to save and to support themselves. The Centre Party strives to limit the tax deductions whilst at the same time maintain high welfare ambitions. This requires good housekeeping of joint means.

A decentralised development policy

In principle, the new network economy gives the chance for development and growth in every geographical position. A decentralised development policy provides the conditions for individuals to grow whilst at the same time making Sweden stronger.

Such a development policy must be built on the realisation that the problems can be similar in different parts of the country but that there are no standard solutions. On the contrary, each town and region must find its own way, based on its own situation. Culture and 'soft values' are important when formulating local environments with competitiveness and quality of life. This requires a greater local self-determination and that the state gets better at creating equal conditions in the form of, for example, infrastructure and education.

The tax system ought to be designed so that it supports local self-determination and provides the conditions for vigour and growth in the whole country. The tax effect will be evened out between different regions and municipalities.

A global economy

Globalisation provides great opportunities to realise an economically just division, increased welfare and social equalisation. It reduces the gaps between the countries of the world. A well-functioning free trade favours everybody. At the same time globalisation leads to individual countries, companies and individuals being more dependent on the development and decisions in other countries and continents. This can cause great difficulties especially for developing countries.

The global economy must follow fundamental ecological and social rules that ought to be reflected in the agreements that steer international trade. The international institutions that control and watch over international trade shall be open and democratic and the possibility to demand accountability shall exist. Strong voluntary citizen organisations are also important for balancing the economic globalisation of power.

Nature and the environment

Mankind is part of an ecological context and has the responsibility to use without using up. People must care for the ecosystems and ought not to bring about unnecessary suffering to other living things. Through economic controls the market economy's dynamism and power can work towards a sustainable environment.

The living environment is a whole formed by mankind in conjunction with the surroundings. The task of policies in this context is to assume responsibility for joint environment values and make it possible for people to improve their quality of life. People are dependent on the physical environment for their well being. Access to clean air and water is a crucial matter for the quality of life, as is the beauty of living natural and cultural environments.

People are a part of the ecological context.

All human activity is dependent on ecological contexts. When people damage them they also damage themselves and future generations. People can not judge the full, long-term effects of their actions, which means that all human activity ought to be based on a principle of caution.

People ought not to disturb the natural ecosystems in a way that prevents them being returned to their original balance.

It is a joint responsibility to retain the biological diversity and the productive power of the biological systems. The use of renewable resources must not exceed their long-term growth.

The laws of physics and insight into ecology say that mankind ought not to permit levels of substances foreign to nature or substances from the earth's crust to systematically increase in nature. Stable, foreign, environmentally dangerous substances shall not be permitted to enter the eco-system at all. Mankind's large-scale use of stored resources, such as fossil fuels and uranium, must therefore be phased out. The release of greenhouse gases must be reduced in order to reduce mankind's negative effect on the climate.

It is necessary for natural resources to be used much more efficiently in order for economic growth to be possible whilst at the same time creating equal opportunities for all people on the earth. Research, new technology and prudent environmental behaviour will become necessary tools for creating sustainable development.

Medical research and biotechnology mean possibilities and risks

Modern biotechnology, medical research and information technology together form an unprecedented powerful tool that makes mankind capable of altering the very building blocks of life. The technique brings enormous possibilities but also significant risks. All alterations to genetic material must be safeguarded by strict ethical norms and openly discussed. Changes in the genetic material that risk being spread or where the change can be permanent can be permitted only under extremely restrictive and joint control. Information about genetic material shall be open to everyone and must not be monopolised.

Environment, quality of life and health

The quality of life is closely linked to health. In order to realise their dreams, people need to have good health and feel well. Health is much more than medical terms. It also includes people's perception of their own situation. A health perspective on the quality of life means that factors other than purely medical ones must be included. It can be a matter of the design of the physical environment, beauty values, striving to reduce stress, ease conflicts or freedom from drug dependency, all factors that influence people's sense of well-being. Improved public health is an important justice project needed to counteract the unequal conditions and prerequisites when it comes to health.

