

# SWEDEN



## STATEMENT

by

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UN Commission on the Status of Women

59<sup>th</sup> General Assembly  
United Nations

New York

1 March 2005

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

Madame Chair,

Excellencies,  
Distinguished delegates,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Swedish Government. Sweden aligns itself with the statement made by Luxemburg on behalf of the European Union.

Allow me first of all to congratulate the Assistant Secretary General Ms Rachel N. Mayanja on her new appointment and I would also like to thank the Division for the Advancement of Women for their efforts in promoting gender equality in the UN system.

Madame Chair,

There is a lot to do in order to change the power structures between women and men in the world. According to the UNFPA, 50% of the world's population is under the age of 25. That means a great responsibility for us politicians to create a society with equal rights for all these young women and men, and to renew our ideas about gender equality again and again. We need to address issues which are relevant to the new generation, about women's equal right to participate in decision making, about sexual and reproductive health and rights, about equal pay for equal work and all those other question which are crucial in an equal society. They have the right to claim efforts and commitment from our side. It is also fundamental that we show the next generation that change is possible.

Therefore we must fulfil the goals and challenges in the 10-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action, the mid-term review of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, such as guaranteeing women's economic independence, women's opportunity to enjoy human rights, women's access to sexual and reproductive health care and services and men's responsibility in relation to gender-based discrimination and violence.

Sweden looks upon this meeting as the occasion for a strong and unequivocal reaffirmation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Outcome Document from Beijing+5. The full implementation of the Beijing Agenda is absolutely necessary if we are serious about poverty eradication and promoting gender equality.

To succeed in this work we – women and men – must be aware of the gender-based power structures that exist in all known societies and cultures. We must acknowledge that the existing relations of power, rooted in patriarchal systems, serve to perpetuate an undemocratic system that affects all members of society and deprives us of resources.

Gender equality is essentially an issue of democracy. It is impossible to have a **democratic** society without having gender equality. The rights of half of the population cannot be ignored. Also, gender equality is a tool for reaching other political goals in the society, like economic growth.

So, gender equality, protection and promotion of human rights must be connected to **poverty reduction** in one coherent undertaking. The promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment is a matter not only of justice, but also of political, social and economic good sense. Gender inequality puts severe constraints on the productive as well as the democratic potential of households, communities and nations. It constrains access to jobs and well-needed income and growth at all levels.

Despite the documented and undisputed contributions to local and national **economies**, women continue to lack access to productive assets. In many parts of the world women comprise a majority of those working in agriculture, local marketing and small-scale marketing. Their contributions are vital to their families and to the whole society. Although women work on the land - they do not own it. Men can inherit - women often cannot. Educating a woman, means better health for the whole family - yet girls are often denied schooling. In some parts of the world girls are better educated than boys, but are still denied the best jobs. And everywhere women are most lacking in political representation, least compensated for the work they do, most illiterate, most impoverished, most lacking in legal protection and recourse and most concentrated in the lowest paying, least secure and least valued sectors of the labour force.

Sweden welcomes the report "Investing in Development" by the UN Millennium Project, which points out that gender equality is vital for overall economic growth and development.

This year, several other important meetings are taking place, the 10-year follow-up of the Social Summit in Copenhagen, and not least the 5-year follow-up of the Millennium Summit, which will deal with the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Last year witnessed the 10-year follow-up of the Cairo Conference.

In these processes, we have amassed a multitude of factual evidence that shows us that we will all benefit from a gender equal society. In order to change the patriarchal structures, it must be made clear, through decisive action, that all persons – regardless of sex, ethnic origin, age, religion, sexual orientation or disability – are of equal value and must be able to enjoy the same rights and opportunities in all areas of society.

Madame chair

One of the more decisive markers of autonomy and full humanity and citizenship is the control over one's own body and sexuality. Good health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, and in particular the right to control one's own fertility, is crucial. The Swedish government remains firmly committed to these issues, in keeping with the goals and commitments of the Platform for Action.

Once again, I would like to refer to the report by the UN Millennium Project. It states that all MDG-based investment packages should address the protection of sexual and reproductive health and rights, including access to information and family planning services. Women's lack of access to sexual and reproductive health care and their inability to control their own fertility, apart from being a violation of women's human rights, deprives countries of valuable human resources, causes suffering and means that several of the MDGs will not be achieved in the foreseeable future.

We are far from achieving the goal of decreasing maternal mortality. Many women, not least the poorest women, do not have access to sexual and reproductive services; due both to lack of services and inaccessibility caused by social, cultural gender-based, geographic and economic barriers.

Approximately 200 million women in developing countries have an unmet need for contraceptive services and many experience life-threatening obstetric complications. We must also address the effects of unsafe abortions. Unsafe abortions constitute 13 percent of all maternal deaths around the world. We have seen that abortion-related mortality and morbidity is highest where abortion is illegal, where reproductive health services are insufficient, and where women do not have control over their own sexuality and fertility.

Women need to have means to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections, in particular HIV. An essential part of this preventive work is that everyone has access to sexuality education as well as condoms and other contraceptives. The reality is that the

promotion of abstinence does not work. For many girls and women this message is insufficient. Where rape and other forms of sexual violence are widespread, abstaining is not an alternative.

The political forces that oppose each individual's right to sexual and reproductive health and rights jeopardize many lives of women, young people and children. Today we must remember that we have already agreed to move the agenda forward, thereby supporting women's empowerment.

Madame Chair,

To effectively promote gender equality we cannot focus only on women. To fight discrimination against women and girls, men and boys need to be involved. Men have the responsibility to question the negative expressions of masculinity, attitudes and behaviour towards women and girls — expressions of masculinity that do not respect the human rights of women and girls.

It is time to break the silence surrounding gender-based violence. It is time to talk about hideous crimes committed by men against women, such as violence against women and children in the home, violence in the name of honour and violence connected to prostitution or trafficking in women and girls, including in situations of armed conflict, crises and transition. In this connection we would like to mention that Sweden fully support the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. I would like to inform you that we are in the middle of preparing an action plan on 1325 and it's implementation on national, EU- and UN-level.

Madame Chair,

The Swedish Government is convinced that if we are to succeed in meeting these challenges and achieve a gender equal society, we must proceed from an understanding that the unequal distribution of power between women and men is sustained by the gender based power structure in society. The Swedish Government will continue the work with breaking down this structure. We owe this to the generations to come!

Thank you !