

SWEDEN



Statement by

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at the 52nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

United Nations
New York

February 25, 2008

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

Mr/Madam Chairperson,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,

I am honoured to be speaking here at the 52nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, and I would like to commend the Commission on its important work. Sweden aligns itself with the statement made by Slovenia on behalf of the European Union.

Mr/Madam Chairperson,

The opportunities for the world's countries to work for gender equality and women's empowerment have never been better.

There have never been so many democracies in the world. Never have so many women been able to vote in elections or run for political office. Economic development has been rapid. Fewer people live in poverty. At the same time, a gap between rich and poor countries still persists.

Globalisation is contributing to prosperity and well being. I agree with former UN Secretary-General Mr Kofi Annan when he says that the main losers in today's unequal world are not those exposed to globalisation, but those who are left out.

Mr/Madam Chairperson,

Despite all the progress, gender inequality is still a fact.

It is time that the world's countries ensure that women and men, girls and boys, benefit equally from the rich harvest of global development. Respect must be given to the human rights and fundamental freedoms of every person. Sweden urges the world's countries to support and implement more forcefully the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is celebrating its 60th anniversary this year. The same applies to the other international human rights instruments.

The UN has a key role in moving forward international efforts to promote gender equality. Progress in UN reform in terms of strengthening the gender architecture and improving the UN's work on gender equality and gender mainstreaming is a matter of urgency.

The basic principle is simply that all people – regardless of sex, ethnic origin, age, religion, sexual orientation or disability – are of equal value and must be able to enjoy the same human rights, responsibilities and opportunities in all areas of society.

Sweden will continue to uphold the rights of girls and women and their access to sexual and reproductive health care, including contraception and safe and legal abortion. Sweden is deeply concerned with the difficulty in fulfilling the UN Millennium Development Goal to halve maternal mortality in the world. In many parts of the world, developments are at a standstill or losing ground; women are still dying during pregnancy and childbirth, or from unsafe abortions.

Without being able to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights, and without access to adequate sexual and reproductive health services, women stand little chance of having the same opportunities as men. Investments in these areas are investments in

sustainable social and economic development and in the protection and promotion of human rights.

The Swedish Government is convinced that we gain a better and more just society when women and men share power and influence in all sectors. In order to achieve gender equality, two strategies are needed.

Firstly, a gender equality perspective must be mainstreamed into all policies and all areas of political decision-making. Sustainable change can only be achieved by long-term strategic work to integrate a gender perspective in policies.

We must measure the effects for women and men, girls and boys, when preparing, outlining and implementing policies at local, national and global level. Therefore, statistics must be disaggregated by sex and analysis done from a gender equality and women's empowerment perspective. This calls for political commitment and accountability, as well as practical instruments and methods for civil servants.

Secondly, gender mainstreaming efforts can be supplemented by special measures in areas where urgent action is needed. Therefore, the Swedish Government has dramatically increased the national budget for gender equality policy – from 4 to 40 million Euros.

Let me give you some examples of how these resources have been used:

1. A national action plan to combat men's violence against women was adopted by the Government in November last year. It was developed in close cooperation with other ministries and involved public consultations with NGOs.
2. A research programme was launched to promote research on women's health.
3. The Government finances a comprehensive programme to promote gender mainstreaming in local and regional authorities. Municipalities play a crucial role, since they are responsible for a major part of the basic services that influence people's everyday lives, such as schooling, child care and health care.

In light of the strong focus on combating men's violence against women in Sweden, I welcome the UN campaign to end violence against women that was announced earlier this morning by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Mr/Madam Chairperson,

One starting point for this session's follow-up theme should be Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. Sweden was one of the first countries to adopt a national action plan for the implementation of this Resolution.

Women and girls are victims of violence, rape and other abuse in conflict situations. However, women are also important actors in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution. Women's knowledge and experiences are invaluable for sustainable post-conflict peacebuilding.

Sweden takes a very serious view of the reports that UN staff on peace-keeping missions have been involved in sexual exploitation and other abuses of women and girls. It is unacceptable and must stop! Therefore, we welcome efforts within the UN system to investigate the occurrence of such abuse, and to prosecute perpetrators.

Mr/Madam Chairperson,

Investments in gender equality are investments in hope and in the future. Globally, we have a range of legal and policy instruments for the effective promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The moment has come to implement them. It is our responsibility to allocate resources, to set clear targets and to take action. Together, we can make the world a better and more equal place for both women and men to live in. Let us begin today!

Thank you!