The external environment must be cared for both locally and globally. Locally it is important to preserve cultural environments and open spaces for people. In the same way, access to housing and good housing environments is important for the everyday quality of life. The physical planning shall be carried out based on people's varying conditions and needs, and include a large measure of influence from local citizens. Secure environments that prevent crime are important. The external environment works together with the social environment in creating an inner sense of security for people.

Health and provisions

Good qualitative food is a crucial aspect of health and for the feeling of security in everyday life. This is one reason why there should be agriculture in Sweden. Another reason is that it is beneficial to have producers and consumers near to one another. Agriculture, which must be sustainable, is also important in the preservation of the countryside and biological diversity.

Human dignity has a special position in relation to animals but for just this reason mankind also has a responsibility for other living things. Domesticated animals should be able to live as close to natural conditions as possible and not be caused unnecessary suffering.

The economy shall reflect an ecological connection.

The rules of play for the market economy must be long-term and ought to be formulated so that it is profitable to recycle and be economical with natural resources. Those, who pollute or damage the environment, must also stand for the costs. In the same way, positive environment action, such as caring for the cultural landscape ought to be given an economic value in the market economy. Environmental costs would thereby be made visible in the price, which makes the market economy's dynamism and inventiveness work towards sustainable development.

At the same time it is important to realise that it will not be possible to measure all environmental values in money terms. Environmental policies must also contain other forms of control as well as stimulating know-how, citizen responsibility and collaboration between different sectors of society.

Environmental problems do not stop at national borders. Large environmental problems require joint solutions for several countries. In order to deal with global problems, the Centre Party works for binding, multinational agreements that also imply economic responsibility for environmental damage. Such rules must not however, prevent individual countries from leading the way to a better environment.

Social networks and voluntary collaboration

Policies must aim at strengthening people's social networks and voluntary collaboration, instead of simply focusing on the balance between the public sector and the market economy. In this way, the mutual trust in society can grow to the benefit of the economy, democracy and people's quality of life.

Public debate in Sweden, as in many other countries, often focuses on the balance between the public sector and the market economy. It is assumed that solutions are to be found in one or the other sphere. This has led to only having economic and administrative aspects to welfare. But this view ignores the fact that those relationships that are the most important for people are neither in the market economy or administered by the central government or municipality.

Collaboration on a voluntary basis.

The civil society can be described as the arena that neither is state nor market economy. It is formed by people's voluntary collaboration in different forms - between neighbours and work colleagues, in informal networks, associations or co-operatives - to take advantage of joint interests. But it is also necessary that a society is formed where everyone has a place, a society that is open for all generations and where existing generation gaps are diminished.

In all communities there is a mutual responsibility, the most obvious and strongest being in the family. The communities of the civil society ought however to be voluntary so that people have the right to break the contact and seek other social networks. The communities must not be discriminating. The principles of the community governed by law shall be maintained.

Social capital knits together and builds bridges

In the contacts between people in a living civil society something called social capital is created. The social capital of a society is made of the social networks of all individuals and can be described as a cement of trust and co-operation that binds together the society and makes it strong.

Part of a society's social capital consists of those relationships that bind groups together. Another part is made of the bridges that are built between different groups and activities. When the bridges exist, the social capital can really be freed and all development possibilities made use of. This does not happen automatically - it needs people to realise the added value of co-operation and the importance of networks.

The quality of the social capital affects the economy, democracy and social welfare. A society that is rich in social capital contributes to an increased trust between people, to social security and common norms. It gives people better health and quality of life. It makes democracy stronger. A strong social capital also creates good conditions for growth and economic development.

Social capital has the greatest chance of developing and being freed in a decentralised society with many meeting points and a strong local self-determination. The trust in the society can then also grow in a positive spiral.

A better balance for social networks and voluntary collaboration.

The public sector, the market economy and the civil society are all dependent on one another. For a long time the public sector has taken over tasks from the civil society. This, together with other factors, has formalised the voluntary involvement in welfare in accordance with the conditions of the public sector.

In recent years, the market economy has been given an ever-increasing space through deregulation and increased participation in a globalised economy. There are still regulations that restrict enterprise and voluntary collaboration. But, at the same time, there is a risk that one-sided deregulation will lead to the market economy and not the civic society, taking the upper hand.

