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Swedish intervention at Thematic Discussion:
Enhancing the contributions of the private sector and other stakeholders in addressing air pollution, and atmospheric problems, combating climate change and promoting industrial development

I want to align myself with the statement made by the EU and highlight some issues that Sweden find particularly important.

Sweden would like to call attention to the fact that sustainable development holds business opportunities and we can already see that companies all over the world have found that out. One lesson that we have learnt in Sweden is that environmental improvement in business is not an expense item but an investment. Integration of environmental work in business strategies can lead to great competitive advantages for both small and larger businesses. This was the Swedish Agency for Economics and Regional Development conclusion drawn from a Program on Environmental Driven Business. In the same program a number of new and enhanced methods and tools for small and medium sized enterprises are developed.

The Swedish Government attaches great importance to Corporate Social Responsibility. Sweden strongly believes that responsible business practices – or CSR – is a decisive part of a development that will help reverse the trend of increased skepticism towards globalization and free trade policies. But we must make sure that demands for CSR not exclude developing countries from global markets. CSR is not about applying the same standards in other countries as we have in Sweden or within the EU. CSR is about establishing a floor for human decency in business.

We also need to explore how Corporate Social and Environmental Responsibility and Accountability can be further implemented and its development impact enhanced. We need to face the task of specifying in more detail the extent and content of social and environmental responsibility and how it should be translated into practice. The ongoing negotiations of a new ISO guidance standard on Social Responsibility – ISO 26000 - could provide an excellent opportunity for governments to together with civil society define what CSR means in practice.

There is also a need to find a better understanding for a sustainable use of ecosystem services as an economic asset.

The cost of inaction should not be borne by future generations. We need strong institutional frameworks, good governance, predictable investment conditions and international cooperation. We also need to work closely together with the market.

Unsustainable consumption and production patterns are a mayor barrier. There has been much emphasis on important factors such as the need for technology and recycling. But we must also emphasize effective infrastructure and to use supply chain management in promoting sustainable consumption and production. Our lifestyles and the way we are consuming products and services is another important issue. For the affluent this will mean to consume differently, for the poor to be able to consume more in a sustainable way.

To conclude the transfer to sustainable consumption and production patterns creates possibilities for new markets for business but also implies a responsibility to provide sustainable products and services on the market.

Thank you