

2017-09-28

**Anförande vid European Institute of Japanese Studies, Handelshögskolan i Stockholm, Tema: “ EU-Japans frihandelsavtal”**

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Dear Commissioner, Excellencies, Professors, Students.

It is a great honor for me to come here to the European Institute of Japanese Studies at the Stockholm School of Economics. And I am happy that you have today focused on the importance of the Economic Partnership Agreement between Japan and the EU and Sweden.

This is an agreement that lies close to my heart and I will share some views on why I think it is of great potential for Sweden and the EU.

First of all I just want to say that I am very happy that Cecilia is here. As in all free trade agreement it is the Commission negotiates for the 28 Member States, and Cecilia is in the driver's seat, making sure that the EU is as an active trade policy force.

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Japan is a country and market of crucial importance for the EU. And it is the third largest export market for Sweden outside of EU:s Single Market. Only USA and China are larger.

The trade between Sweden and Japan has had a very positive development since 2014 och amounted to almost 30 billion crowns last year. Almost 3000 Swedish companies are involved in export to Japan, and employs around 28.000 people. Japanese companies with affiliates in Sweden counts to around 150, and employs almost 12.000 people.

The Swedish Government welcomed the political agreement in July on the Economic Partnership Agreement. And we are hoping for closure in the negotiations before the end of the year.

Thanks to the coming agreement, Japan will remove 97 percent of the tariffs on goods. This is the most ambitious agreement that Japan has ever signed. The EU will abolish 99 percent of its tariffs. This is extremely important.

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But tariffs are not the only barrier for trade in goods, services and innovation. Non-tariff barriers can be just as harmful.

It is therefore very positive that the agreement also includes deeper cooperation in a number of other areas such as intellectual property, competition law, protection of animals and plants as well as sustainability.

For the first time, the EU will have a free trade agreement with text on an efficient implementation of the Paris climate agreement.

The agreement creates great potential for trade between our two trading blocks and not only for large multinationals. Two thirds of the companies that are today exporting to Japan are small companies.

According to very modest forecasts the agreement with Japan could increase our exports by 10 per cent. In the case of Sweden this would amount to an increase in exports of about 2 billion crowns per year.

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So openness for trade with Japan is good for Sweden and openness to trade in general is good for Sweden. This openness has served Sweden well for more than 100 years. Today 1,4 million Swedes have job to go to thanks to our exports. And Swedish exports are thriving. Up 12 % in the first half of 2017.

Sweden stands for free trade, with fair and robust rules that provides predictability to our companies, employees and consumers.

The positive view on free trade has indeed enjoyed strong support across the government, trade unions, business community and the public. The Swedish tradition of constructive cooperation between business and labour has been an asset in this regard.

However, we now see that protectionism is on the rise in many other countries. Fear of openness and trade is fuelled by unemployment and a lack of security. We should not allow short-sighted protectionism and as we continue to push for more open and free trade on international level, we must also push for greater security and social justice for our citizens at the national level.

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Globalisation and trade do not only create a win-win situation. The benefits of trade should be made more inclusive. This is why Prime Minister Löfven launched the initiative “The Global Deal”. The aim is to improve the dialogue between the social partners and countries to improve employment conditions and productivity.

I guess that those of you who are students will soon be out there on the job market and maybe some of you will work in a company that exports to or is established in Japan. I wish you all success and hope that the Economic Partnership Agreement between EU and Japan will come into effect soon and your company will be able to profit from it.

Thank you very much!