An imbalance has been created where the civil society has been forced back. Politicians have underestimated its importance. A policy is needed that gives room for people to take responsibility and show involvement in joint concerns. At the same time the public responsibility must be clear in order to defend equality and every person's fundamental rights. In other words, the public sector must provide greater space for people to deal with matters themselves, in the civic society and in the market economy, whilst at the same time being better at dealing with its own main tasks. This can be expressed as the Centre Party striving for more narrow but stronger central government.

Purely having the central government and the municipalities pulling back does not create a better balance. A conscious political strategy is also needed in order to co-operate with and strengthen the civil society. Only the state can safeguard the possibility of small communities asserting themselves against strong economic interests. At the same time, the state must safeguard the freedom and rights of the individual in relation to the civil society's communities.

Strengthening the rights of the individual

One of the most important political tasks is to secure the freedom and rights of all people with a strengthened constitutional law and clearly formulated rights. The tendency of different groups being put in the margin must be prevented. The state has a responsibility to uphold the fundamental rights of the individual whenever they risk being violated. Such fundamental rights shall to a greater extent be formed so that they can be claimed directly by the individual, in a court of law if necessary. This can, for example, apply to disabled people's right to access to public premises or the right for them to have an adapted dwelling.

A combination of individual rights that can be claimed and increased local self-determination can unite diversity and local variation with stronger protection for the rights of the individual.

Security and a spirit of community

People's sense of security must above all be founded on social networks and their own work and savings. In addition, society ought to contribute with welfare services that are financed in solidarity and economic safety nets with a strong basic security. Protection of life and property are also one of the states' main tasks.

Security in social networks

Every person is dependent on a basic social security. People's inner security must above all be based on a functioning social network around the individual. For most people their own family is the most important social network. Policies should create good conditions for families and other close social networks and encourage joint responsibility amongst citizens.

Security through welfare services financed in solidarity.

Healthcare and education are important aspects of security that can only be guaranteed jointly. Financing in solidarity is the basis for everyone's equal access to these public services.

Respect must also be shown for those people, who want to have their security met in other ways. Therefore the public responsibility for social security ought to be met by a diversity of producers of public services, so that the users really have the chance to choose. This also encourages individual initiatives that subsequently are of benefit to everybody and develop the whole society.

Basic economic security

The most important security lies in one's own work and savings. The public security systems shall guarantee a basic economic security at the same as individuals are stimulated to manage their own upkeep. The systems must be simple, sustainable and easy to understand. The element of basic security, equal for all, ought to be strong. They should be designed so that they permit mobility and flexibility in different stages of life. Risks in the systems that cannot be influenced shall be spread between individuals so that everyone can take part on equal terms.

Legal rights - a key task

The protection of the individual's life and property is one of the state's main tasks. The starting point for the legal system shall be every person's equality before the law and that no one shall be punished for someone else's wrong doing, and that regulations shall be clear. Laws should not be able to be applied retroactively. It is also important that laws do not have middle-aged men as the implied norm.

Law enforcement authorities, with a close presence in the whole country must be given the resources required to prevent and follow up crimes. The legal system must protect the individual's legal security and integrity in regard to both the state and private companies. Respect for the legal system requires active citizens and information, for example in school.

At the same time as laws ought to support people's own responsibility and social networks, it is important that there also is protection for individuals, who are exposed to violence in the family, which particularly affects children and women. A drug free society is a significant factor for people's security. Freedom from sexualised violence is an important prerequisite for equality and women's security.

Learning, education and culture

All education ought to be based on a comprehensive view of people, characterised by the ideals of non-formal education and respect and faith in every person's ability to learn. In the times we live in, education is the most important instrument for social equalisation. Free research and a living cultural life are important for the open society.

Comprehensive view characterised by the ideals of non-formal education

The whole education system must be founded on a comprehensive view of people and characterised by the ideals of non-formal education. It is founded on a belief in people's ability to learn and apply their skills and knowledge. It is important to strengthen people's self-esteem and encourage the lust for learning.

Education the way to social equalisation

The most important and long-term route to social equalisation is education. In a society where knowledge is the most important foundation for economic development, the equal access to education is a key question of justice. Each person has the right to attain sufficient knowledge to be able to function like a citizen and everyone should be stimulated to life-long learning. The educational bodies ought to be profoundly decentralised.

