

# SWEDEN



## STATEMENT

by

**M.P. Ms. Anne von Zumbach**  
**State Secretary for Gender Equality**  
**Swedish Ministry of Education and Research**

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Excellence. Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sweden fully associates itself with the statement made by Denmark on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

Today, Sweden reaffirms its strong commitment to gender equality and the rights and empowerment of girls and women. While significant progress has been made, many challenges remain, it is increasingly urgent for us to work together to make the 2030 Agenda a reality. We are committed to working for a world where everyone has the right to eradicate poverty, ensuring property rights and the institutions of free markets, and ending gender inequality and discrimination by vigorously defending and promoting gender equality.

Of the more than one billion women who live in extreme poverty in the world, 700 million can be found in rural areas, and of the 615 million people who are chronically hungry, 60 per cent are women. We face persisting and unacceptable gender disparities and gaps. The theme for this year's commission is "Gender Equality: A Timely Agenda".

We know the challenges that face us, the path we need to take and the steps we need to overcome.

We know that not all women have the same rights in the world. 10 per cent of the world's income, and they own only 1 per cent of the world's property.

We know that women have less access to credit and other financial services, particularly in rural areas.

We know that women suffer more than men from natural disasters, especially when it comes to sexual and reproductive health. One thousand women die or as a result of child marriage, a complication of the reproductive system, a risk that is twice as high in rural compared with urban areas.

Across regions, women in rural areas have one thing in common: they have far too little access to property, productive resources and opportunities, and they face major constraints in exercising their rights. This is particularly true for young women, minority women, women with disabilities, or women who face discrimination and marginalisation due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Closing the gender gap in the fulfilment of human rights for everyone in rural areas would produce significant gains for society.

Sweden is firmly committed to this endeavour, as a member of the High Level Panel of Experts, as a partner to UN Women, and by taking very seriously the task to mainstream and gender equality, to work for the empowerment of women and girls – and to defend and realise their human rights. We believe that the UN Human Rights Council is



...to this end, which is yet to be fully explored. Sweden has presented its  
...valid candidature to the Council for the term 2015-2017. It is essential, when working towards  
...these objectives relentlessly.

Chair,

I would like to thank the Secretary General for his report on the empowerment of  
...women and their role in development and current challenges. Based on this  
...report, we can see a clear need to strengthen rural girls and women. It is an  
...essential part of the solution to the global challenges of our time, and an  
...essential part of the quest for a free and fair society. There is potential for  
...reform in all countries in the world, including my own.

The main challenge for rural women today is not hunger or extreme  
...poverty. But less than a century ago, Sweden was an underdeveloped rural country  
...marked by poverty, poor health care, and limited economic opportunities for  
...women. We have come a long way, but barriers to women's full and equal economic  
...opportunities in rural areas still exist. We must encourage entrepreneurship, creativity and non-  
...stereotypical ways of living. It is necessary to encourage modern women and men to stay  
...in rural areas.

All over the world, rural development is not as rapid as it could be due to the inability  
...of women and girls to fully enjoy their human rights, including the right to health and  
...education. We need to act as economic agents and drivers of development.

Protecting and promoting the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and  
...girls remains a challenge in many countries. In developing countries, nearly half of all  
...girls are under the age of 15 who live in precarious conditions in an early marriage or early  
...pregnancy. This limits their education, their opportunities and choices, and, far too  
...often, their ability to contribute productively to growth and sustainable development  
...in their societies.

We know that with equal access to productive resources and services, rural women  
...can contribute to economic growth. It is not enough to lift 150 million people out of  
...hunger. Women's contribution to total production also leads to improved nutrition and  
...health for children.

Chair,

We must continue to promote increased agricultural yields and rural development –  
...and greater investment in women farmers:

First, women's opportunities to own and control land and other property must be  
...improved, as well as their access to credit, education and training.

Second, increased support must be given to education for women and girls and to  
...their sexual and reproductive health and rights. It is fundamental both for their life  
...choices and to their equal participation as economic agents.

Third, efforts must increase to fight stereotypical gender roles and gender-based  
...discrimination and violence, including, but not limited to, violence against girls and boys.

The rural women of the world are a powerful force for change and development. The Secretary-General's report shows what we ought to do and which pathways will lead to gender equality and women's empowerment. Let us together send a clear message - gender equality is a human right that has not yet been fulfilled. It is an objective in its own right, and at the same time a condition for the empowerment of rural women.

Thank you.

