



Statement by H E Ms Mona Sahlin, Minister for Sustainable Development, Sweden, on *Turning Political Commitments into Action*, at the Commission for Sustainable Development, New York, April 20, 2005

Mr. Chairman,

Following on to the statement made by the EU, Sweden would like to underline a few issues. At CSD last year the Secretary-General Kofi Annan assessed progress towards the goal of sustainable development to be at best uneven. He focused both on the environment and on human beings - women and men - and the need to address linkages and cross-cutting concerns to achieve sustainable development.

Mr. Chairman,

When promoting sustainable development we must wholeheartedly combat inequalities, and their root causes such as gender-based discrimination. We must take action to empower women. We must ensure that women and men can enjoy their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Gender equality is essential to combat the HIV/Aids pandemic. Globally, young women are 1.6 times more likely to be living with HIV/Aids than young men. We must involve women in decision-making at all levels. We must set goals for equal participation and full involvement of women. Women must be given secure tenure and the right to land.

We have heard many voices here at CSD testify that access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene, and housing has direct effects on women's situations in life. Many women and girls often spend a major part of their day fetching water. Better access to fresh water is an issue relating to improved privacy, dignity, and security. It creates time for education and leads to improved health.

As the Secretary-General pointed out, science and knowledge are key instruments in our quest. The knowledge available in the gender and development discourse, which was elaborated upon recently at the meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women, must be integrated.

Mr. Chairman,

In recognition of the significance Sweden attaches to sustainable development, a Ministry of Sustainable Development was formed earlier this year. The tasks of the previous Ministry of the Environment have been merged with new areas of responsibility such as energy, emissions trading, construction, planning and housing. The vision is to transform and modernize Sweden into a green welfare state. This is a vision of an ecologically sustainable Sweden, which safeguards health,

environment and welfare while enabling us better to contribute to increased solidarity and a fairer distribution of resources in the world.

To expedite implementation of our common goals, the Swedish Water House gathers Swedish expertise in the water and sanitation field and makes it available to other countries. The UNDP Water Governance Facility has been established with the support of Sweden and UNDP at the Stockholm International Water Institute.

Sweden supports the arranging of annual multi-stakeholder meetings by UN-Water for the follow up of the water and sanitation related decisions from CSD13. We offer the World Water Week in Stockholm as a platform for deliberations on the cross cutting dimensions of environment management and protection, social progress and economic development.

In order to reach the Millennium Development Goals and the targets set in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, policies and strategies must deliver results. In this regard, development assistance is of crucial importance. We urge all donor countries to live up to the 0.7 per cent commitment. In 2006 1.0 per cent of the Swedish GNI will be allocated to international development co-operation. An additional 1 billion SEK, equivalent to 140 million USD, of the increased development assistance budget will be dedicated to action in the environmental field. Prioritized areas are water, sanitation, energy and climate, chemicals and environmental governance.

Mr. Chairman,

Most of our environmental problems are linked to how we all consume and produce. Sweden is committed to the Marrakech process. We must change production and use of hazardous chemicals and heavy metals to protect human health and the environment. The development of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) is of great importance in this respect. All countries must take responsibility to support and contribute to changing unsustainable consumption and production patterns.

Mr. Chairman,

UN-Habitat Governing Council underlines the need for an integrated and holistic perspective on housing and human settlements. We must involve inhabitants, women and men alike, in the development and planning processes. We must promote the development of new technologies and alternatives, not least within the energy sector.

We are faced with climate change and air pollution. Energy is a key sector in the efforts to combat climate change. It is my hope that the next CSD session will strengthen our work towards a sustainable use of our energy resources. What we need is straightforward analysis and practical responses. In this work there is no limit to innovative practices.

Access to energy is instrumental for economic growth and poverty eradication. To conclude, let me return to the issue of gender equality. Women are more affected by limited access to energy, especially in rural areas. The issue of personal safety and security is similar when gathering fuel as when fetching water. Women are furthermore exposed to health hazards from indoor cooking, due to poor ventilation.

According to a study from UNDP, 2 million premature deaths each year are caused by smoke from poorly ventilated indoor fires.

But we also know that small changes can make a difference. When the availability of lightening in the home increases, so do women's literacy and educational levels, creating possibilities for income-generating activities. This development is of gain to both women and men.

Thank you.

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