



**Statement by H E Ms Lena Sommestad, Minister for Environment, Sweden, in Ministerial discussion with Major Groups, at the Commission for Sustainable Development, New York, April 21, 2005**

Mr/Madam Chairperson,

In reaching the internationally agreed goals and targets, the participation of all stakeholders is crucial. I am proud of the commitments we made in Johannesburg when stating the importance of the contributions from major groups, and I fully support the EU statement in stressing that the active participation of major groups is crucial and should be reflected in the working arrangements of upcoming CSD sessions.

Are we doing enough in making sure that stakeholders have their say? I believe we can do more, and although all major groups are important contributors, let me highlight the cooperation with two of them, and how we can work better together in our common strife for reaching the targets.

Women. The number of women in environmental decision-making institutions remains unrepresentative and undemocratic. A manifest of women's collaborative power was the first Global Women's Assembly on Environment; Women as the Voice for the Environment (WAVE), held in Nairobi in October last year. The meeting, attended by 150 participants from civil society from 65 countries, was held in conjunction with a meeting of the Network of Women Ministers of Environment. WAVE is a fruitful example of how governments and civil society can join forces and work successfully together. One of the results was a ground-breaking decision on gender equality in the field of environment, taken by the UNEP GC in February.

Youth. Young people are a tremendous asset. Never before have there been as many youngsters in the world, today they make up 45 percent of world population. However, many go uneducated, unheard and unemployed. This is a terrible waste of resources – for individuals and for society, as it is not socially sustainable.

We must focus on education, in a broad sense and on education for sustainable development. We should not focus solely on formal education, but keep in mind the importance of the non-formal and peer-to-peer education as well. In this regards, the knowledge sharing between youth organisations are of immense importance.

We now have the momentum to join forces in the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. In the UNECE region we have recently adopted a strategy on education for sustainable development and I hope that the regions can share practices and learn from each other.

Creating equal participation for women and youth in all stages of the decision-making processes would create vast opportunities for successfully achieving the goals we committed ourselves to reach.

Thank you.