

Commission on Population and Development, 48th session 13-17 April 2015
General debate on national experience in population matters:
Realizing the future we want — integrating population issues into sustainable development,
including in the post-2015 development agenda

Swedish statement by State Secretary Ms. Ulrika Modéer

Madame Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Civil Society Representatives,

Sweden aligns itself with the statement made by Latvia on behalf of the European Union.

Madame Chair,

This session takes place at a strategic moment in time. The global community is shaping a new framework for sustainable development beyond 2015. Population issues, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, have to be at the core of this agenda. Why?

Because these issues matter. They are crucial for development, for the eradication of poverty, for the fulfillment of human rights, for the achievement of gender equality, and for tackling climate change.

Madame Chair,

In Sweden we have a high life expectancy. We also have a low birth rate, although at 1.9 it is among the highest in Europe. This is a challenge in terms of higher dependency load on the younger generations. But Sweden's journey from a very poor country with one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the west, to a society with high life expectancy has been very positive.

Sweden's firm support for universal access to education and health, including sexual and reproductive health education and services, is part of our success story. Another is our determined and sustained efforts to bolster gender equality and women's rights and possibilities. This includes her right to decide freely the number and spacing of one's children and to participate in the labor market and to contribute to society on the same terms as men. Sweden has also taken important steps towards equal responsibility of men and women in the household and in caring for children. We now have a feminist government, and a feminist foreign and development policy.

Madame Chair,

Roughly one quarter of the world's population is between 10 and 24 years old. Their possibilities, aspirations and achievements will shape the future. Our ability to fulfill their human rights, provide them with a safe environment and opportunities, access to health services, quality education and decent work, is crucial.

Boys are twice as likely as girls to attend secondary school. One of the primary causes of girls dropping out of school is early or forced marriage or pregnancy. It is crucial to offer girls comprehensive sexuality education, youth friendly services and contraceptives so that they stay in school as long as boys. Women and girls should also have the right and access to legal and safe abortions. Making abortion illegal does not reduce the number of abortions, it only drives it underground.

Offering and promoting girl's education is not only the right thing to do, it is smart for the economy. For every year a girl stays in school, her possibilities of getting a good job and a higher income increases even more than for boys. Ensuring that women and girls have full autonomy over their lives, bodies and sexualities is a first crucial step towards fulfilling their human rights and enhancing their health and well-being.

Unfortunately, gender based violence and discrimination continue to keep many women, girls and young people from enjoying their human rights. These inequalities must be eliminated. Everyone, regardless of sex, age, ethnicity, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation or gender identity, migrant status or any other status should have the same rights and possibilities. Men and boys need to engage in challenging the structures that perpetuate inequality and discrimination.

Madame Chair,

Population dynamics influence the availability of financial and natural resources, including land and water. Climate changes already affect people at a large scale, partly as a consequence of changes in global consumption patterns. The poor and marginalized are most affected. This is not acceptable. Our pledge to the Green Climate Fund of 4 billion SEK – 580 MUSD -is a sign of our commitment to climate finance.

Migration contributes to development and reduces poverty for migrant households. Sweden continues to be one of the EU Member States with the highest number of asylum seekers and also ranks high in terms of per capita refugees globally. We advocate for more states to increase the overall number of resettlement places. It is important to keep solidarity high on the agenda and protect those in need.

Madame Chair,

Sweden's development path has been long and we still have work left to do. Despite anti-discriminatory laws and regulations, gender based violence and discrimination against women, sexual minorities and immigrants are examples of problems that we still have to fight. We also have to continue to provide the younger generation with knowledge and means to make important life choices. Sweden is therefore fully committed to the full and further implementation of the ICPD beyond 2014 and its integration into the post-2015 agenda.

Commitments have to be backed with resources and effective, accountable and transparent institutions. We welcome a vibrant, active and critical civil society to keep its government accountable. Sweden stands by its commitment to contribute one per cent of our gross national income to development cooperation. We are also launching a new strategy for sexual and reproductive health and rights in Sub Sahara Africa with funding that will support the region with 350 million Swedish crowns annually.

Our commitments to ICPD beyond 2014 are based on our strong belief in equity, human rights and gender equality.

I thank you