

Rio +20 Summit on Sustainable Development
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STATEMENT BY MR FREDRIK REINFELDT, PRIME MINISTER OF
SWEDEN

Check against delivery.

Madame President, Mr. Secretary General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The world of today is facing huge challenges. But also huge possibilities.

Globalization has brought tremendous benefits for many people. Through increased movement and increased trade. The economic growth during the last fifteen years has brought 400 million people out of poverty.

Today we see more countries than ever, walking the path towards democracy. We also see how knowledge and innovation contribute to solving more and more of our common problems.

At the same time, many of the countries in the world are being torn by war and conflicts. Often the same countries which are fighting widespread poverty.

Unsustainable production and consumption patterns are depleting our natural resources. Climate change is causing more extreme weather conditions, which affect the poorest people the most.

The world is not short of challenges if we are to reach a more sustainable development. The question is – how can we together meet these challenges?

Firstly, a number of fundamental conditions need to be in place.

Among those are first and foremost democratic principles. Openness and transparency. Free flow of information. Accountability. As well as respect for human rights and gender equality.

Maybe most important and fundamental in this respect is to ensure human, economic and social rights for 3.5 billion women and girls around the world. This is not only a question of fairness and gender equality. But also a purely economic question, since it would lead to significantly higher GDP growth in many countries. Especially interesting of course in times of economic crisis.

Every day, around 1000 women die from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. Addressing women's sexual and reproductive health and rights is more urgent than ever.

Market economy and free trade are other important instruments to fight poverty and bring prosperity to more people around the globe.

Instruments which in times of economic crisis are being questioned, also in Europe. And which are sometimes being replaced by protectionist policies. Something we need to take a clear stand against.

Furthermore, we also have to create possibilities for people to strengthen their power over their own lives. Only when people are free to think and express themselves, they are able to make demands. Contribute to change. And create a sustainable development.

Madame President/ Mr. Secretary General,

I would like to highlight in particular four areas of importance to create a sustainable development:

Firstly:

In a sustainable society, the prices of natural resources have to be right - in the sense that the prices also have to reflect the environmental effects.

This can be done for instance through environmental taxes, trade with emissions and environmental fees. In Sweden, we have made that kind of economic incentives work. Showing also that it is possible to increase economic growth and at the same time reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Crucial of course for developing countries.

If we are serious about meeting the climate threats, we all need to perform better in this area. That is why we believe that economic instruments should be key tools for a green and inclusive economy.

Secondly:

In 2030, five billion people are expected to live in cities. A large part of the energy consumption, the environmental and social problems -including the increasing poverty - will be concentrated here. This is the reason why Sweden is pushing to increase the awareness and need for sustainable urbanization.

We simply have to rethink and adopt a comprehensive view on urban planning. Where resource efficiency and energy efficient techniques go hand in hand with increased recycling. And where increased employment is combined with increased availability in social services.

Thirdly:

The business community is playing a decisive role to mobilize resources, create employment - in particular for young people - and stand up for responsible innovations - in our endeavor to reach a sustainable development. The economic and environmental problems of today are to a high degree linked to the production and consumption patterns.

To better take care of the expertise, the resources and the innovation potential of the business to reach sustainable development should be a priority.

Fourthly:

Access to and a sustainable use of energy as well as water and sanitation is crucial. Cost-efficient and healthy energy and water solutions contribute to improving people's living conditions, health and environment.

Madame President/Mr. Secretary General,

The Swedish government organized in April this year a Partnership Forum for Sustainable Development to discuss how governments, businesses, organizations and individuals could promote a more sustainable society. The four points I made as well as a number of other recommendations are included in the Call for Action that was issued at this conference.

Finally Mr. Secretary General,

Sweden believes that the notion of sustainable development needs to become more concrete and measurable. We therefore very much welcome the agreement at this meeting to set up Sustainable Development Goals.

Because real change is only possible when we truly understand the challenges facing us. When we know what actions are needed. And when we can see the progress made.

We believe that Sustainable Development Goals can make it a lot easier for all of us to take action. The action that is urgently needed.

Thank you for your attention!