A school with respect for the individual

Schools shall be steered by knowledge goals for each student instead of time control. Teachers, students and parents shall have extensive opportunities to decide over their own school. The schools ought to co-operate with the surrounding community and utilise and develop the responsibility of the parents. It is important that the students are equipped and trained for continued democratic participation in the community.

Schools shall be founded on clear democratic principles and train the student in reflection over ethical and moral questions. This includes actively opposing built-in injustices such as inequalities between men and women. Teaching shall be based on respect for every individual and show consideration for the fact that everyone learns in different ways. Exclusion and bullying can never be accepted in schools. It is equally important that the schools, which are in touch with all children and young people, work actively with drug prevention.

In Sweden there is a strong tradition of non-formal education. It is partly based on strong non-formal education organisations, which through non-profit making work, contribute to raising the level of education. It is also partly based on practical teaching, the 'education of the hand', which develops for example in a family business where parents hand down their knowledge to the next generation. It is important to look after this tradition.

Higher education and research

Higher education and research are valuable for the individual's personal development and vital for the country's opportunities for technical and economic success. Higher education shall be free of charge and available to everybody throughout the country. It is important for the quality of education that each university also carries out research and that the universities work together with the surrounding community.

Free and open research is the basis of an open society. Modern technology and science shall be used to the service of mankind. Research and development have important benefits to add to society such as preventing illness and raising the quality of life for people, as well as totally altering our view of society and nature. Research and development can bring about great opportunities and also significant risks. The search for knowledge and new inventions must be free. But the application of knowledge must be a matter for joint decisions. All research and development must be safeguarded by ethical norms and discussed openly. A continuous discussion and well-informed ethical consideration is necessary, both amongst researchers and in society as a whole.

Cultural life provides growth

A living cultural life is necessary for people's opportunities to grow as individuals. People shall have both the chances to create for themselves and the opportunity to acquaint themselves with cultural experiences. It is a joint responsibility to protect both the breadth and depth of the cultural selection on the terms of different people; women and men, young and old, traditional and new - all have this responsibility and it also applies to the cultural expression of the minorities.

People shall have access to a rich cultural life, regardless of social and economic status or town. Culture develops the civil society and keeps the democratic discussion alive. It also

contributes to economic development. The cultural life should to be characterised by diversity and openness to the surrounding world. The Centre Party wants to increase the cultural exchange between countries and regions, at the same time as looking after and developing local and regional culture.

Peace and security

International co-operation ought to aim for joint security and a global legal system for the defence of human rights and freedom, rather than the sovereignty of states.

After the end of the cold war, the forms of international co-operation and security have been radically changed. A global situation with two competing superpowers and clear ideological conflicts has been replaced by a complex pattern of conflicts and non-military threats.

From the balance of power to joint security

Globalisation promotes mutual dependency and assumes increased co-operation between the countries of the world. International security politics ought to aim at increasing countries' mutual exchange and confidence so that co-operation and mutual trust replaces deterrence and the balance of power. The Centre Party strives for joint security, founded on a number of arenas for international co-operation. Sweden shall be an active participant within and in co-operation with the organisations that are part of this peace system.

International solidarity

The Centre Party works for international solidarity, which leads to global equalling of economic gaps, sustainable development and democratisation. Primarily, foreign aid ought to be used for improving the conditions for locally run development and growth. Aid shall strengthen people's self-determination and the possibilities for taking part in development processes and the building of democratic structures. This includes not least guaranteeing women the real possibility of influencing their own situation and the development of society. It is important to close the technological gap that has opened and widened between the rich and poor countries of the world.

An international legal system

Real peace requires that the causes of international conflicts, for example poverty or the lack of access to food and clean water are dealt with or at least reduced. World security, and thereby Sweden's security, can be increased by a strong international legal system and conflict preventing action, joint handling of crises as well as reconciliation and reconstruction after crises and conflicts.

