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## **Speech by Laila Freivalds at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Washington DC, 17 February 2004**

Thank you, Dr. Serfaty, for your kind words of introduction. It is a great pleasure for me to be here at CSIS today. I know that CSIS and you personally have been very active to keep up the transatlantic dialogue also during the recent troubled times, and I commend you for that. I very much appreciate this opportunity to meet in an informal setting with members of the Washington foreign policy community. In particular I look forward to hearing your views and ideas. I have promised, though, to make some brief introductory remarks to start off the discussion.

The theme today is "Transatlantic relations on the eve of EU and NATO enlargement". I will get to the transatlantic part in due course, but let me start by saying a few words about the fundamentals of Swedish foreign policy, and also how we look upon the European Union and NATO.

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Last week I delivered the annual Statement of Government Policy in the parliamentary debate on foreign affairs. I began by stating the values that are the guiding principles of our entire foreign and security policy: "In today's world, security must be built globally and jointly, and entail freedom and security for all. Security requires democracy and respect for human rights and international law."

This is what we try to promote in our bilateral relations. This is what we strive for on the different levels of multinational cooperation where we take part: in a Nordic – or nowadays Nordic-Baltic – context, as members of the European Union and the United Nations, as partners to NATO.

Our values of peace and security, global development and poverty alleviation, the ideas of democracy and rule of law, human rights and international law have their most explicit foundation in the United Nations. Security cannot be built in isolation from other countries, or even in Europe alone. We are dependent on effective multilateralism for our common security. A strong UN means stronger global security.

Our membership of the European Union is central for translating our values into concrete action. Ever since we joined the EU Sweden has been one of the foremost advocates of enlargement. This consolidates the foundations of Europe's security system – integration, cooperation, and common values. On the first of May we will take the most important step in modern time towards lasting security in Europe.

Let me add here that I am very pleased that the Cyprus issue now seems to be on track to be solved in accordance with the Annan Plan, thus allowing an undivided Cyprus join the EU. In addition to the efforts of the UN, this result is also in large part thanks to continued transatlantic cooperation in trying to persuade the parties that now is really the time to strike the deal.

But the process does not end there. Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey are working hard to fulfil the membership requirements, and we support them in their efforts. In particular, the new Turkish

Government has taken very positive steps. As you know, the EU will decide on entering accession negotiations with Turkey in December.

The countries in the Balkans are already knocking at the EU's door. The EU has no exit strategy for the Balkans, only an entry strategy. It will take time to reach the ultimate goal, but there is no alternative to integrating the Balkan countries into the EU. The EU has therefore launched a process of closer ties for the Balkan countries, similar to the process the new EU members have been through.

We will support them in that process. We will also carefully monitor that the membership conditions concerning democracy, human rights and rule of law are met. In our vision for Europe there is room for a range of religions, cultures and traditions, as there is in Sweden.

The EU will not only grow larger, and it will not bring benefits only to its own citizens and member states. As cooperation deepens, the EU will also grow into a stronger, more capable actor on the international stage. The contribution of the European Union to global security must be strengthened and made more tangible. We must meet the threats identified in the EU Security Strategy: terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, environmental disasters, organised crime, regional conflicts, civil war and failing states.

The transatlantic link is essential for Europe's security and development. A larger and stronger EU will also be a more competent and dependable partner for the United States. American leaders clearly saw that more than fifty years ago, when they encouraged European cooperation and integration through the Marshall Plan, and also the creation of NATO. It remains as true today. Even if we sometimes have differences of opinion, we share basic values of democracy and human rights. We also share the same interest in promoting these values throughout the world.

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Let me give you some examples where I think the mutual benefits – and synergies – of U.S. and Europe acting together are obvious.

*Number one:* In the Balkans, the involvement of the United States was essential to stop the bloodshed in the mid-1990's. Peacekeeping troops from almost all European countries as well as U.S. and Canada, under NATO command, helped create conditions for reconstruction and political and economic development. Gradually the European Union's role on the ground has grown. The EU will soon take even more responsibility when SFOR will have completed its mission. The prospect of EU membership is also a motivating force for the countries and peoples concerned to make the necessary reform efforts. Even so, a continued U.S. engagement in the Balkans remains essential, albeit in new forms. When both the U.S. and the EU engage, they are a formidable force for positive change in the world.

*Number two:* We want to deepen cooperation with the post-Soviet independent states in order to promote respect for human rights, democracy, economic development and free trade. We also need to take security-building initiatives, such as preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and training defence forces in democracy and human rights. Clearly, the EU and the U.S. share the same goals here.

*Three:* We all encourage further economic and political integration of Russia in the Euroatlantic structures. At the same time we also have certain concerns regarding recent developments in Russia. A genuine partnership between Russia and the EU, as well as between Russia and the U.S., must be built on shared values. Human rights and fundamental freedoms must be respected. The population in Chechnya should be able to live in peace and enjoy all human rights. When the EU and the U.S. convey the same message, it is more likely to be heard – and heeded.

*Four:* The countries around the Mediterranean and in the greater Middle East region are assuming increasing importance for the EU and for Sweden, as well as for the United States. Increased respect for human rights, democratisation and social and economic progress benefit development and security both for these countries and for us. The region is therefore given special attention in the EU Security Strategy. Ever closer cooperation through the Barcelona Process and the planned creation of a free trade area around the Mediterranean by the year 2010, will strengthen relations between the region and the EU. The efforts of the EU and those of the U.S. should complement and reinforce each other.

*Five:* Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a common threat that we must counter together. The EU-U.S. Summit last June adopted a joint statement on non-proliferation. We can do much more.

Not to mention the fight against terrorism, where the EU and the U.S. already has close cooperation. And global issues such as HIV/AIDS, where the EU and the U.S. through joint leadership could bring the issues forward more effectively. The list goes on.

Acting together does not necessarily mean that the EU and the U.S. should do exactly the same things, or agreeing on every single move. But it does mean ensuring, through close and continuous dialogue, that there is broad agreement about goals and strategy. It also means that each party contributes towards those goals on the basis of the particular strengths and advantages they might have in each case.

Therefore we should keep all the lines of communication and dialogue open. That is one reason why I am here in Washington this week.

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Am I painting too rosy a picture? Maybe so. None of us has forgotten the disagreements in the run-up to the war in Iraq. Other issues with a similar destructive potential may emerge. Issues such as the International Criminal Court and the Guantanamo detainees make parts of European public opinion doubt that we in fact share fundamental values across the Atlantic. And some analysts claim that the U.S. and Europe are bound to drift apart due to different attitudes towards the use of force in international affairs.

But I do believe that the benefits of good transatlantic relations, and intensified cooperation between Europe and the United States, are so obvious and desirable that it is everybody's responsibility to make every effort not to repeat the mistakes of the past, or let them linger on and become obstacles to progress in the future.

The world needs the United States – and the United States needs the world. It's just as simple as that.

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I will stop there, and look forward to discussing these and other issues with you.

Thank you for your attention.

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