

SWEDEN



Intervention
by
SWEDEN

Commission on Population and Development
Forty-first Session
(item 4)

United Nations
New York

7-11 April 2008

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -

Mr Chairman,

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

Sweden continues to be a strong and dedicated supporter of the ICPD (Cairo) agenda. We welcome the continuous, systematic follow-up within the framework of this Commission of the ICDP agenda, which covers many elements.

My delegation appreciates this opportunity to share with you today some of our national experiences relating to the themes of this Commission. Underlining the importance of good governance, I will first say something about experiences and efforts as regards sustainable urban development in Sweden. I will also highlight one of the central items on the ICDP-agenda, namely sexual and reproductive health and rights. The Swedish government finds both these issues of crucial importance for the Millennium Development Goals to be attained in a world where urbanization cannot and need not be stopped or reversed, but rather be addressed in a constructive way. This means to recognize our common challenge and responsibility to maximize the potential of, and tackle the problems associated with urbanization, creating socially, economically and ecologically sound urban as well as rural communities. We need to build not only on experiences from within country boundaries but on research results, skills and good practices and experiences from all over the international community, from women and men; young and elderly, in our urban development strategies and coordinated action for global development.

Mr. Chairman,

The increasingly important role of cities, in Europe and globally, is reflected in Swedish national policies. Sustainable Urban Development is a priority area, especially in relation to social cohesion and to climate change. Local Agenda 21- efforts are integrated in the work of all municipalities based on the principle of local self-government. The Swedish government is currently establishing a new programme to facilitate urban development measures that will mitigate climate change and decrease negative environmental impact. The growing trend of segregation between city districts is addressed in a national, cross sector urban development policy. Its aim is to reduce the number of urban districts characterized by exclusion, and to place cities in a better position to contribute to Sweden's competitiveness. This policy is focusing on employment, education and security.

One of our main challenges in deprived urban areas is to establish a structure for urban governance involving actors at all levels, from local to national. We need a system for measuring and evaluating the effects of national policies in the urban context, with data on neighbourhood level showing disparities within a municipality. This system should also allow for international comparison between local communities and include sex-disaggregated data. The system should also support the exchange of experiences and knowledge among actors involved in the urban development work at all levels. A key instrument in our urban development policy is the concept of local development agreements. These are annual agreements between the national government and metropolitan municipalities that aim at facilitating partnerships between government agencies, municipalities, private actors and civil society.

Mr. Chairman,

Rural poverty is a factor contributing to urban growth and to the expansion of slum areas unless it is not accurately addressed. Urban areas can and often do provide options for a better life for poor people from rural areas, provided that they can gain access to productive job opportunities, health services, sanitation, education and adequate housing conditions. Therefore knowledge about internal migration and exercising good governance in both rural and urban communities are important to us, in particular in times of fast urbanization

The Swedish government has put policy coherence at the centre of our policy for global development. This means that all policy areas must contribute to the overarching goal of an equitable and sustainable global development. The policy is guided by a rights perspective as well as a poor people's perspectives on development. The policy has recently been renewed to ensure solid and coherent work on six global challenges. Sustainable urban development is one of 18 focus areas within these challenges.

Mr. Chairman,

let me point out that in 2025 half of all urban slum dwellers will be under the age of 25. There must be opportunities for these young women and men to improve their lives. The prevalence of HIV has been reported to be higher in urban than in rural areas, with young women and girls being the ones most susceptible to HIV infection. They urgently need education about women's and men's sexualities, access to youth friendly services, voluntary counselling and testing as well as treatment.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights is a cross-cutting issue on the ICPD agenda. This factor - being in some cases particularly apparent in the context of urbanization, - is a top priority in my Government's development cooperation work for the attainment of all Millennium Development Goals, and in particular the target of universal access to reproductive health services by 2015. If well-governed, cities do provide an opportunity to effectively reach many women and men with sexual and reproductive health services and information. By ensuring that all women and men enjoy their sexual and reproductive rights, national and local governments will enhance also poor urban people's employment opportunities, their possibilities to participate in the democratic institutions and in the social life a city offers. Such investments are vital to the prosperity and development of the whole community.

To conclude, access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and the enjoyment of Sexual and Reproductive Rights are ends in themselves. Supporting good urban governance that ensures the provision of sexual and reproductive health services is an important part of our efforts to make the best out of the fact that from now on more than half of the world's population are living in cities.

Thank you!