International law has changed since the end of the cold war. The UN declaration of human rights has come to act as a guiding principle and has been cited in support of intervention in conflicts, even those within a state. The Centre Party wants international law primarily to protect human rights and freedoms and not the rights of states and regimes. Human rights or the violation of human rights are not internal concerns of individual states. To prevent humanitarian catastrophes or extreme violations of human rights the respect for national sovereignty can not be allowed to stand in the way. The UN has the obvious central role in

this development. Violations that are directed against women and children must be paid special attention.

Swedish security policy

The Swedish security policy shall be designed so that it promotes the growth of joint security and lasting peace in our immediate surroundings. Sweden shall contribute with its own resources, in accordance with its own decisions, to deal with international conflicts, peace keeping and reconstruction. Naturally Sweden shall fulfil its obligations in accordance with the UN charter. Sweden's military defence shall be secured by its own means. The Swedish parliament has the sovereign right of decision over its own military resources and no Swedish citizen shall be forced to participate in war without a decision being taken in accordance with Swedish law.

Challenges of our time

Even though values and ideals are lasting, the world in which they are to be applied changes constantly. Many of the challenges we stand before lack simple and unambiguous answers. We can only arrive at the answers through open discussions and by trying different solutions on the understanding that the answer does not need to be the same everywhere and every time.

Through the industrial revolution and the successes of democracy, people today have greater possibilities than ever before. But there are still great injustices and many challenges to be met. Power is still unevenly divided and many people on earth remain without even basic security. The profits of success are shared unjustly, new gaps appear and there is still a long way to sustainable development.

The possibilities of change

The history of mankind is characterised by continual change. Technical development, more individualistic values and an increased globalisation of society are three important tendencies that affect our world today. Together they form the basis of what can be described as the 'network society'. But these effects look dramatically different in different parts of the world.

New technology creates new possibilities for people. Information technology develops communication, reduces distances and puts people in a position to handle information in a completely new way. Genetic technology opens unbelievable opportunities, including treating serious illnesses.

Individualisation releases people from restrictive norms and old authorities. An increasing number of people strive to realise their dreams on their own terms and at the same time demonstrate solidarity with others.

Globalisation strengthens and deepens contacts between people over the whole world. Globalisation also spreads experiences, culture, values and knowledge. An increasing number of people can enjoy new experiences and meetings.

The development offers great opportunities for people, regions and countries. Material prosperity is increasing. Greater mobility and better information channels have made people more knowledgeable about their surroundings than ever before. An increasing number of people have access to education and other social benefits. Democracy as a political ideal has been spread across the world during the 20th century. There are fewer wars between states.

This development challenges existing norms and structures, including our concept of the nation state. The everyday life of people is affected at work, at leisure and in the family and changes the prerequisites for security. The development has many faces and its effects look dramatically different in different places around the world. A large part of the world's population can take no part in the opportunities provided by globalisation.

Many challenges remain

In many regards the challenges are the same today as they were a hundred years ago; opportunities, resources and power are unfairly divided. This is most obvious in the relationship between industrialised and developing countries, but discrimination and injustice are also characteristics of the western world's industrial countries.

Globalisation with a human face.

The modern society offers great opportunities for people, regions and countries to grow. But for most people there is no question of globalisation. They never see the invisible hand that steers the international economy, but are hit hard by its other side. For a very large part of the world's population everyday life is a matter of survival - of food and clean water - not a matter of cultural experiences, travel and luxury consumption. As global prosperity increases so do the gaps too. Amongst those affected it is almost always women and children who come off worst.

The world economy and modern technology provide new opportunities to deal with some of mankind's great problems - to eliminate poverty and illiteracy, to cure illnesses and prevent famine. It is a joint responsibility for the whole world to utilise these opportunities and not let short-term profit interests and an uncontrolled global capitalism steer development.

It is not a matter of counteracting globalisation, but of creating good rules of play to protect people and the environment. International environmental agreements shall have the same legal status as trade agreements. One of the 21st century's great challenges is to give globalisation a human face, to let everyone, in all parts of the world, participate in the process and be allowed to reap the benefits.

Social, economic and ecologically sustainable growth

In the long run injustices can not be compensated for by re-allocation alone. They must primarily be evened out through the growth of the region concerned. This applies both globally and in Sweden. And it is a question of creating the prerequisites for all countries and regions to grow.

