

**Commission on Population and Development, 49th session 11-15 April 2015
General debate on national experience in population matters:**

Agenda item 4: General debate on national experience in population matters: strengthening the demographic evidence base for the post-2015 development agenda

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Lennarth Hjelmåker, Ambassador for Global Health
Ministry of Foreign Affairs Sweden**

Madame Chair, Distinguished Delegates, Civil Society Representatives,

Sweden aligns itself with the statement made by the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

Madame Chair,

Sweden welcomes the broad, cross- regional support for gender equality, human rights and sexual and reproductive health and rights as key to sustainable development.

Gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights were Swedish priorities during the post-2015 negotiations, and we are pleased that the rights, health, empowerment and well-being of women and young people are firmly woven into the SDG's.

The 2030 agenda, with goals and targets directly linked to the ICPD, offers a real opportunity for transformative change.

And change is needed.

Every year, the lack of sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls leads to 80 million unplanned pregnancies and 20 million unsafe abortions around the world. Every year, more than 300 000 women and girls die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.

The figures are staggering and reveal our failure to deliver on previous promises to women and girls.

The majority of maternal deaths are due to causes that could easily have been avoided with access to comprehensive sexuality education, available and affordable modern forms of contraceptives and counselling, safe and legal abortion and access to non-discriminatory sexual and reproductive health services and information for all, in particular for youth and adolescents.

The lack of sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls has enormous negative consequences for the individuals affected, their families and children and for the social and economic development of the societies they live in.

Madame Chair,

After our historic agreement last year, commitments should turn into action. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda is a Swedish top priority and we are fully committed to engage with other member states and stake holders to ensure its full and effective implementation, nationally as well as internationally.

Regular collection and analysis of population data and demographic data-based on human rights principles- is vital for measuring the success of the implementation of the 2030 agenda as well as of the ICPD Programme of Action. Statistics is a powerful tool to make visible structures that hinder equal opportunities and equal rights for everyone. With basic knowledge of age, sex, income, fertility, mortality and a few other variables, we stand a better chance of developing policy and politics that make a difference to people. Birth registration should be a starting point combined with reliable civil registration and vital statistic systems.

In order to ensure that no one is left behind- especially not women and girls- we need to make sure that those most in need do not remain invisible. The data-gap of adolescents in and especially of young girls, 10-15 years old, has to be addressed.

We should also invest in capacity development and in an exchange of lessons learned at national, regional and international level. In this context we would like to stress the importance of cooperation between National Statistical Institutes, national agencies for civil registration, health agencies and civil society organisations. There is a wealth of knowledge within these organisations to tap into when it comes to collecting data and developing statistics, also in terms of user perspective and in terms of identifying problems and challenges.

Sweden welcomes the extensive work of the UN Statistical Commission and the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators, and underlines the importance of the adoption of their proposed global indicators, as an initial framework for follow up and reviews of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets. We also fully support the continued process to refine and improve the global indicators as proposed by the Statistical Commission.

Madame Chair,

Sweden has a long experience of collecting population data and producing and making available gender statistics. It has provided us, and the general public, with an evidence base

against which we can measure the success of the policies we develop and implement, and has helped us to develop policies and politics that really matter.

One example is the publication “Women and Men in Sweden, Facts and Figures”, in which the national statistical office in Sweden, since 1984, has regularly been reporting on the status of gender equality in Sweden. The booklet contains easily accessible statistics in a number of areas: population, health, education, time use, care, gainful employment, wages/salaries, income, violence and crime; influence and power, and is widely used by policy makers and civil society. The booklet is an example of how population statistics, combined with a strong user perspective, can make visible injustice and in a transparent way informs policymakers and the general public on gender issues. A number of other countries have started producing a similar booklets modelled on the Swedish original.

Sweden is actively supporting the collection of population data for sustainable development through our extensive core and earmarked support to UNFPA's technical support for national Population and Housing Censuses in many parts of the world. Sweden also engages directly in censuses in many partner countries - for instance in Mali, Georgia, Myanmar, Kosovo, Burkina Faso and Mozambique. But censuses are only two-three year operations. Since Sweden is convinced that sustainable change takes time we also collaborate with over ten countries to strengthen national statistical capacity through institutional cooperation. It is this kind of long-term hard work “behind the scenes” rather than quick “data shopping” that truly improves the quality of statistics - and in the end democracy, gender equality and human rights.

Madame Chair,

Human rights, gender equality and access to sexual and reproductive health and rights are pivotal for development. 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.

I can assure you of Sweden’s steadfast commitment to the full and effective implementation of the Agenda 2030 and to the ICPD Programme of Action and the outcome of its global and regional reviews and conferences.

I thank you.