

## STATEMENT BY STATE SECRETARY TANJA RASMUSSEN

Commission on Population and Development, 47th session 7-11 April 2014

*Swedish statement on agenda item 4: General debate on national experience in population matters: assessment of the status of implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development*

Mr President,

It is an honor to address the 47th session of the Commission on Population and Development. Sweden aligns itself with the statement made by Greece on behalf of the European Union and its member states.

Twenty years ago the ICPD in Cairo marked a turning point by putting people's rights and dignity at the heart of development. It emphasized that increasing social, economic and political equity, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, is a fundamental human right and the basis for individual well-being, lower population growth, the eradication of poverty and the achievement of sustainable development.

Over the last twenty years we have worked to implement the Cairo agenda. We still face great challenges.

Progress is often limited to the wealthy and advantaged. In the poorest and most disadvantaged communities the status of women has seen little progress. Every day 800 women die in childbirth or other pregnancy related complications, and almost 200 of them are young girls. Children are dying giving birth.

To say this is unacceptable is an understatement.

The ICPD Programme of Action is as relevant today as ever before. We must ensure its full implementation, on all levels.

Sweden welcomes the ICPD Beyond 2014 Review report and the Secretary General's summary report.

The reports clearly confirm an international consensus for the ICPD agenda. We applaud the report's emphasis on a human rights-based framework and we hope to see the same issues and recommendations reflected in the coming index report by the Secretary General as well

as in the post 2015 framework. We also hope that the General Assembly Special Session on ICPD Beyond 2014 in September will take the findings of the review into account.

Mr President,

Sweden has grappled with gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights for centuries. In the 19th century Sweden had one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the West and women were not allowed to vote or run for political office.

In the last century Swedish women have demanded and obtained their rights to participate on the political and economic arenas, and to decide if, when and how they would have children. SRhealth clinics for youth up to 22 years old are essential for upholding rights. And our anti-discrimination laws have been strengthened to protect the rights of all individuals to freely express their sexuality and gender identity.

Research shows that information about anatomy and sexualities does not lead to earlier sexual debut or greater sexual frequency. This is confirmed by the Swedish experience. In Sweden comprehensive sexuality education has been mandatory since 1955 and the mean age of sexual debut has remained the same.

It is a fact that unsafe abortion accounts for a growing proportion of maternal deaths globally. In Sweden, women are able to make their own decisions on whether they want to bring a pregnancy to term. For the last 30 years, no woman has died because of having an abortion. Making abortion illegal does not reduce the number of abortions; it only drives it under ground.

Furthermore, in 1999 Sweden introduced a law that criminalized the purchase of sexual services, but not to sell them. The purpose of the law is to punish the clients, not the prostitutes. Prostitution violates human dignity and human rights, whether it is forced or voluntary. The Swedish law has been successful in reducing the demand for prostitution. A few weeks ago a non-binding resolution in the European Parliament was adopted that clearly stated that EU countries should reduce the demand for prostitution by criminalizing the buyers. This is a big victory.

Mr. President,

Discriminatory structures, such as laws, customs, traditions, religious considerations and stereotypes continue to keep many women and young people, particularly adolescent girls, from enjoying their human rights and accessing education and sexual and reproductive health services.

These inequalities must be eliminated. Everyone should have the same right and possibilities. We need to engage men and boys as our strategic partners in challenging the structures that perpetuate inequality and discrimination.

Mr. President,

This session takes place at a strategic moment in time. The global community is shaping a new generation of development goals and a post-2015 agenda. We have a responsibility to make sure that the future agenda is universal. It should be ambitious and address the unfinished business of the millennium development goals.

Gender inequality is one of the most pervasive forms of inequality globally and a pressing human rights concern. The achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment is a universal responsibility. Sweden calls for a stand alone goal on gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment. We also call for mainstreaming gender specific targets and indicators across all goals in the post-2015 agenda.

We also recognise the importance of putting our money where our mouth is. Over the past 10 years Sweden's support to SRHR has tripled from 128 million USD in 2001 to 372 million in 2012. We are also the proud sponsors of the sixth international parliamentary conference on the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action in Stockholm later this month.

Mr President, in conclusion:

This session, as part of the twenty year review of the ICPD, is an important milestone for the reaffirmation of the full implementation of the Cairo agenda with its strong focus on human rights and achieving a new global consensus for ICPD Beyond 2014. We cannot afford to

ignore this opportunity. We have to further advance the agenda, including sexual and reproductive health and rights for all, for the benefit of all people and societies.

Thank you

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