The social and geographical gaps are growing in many countries and they are growing even more between the rich and poor countries of the world. In order to remedy many of the world's problems - population increase, an ageing population in many parts of the world, social problems or poverty - economic growth and extensive international involvement is needed to alleviate debt and poverty. Growth must occur in such a way that the conditions for future generations are not aggravated.

In order to achieve this, an active development policy is needed, which begins by reducing differences but primarily gives the long-term prerequisites for all countries and regions to grow under their own power.

The prosperity and lifestyle of the western world has to a great extent been built on the consumption of limited natural resources and short-term exploitation. This has also meant a ruthless exploitation of resources in other parts of the world. Climate changes, the lack of fresh water, the deforestation of ancient forests, desert spread and nuclear waste are examples of environmental problems that threaten the survival of mankind. The problems are linked to one another and with poverty and in the end lead to the lack of people's freedom as well as injustices between generations or people in different parts of the world.

A sustainable development can not be achieved by looking back nostalgically. Technology and new solutions are crucial to succeed with making our consumption of resources more efficient as well as detoxifying the natural cycle.

During the 20th century we have seen a development where incomes rise and prosperity increases, whilst the foundation of our welfare is dug away. It is time to lay the foundation for sustainable development that gives future generations the possibility for the same prosperity. Both women and men must form a socially sustainable development, with the best for children and young people in mind.

Democracy with global coverage and local roots

The political institutions that have been based on traditional divisions and geographical borders have increasing difficulties in dealing cross-border problems, new social patterns and increased mobility. When the nation state loses its importance, the forms for political decision making must be renewed.

The local community, municipalities, regional bodies, the EU and the global level must be shown to be the arenas for important decisions. And we must find democratic forms for dealing with matters that simply do not follow national borders.

Many experience an increased distance between themselves and elected politicians and political institutions, not least those people who are already socially or economically vulnerable. Those who need politics the most seem to have the greatest level of mistrust. This frustration must be met by a democracy that invites people to participate actively, in their own local community as well as global matters. In the developing global society everyone must be permitted to be citizens to the full.

Growing with the change

The large scale and complex modern society is difficult to form a general view of. Increased knowledge reveals previously unknown problems all the time. People feel that they are meeting many risks that are difficult to understand and evaluate, and even more difficult to influence themselves. It often concerns our living environment and can be a global environmental threat or the food on our plates. Diffuse threats that individuals can not control themselves are experienced as more frightening than those that are closer and more familiar.

Increased speed and mobility as well as increased needs for knowledge, put people in front of a number of situations that are difficult to handle, often without the recognition that previously was an important basis for security. Social contexts change as a result of altered values. Large organisations and great distances to decisions make power anonymous and difficult to understand.

Together this all risks damaging trust in everyday things. This includes trusting my surroundings, that I dare to wash in or drink the water in the tap, and the trust between people, between citizens, people in power and scientific experts. A lack of trust undermines democracy, and economic and social networks in the long run.

The modern society also shows significant differences in health conditions between different groups, expressed in amongst other things the average life expectancy and poor health. Right in the Welfare State of Sweden many feel powerlessness and exclusion.

A society where every person can grow must also strive to give each person the same opportunities in practice. Not least is it a matter of dealing with the habitual thoughts and norms that lead to people being discriminated against every day because of their gender, sexual identity or ethnic background. It is time to break down oppressive structures and norms and let each person develop on their own terms.

In a time of great change there are enormous possibilities, but also the risk of losing trust and leaving people excluded. It is a decisive challenge to let every person take part and grow with the change instead of fearing what tomorrow might bring.

Meeting the challenges

Politics should be a tool that enables the opportunities of our time to be available to everybody and for us to be able to meet the new challenges that a living society is faced with together. Seen from our outlook on mankind, the Centre Party has a fundamentally optimistic attitude to the future, which is based on faith in people wanting to and being able to take joint responsibility.

Politics can provide the prerequisites but they can not formulate the answers alone. The answers must look different too, at different places and at different times. From the values that the Centre Party represents we want to give people the tools so that they can rise to the challenges of our time, by themselves and together with others. In this way people can grow, in responsibility, community, love and creativity.