

13 OCTOBER, 2022



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INTERVIEW WITH H.E. KARIN OLOFSDOTTER, SWEDISH AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S.

SACC-LA: We know many are curious and might not really know what an ambassador does and what the profession and title entail. Could you please tell us a little bit about yourself and your position as a Swedish diplomat, serving as the Swedish Ambassador to the United States. For example, what does a typical workday look like, if there is such a thing as a “typical day” in the life of an ambassador?



H.E. Karin Olofsdotter: I am a Swedish career diplomat, having worked in our foreign service for 28 years. I have spent about half the time abroad, Moscow, Brussels, Washington, Budapest and now Washington again but now as ambassador. During my career I have focused mostly on security policy and trade. You are right – there is almost not a typical work day; as an example I had one day not too long ago when I first was on a panel at the Finnish embassy talking about forestry, then took part in a twitter town hall on LGBTQI-issues, then hosted a lunch dealing with the Biden administration’s upcoming Summit for Democracy, and in the afternoon met two US Senators talking to them about Swedish membership in NATO.



SACC-LA: You visited Los Angeles last week for a few days. Could you please let us know a little bit more about some of the places, companies and/or organizations you and the Swedish Embassy delegation had the opportunity to visit and meet with while in LA.



Olofsdotter: Our first stop was at the Port of Los Angeles where we had a discussion with the Gene Seroka CEO OF THE PORT, and he was just about to head to Sweden to conclude a bilateral sister port agreement with the port of Gothenburg. We met the company Calstart to discuss the future of transportation in California, visited the headquarter of Spotify and later that evening I got to inaugurate the new Scandinavian exhibition at LACMA. The following day we finally got the chance to have an inauguration party for the honorary consulate we opened in Los Angeles a year ago – headed by our great Honorary Consul Gudrun Giddings. We also visited UCLA and since I studied at UCLA many years ago I was delighted to return and give a talk there. The final day we also visited the Rand Corporation. It was truly a great visit!

SACC-LA: We understand that you held the opening speech at LACMA for their grand opening of the famous museum's new exhibit on "Scandinavian Design and the United States, 1890–1980" plus spoke at UCLA and participated in a Q & A discussion with the university's students. You also gave out the Swedish Royal medal; the order of the Pole Star, granted by the King of Sweden to Professor James Massengale. And held a fantastic speech at the Honorary Consulate of Sweden's celebratory one year anniversary. Many have commented on how good and natural you are while speaking in front of large audiences, have you ever trained or taken speech classes?

Olofsdotter: Thank you so much for that nice complement! I have never taken public speaking classes, but between the age of 10 and 18 I was a member of a local theatre group in my hometown Halmstad – so I guess my abilities comes from acting.



SACC-LA: According to the Global Innovation Index 2022: Switzerland, the U.S., Sweden and the UK lead the Global Innovation Ranking. With Sweden being ranked as the third most innovative country in 2022. Do you have any thoughts on why Swedes keep doing so well within the area of innovation?



Olofsdotter: Sweden has long fostered innovation and entrepreneurship, with a global export-oriented outlook. Combined with heavy investments in R&D that explains our top ranking. Sweden spends nearly 2% of its GDP on higher education and more than 3% of our GDP on R&D. Public R&D funding comes from governmental agencies, and from a number of governmental research foundations. On the private side, Sweden is the home to many large companies, and foundations, with high R&D spending.

SACC-LA: Sweden is a rather small country in both size and population, yet it invests a lot of capital into the U.S., which also in turn creates a lot of new jobs. Could you please elaborate a bit more and inform us and our readers, on Sweden's business investments and some of the major Swedish companies doing business with and in the U.S.

Olofsdotter: The United States is the top destination for Swedish foreign direct investment, which reached to more than 68 billion USD in 2021. That makes Sweden the 13th overall largest investor in the U.S., despite our modest population. This also means that Sweden supports a large number of jobs in the U.S. - over 367 000 - according to our most recent analysis. Among the largest employers you find companies like Securitas, ABB, IKEA, H&M, AstraZeneca, Volvo Group, Assa Abloy, Skanska and Ericsson.

SACC-LA: We have come to realize and understand that you have a very busy schedule with longer than normal days both when you travel and when you are back at the Embassy in Washington DC. Including the fact that your job requires you to make many and important decisions every day. What are some things that help manage your workload and possible stressful situations?



Olofsdotter: I have great colleagues that help me to schedule my working day – unfortunately I say yes to many more things than I can possibly fit into a day – but they help me with a realistic workload.

SACC-LA: You are known to be a well-liked and respected leader, what are some advice or ideas, suggestions you might have to become and stay a great leader such as in the role of an Ambassador, CEO, managing director, etc.?

SACC-LA: Sweden is a strong supporter of parity and inclusion of all. Since you are the first female Swedish Ambassador to the U.S., have you experienced any challenges or perhaps favorable instances during your career, within your various job titles, due to your gender?

Olofsdotter: First of all, I think you really have to love and be passionate about the issues you are working with. Then you have to trust your colleagues and let them flourish in all possible ways, so you get most creativity out of the organisation.

Olofsdotter: I am fortunate to come from a country where gender equality is top of the agenda – and I have of course benefitted from that. Then I of course hope that my other qualities, besides my gender, has made my career possible.



SACC-LA: On August 9 earlier this year, U.S. President Joe Biden, alongside Vice President Kamala Harris signed the ratification documents endorsing Finland’s and Sweden’s accession to NATO. You represented Sweden at this historic moment in the White House. Did you have any “take-away” moment(s) from this important day?



Olofsdotter: It was a fantastic moment in the White House, the support from the President and Vice-President, as well as the Senate and the House of Representatives shown to Sweden and Finland in our pursuit of NATO membership was very touching. And it is important, we live in very dangerous times.

SACC-LA: We learned earlier in this interview that you have lived in LA, and studied at UCLA Andersson school of management, also known as the graduate business school at UCLA. During this time, set aside from your studies, what was your favorite place or thing to do in Los Angeles?



Olofsdotter: Visiting the bookstores in Santa Monica and hanging out on the beach – I truly loved my time in Los Angeles.

**FIVE 'ONE-OR THE OTHER' QUESTIONS WITH AMBASSADOR
H.E. KARIN OLOFSDOTTER:**

LA Beaches or Swedish Forest
American Hamburger or Swedish Meatballs
Theatre Play or Feature Film
Book or Podcast
Staycation or Vacation



Thank you very much Ambassador H.E.
Karin Olofsdotter!
We hope to see you again soon, in Los Angeles.