



SWEDEN



STATEMENT

by

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- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

Madame Chair,

Sweden aligns itself with the statement made by The Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

My delegation appreciates this important opportunity to engage in a continuous, systematic follow-up of the Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and its Key Actions for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action adopted five years later.

Human rights and gender equality are two priority areas of the Swedish Government. Development, human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment are inter-dependant and the cornerstones in the implementation of the ICPD. The United Nations system and, in particular, the United Nations Population Fund is doing a tremendously important work by advancing the ICPD goals and recommendations at the global, regional and national level. Sweden continues to be a strong supporter of the ICPD and to translate the actions into country specific activities. In this regard, my delegation would like to underline the importance for country and regional ownership of the agenda and the need to develop national capacities so that countries themselves can achieve the goals set out in the Programme of Action, in line with the Paris declaration and Accra Agenda for Action. In view of the comprehensive nature of the ICPD, the implementation of the Cairo agenda is crucial for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to highlight some specific areas that deserve further attention; first on population and development and then the issue of migration. And finally, we will emphasize the importance of linking gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and rights to HIV/AIDS.

Madame Chair,

The recent global food crisis still threatens the health and well-being of millions of people around the world. In addition, the world is now facing the consequences of the global economic recession and financial crisis, which particularly tend to aggravate the

already severe problems facing poor people, especially poor women who are faced with new and additional challenges to provide for their families. The origins of these crises are multidimensional, and it is crucial that the international community deals with the root causes and at the same time finds innovative ways to mitigate the effects for those who suffer the most. In the international debate on these crises we hear new calls for population control. This argument takes us back to a more quantitative way of thinking about population predating the Cairo conferences and undermines the progress countries have made to promote reproductive health and rights. We must use a number of different and mutual reinforcing strategies to address the challenges aggravated by the financial crisis and other threats, including climate change. It is thus pivotal not to aim for simplistic solutions to complex difficulties which require comprehensive, sustainable strategies. As stated in the ICPD Programme of Action, reproductive rights are human rights, and we strongly believe that the choice of the individual must remain in focus in our reasoning regarding sexual and reproductive health.

Every woman and man must be enabled to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have access to information and means to do so. Moreover, individuals must be able to make an informed choice and have access to a full range of reproductive health services, including contraceptives. As the ICPD states “The principle of informed free choice is essential to the long-term success of family-planning programmes. Any form of coercion has no part to play”. Sweden is convinced that such an approach results in wanted children and better health for their mothers. If children are wanted and planned there are often better chances that the parents can afford to feed them, give them education and what is otherwise needed for a prosperous future. For these reasons, Sweden feels that it is essential to address the indivisible interlinkages between sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality as well as population and development.

Madame Chair,

Migration is a global trend that holds enormous development potential, for individuals as well as for societies. However, managing migration and its consequences, is one of the most pressing issues. Individuals and families migrate for different reasons; to escape conflicts, warfare, natural disasters and poverty, to find jobs, to secure a better future for their children, and to reunite with their families. Their journeys are an expression of

challenges of different kinds. By addressing these challenges and taking measures to maximize the development potential of migration, we stand a better chance to increase economic growth and ensure social development and social cohesion in a sustainable way. To succeed, we also need effective integration strategies to ensure mutual accommodation of migrants and their host societies.

Sweden considers migration an integral part of its agenda for development and poverty eradication and we have identified migration as one of six main areas of focus to achieve the goal of equitable and sustainable global development. If the development benefits of international migration are to be maximized and the negative consequences minimized, coherent policy decisions, approaches and actions are crucial.

Internal migration and population distribution are often the result of poor rural development and increased urbanization. Low agricultural productivity, natural resources degradation, few employment opportunities outside the agricultural sector, hunger and poverty are some of the major causes of migration from rural to urban areas in many developing countries. Urban areas can and often do provide options for a better life for poor people. Still, poverty and exclusion are concentrated in deprived urban areas and call for constant attention and ongoing action to ensure that urban dwellers in those areas get access to job opportunities, decent working conditions, health services, sanitation, education and adequate housing conditions. Creating socially, economically and ecologically sound urban communities first and foremost requires good urban governance based on democratic decision making and the active involvement of citizens, in true partnership with the civil society.

Madame Chair,

Sweden is deeply concerned about the prospect of reaching all aspects of the 5th Millennium Development Goal to improve maternal health. Reducing maternal mortality depends on many factors and we have to acknowledge all of them in order to prevent this needless death and suffering of women, many of whom are young teenagers. The second target under MDG5, universal access to reproductive health, was a very important milestone in this regard. In our commitment to address maternal health, we have to address important underlying factors such as gender inequality, the roles of men and

boys, the various needs of young people, issues around sexuality and gender based violence. Therefore, MDG 5 must remain in the broader context of sexual and reproductive health and rights. This will also help attaining the MDG's at large and the reduction of poverty –and it is also imperative for achieving MDG 3 on promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

In addition, we need to address the devastating effects of unsafe abortions. The linkages between unsafe abortions and maternal mortality must be recognized. Every year, about 20 million women are forced to resort to unsafe abortion. The effect is that 70 000 women die every year and millions more face severe health problems.

Madame Chair,

Peoples vulnerability to HIV increases when their human right are not respected, particularly rights relating to sexual and reproductive health . This together with the feminization of HIV shows that respect for human rights must be strengthened and that gender equality must increase in order to be able to respond to HIV and AIDS effectively. Therefore, strengthened respect for humans rights, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and increased gender equality constitute key priorities in Sweden's new policy for international HIV and AIDS efforts. Men, women and young people, regardless of hiv status, sexual orientation and gender identity, must have access to information, knowledge and services about HIV and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Linking initiatives on reproductive health and rights to HIV and AIDS is therefore vital to a successful response to the pandemic.

Madame Chair,

How can we proceed in advancing the ICPD agenda?

One important contribution is UNFPA's work to develop a cultural lense, as a programming tool, which helps to establish connections between local values, attitudes and behavior with universally recognized human rights. This method has proven to have great potential in challenging discrimination and harmful practices. Sweden would like to stress the central role UNFPA plays in promoting this approach within the UN system.

Let us be reminded that oppression and discrimination exist in all societies. This is one important reason why the advancement of human rights and gender equality is a key development priority for my Government.

In conclusion Madame Chair,

Sweden remains a strong and dedicated supporter of the ICPD Cairo agenda and recognizes its importance to achieve the MDGs. We also recognize that we have to make significant progress in realizing its implementation at all levels. Now is the time to transform global commitments into concrete actions that lead to real change for the world's women and men.

Thank you.