



**Ministry for Foreign Affairs
Sweden**

Ambassador Anna Brandt

Swedish Statement at the SDG OWG VIII on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Mr. Co-chair,

I associate myself with the statement made by the European Union on equality and social equity. I will now speak on gender equality and women's empowerment on behalf of Sweden.

As is stated in the UN issues brief for this session:
Gender inequality is the most pervasive form of inequality around the world and a pressing human rights concern.

The achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment is therefore a universal responsibility. We also know through research and evidence based experience that it is essential to poverty eradication and sustainable development. Gender equality is both a goal in itself and a precondition for sustainable development.

Gender equality will be achieved when women and men have the same rights, conditions, possibilities and power to form their own lives and contribute to society. Unfortunately we are far from such a situation today.

There is solid and increasing support from countries, international organizations and civil society organizations, for a **stand-alone goal** on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as well as for **mainstreaming** gender specific targets and indicator across all goals in the post 2015 development framework. We are fully behind this.

To achieve gender equality and women's empowerment, we have to focus on the empowerment of women and girls in all spheres of life and throughout the life-cycle. Accelerated results will only be achieved if men and boys also are addressed and included in the work. To move forward, the following areas must be given special attention:

Women's economic empowerment; through access to and control over economic and productive resources, such as access to land, property, inheritance and banking and financial services. Equal opportunities in the labour market as well as equal pay for equal work are important principles that must be upheld. Affordable child and elderly care as well as parental leave are key enablers for women's economic empowerment. And we need to encourage the development of relevant indicators to more accurately measure progress and to capture the effects of work, including in the informal sector as well as care and other unpaid work. We must also strive for a more equal distribution of unpaid care work.

Literacy and education at all levels for all women and girls, with a particular focus on ensuring the transfer to secondary education and including adult and vocational training, as well as equal access to ICT.

Women's equal access to political decision making at all levels, from local councils to national parliaments. Globally, only one in five parliamentarians and less than one in ten mayors are women. Studies show that when women have greater representation in public administration, public resources are more likely to be allocated towards investments in child health, nutrition and access to employment. Likewise, recent research shows that women's participation in local institutions governing natural resources is critical for sustainable forest and water management.

Women's and girls' security, preventing and combating all forms of gender-based violence. This entails strengthening women's legal empowerment and their equal access to justice and a functioning judicial system. It also includes a focus on preventing violence to occur through economic, political, educational and physical empowerment, as well as the active engagement of men and boys for gender equality.

As stated in the UN issues brief, many women and girls lack access to basic sexual and reproductive health services and every day 800 women die in childbirth or other pregnancy related complications. This is unacceptable. Therefore, **sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)**, must be included in the new framework;

- to increase life expectancy and quality of life
- to strengthen the physical integrity of women and girls and their right to decide and exercise control over their own body, sexuality, reproductive health and child-bearing;
- to avoid the unnecessary huge costs to society of denying sexual and reproductive health and rights
- to improve young people, women and men's access to information related to SRHR:

Finally, we must increase our efforts to support countries' to build capacity to generate **sex disaggregated data and gender statistics**. Without a significant improvement in this regard it will be impossible to monitor progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment.