



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Speech by Minister Regnér at ministerial debate in the Security Council on trafficking in persons in conflict situations

Published 15 March 2017

15 March 2017, New York – Statement on behalf of Sweden by H.E. Åsa Regnér, Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality at the Security Council Ministerial level Open Debate on Trafficking in Persons in Conflict Situations: forced labour, slavery and other similar practices.

Mr President, Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

Sweden aligns itself with the statement by the European Union and the statement by Norway on behalf of the Nordic countries.

Combating brutal human rights violations through trafficking in persons must be a priority for us all. It is our common responsibility. Sweden remains strongly committed to eradicating all forms of trafficking in persons. We would therefore like to congratulate the United Kingdom on organising this ministerial open debate.

Today's debate is important for many reasons. Firstly, we need to ensure this issue remains on the global agenda. Today's discussion builds on the momentum created under the Spanish Presidency of the Council. Secondly, we need to move forward with action in line with Resolution 2331 (2016). Finally, trafficking in persons is a transnational threat, which requires a transnational response. The UN provides a unique forum for achieving this goal.

Mr President,

Human trafficking and various forms of slavery are flourishing. This is due to ongoing conflicts and the massive displacement of civilian populations, such as the situation in the Lake Chad Basin region, which the Council visited two weeks ago. It flourishes because there are those ready to cruelly exploit people in vulnerable situations.

The most effective way to end human trafficking is to address its root causes. The root cause is demand: if men did not buy sexual services there would be no trafficking for sexual exploitation.

Preventing conflict and displacement before they occur and investing in equitable sustainable development for all are important measures in combating human trafficking. Existing international obligations relating to human trafficking and forced labour must also be fully implemented.

This Council has an important role to play in prevention, including through the Sustaining Peace agenda. In addition, peace operations mandated by this Council must see the role that organised criminal groups, as well as terrorist groups, play in perpetuating the unstable situations and conflicts that lead to human trafficking, and in human trafficking itself. Working on the ground to create accountable and effective security sector institutions can enhance the capacity of Member States to address these groups.

Mr President,

As the Secretary-General has previously reported, there is a clear nexus between conflict and post-conflict-related sexual violence and human trafficking, such as sexual slavery, forced labour, organ removal; the list is long. I will focus on sexual exploitation – predominantly targeting women, and girls and boys.

The effects of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation are different from the harm caused by trafficking for other forms of exploitation. Their seriousness is related to the specific ways in which the bodies of trafficked women and girls are abused.

Recognising that human trafficking has a clear gender dimension is therefore essential: all action against trafficking should have a gender-specific approach.

Sweden wants to stress the importance of not creating legal markets for human traffickers. There is an ongoing discussion, within the UN and elsewhere, about whether or not prostitution should be viewed as a

profession; the term sex worker is often used in these discussions. Swedish policy on this issue is clear. Prostitution can never be regarded as a job; prostitution is always exploitation. Sweden urges more countries to consider legislation that targets the person who buys sex and offers support to the person being exploited – thereby shifting the criminal focus and guilt from the person being exploited to the exploiter. Knowledge about one's own rights, including about sexual and reproductive health and rights, is crucial.

Another essential element is accountability in conflict and post-conflict environments. Sweden strongly supports the implementation of the United Nations zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse.

As Chair of the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, we would also like to stress the particularly vulnerable situation of children in this regard and also highlight forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflicts as one of the worst forms of child labour. Target 8.7 of the SDGs asks us to eliminate this and we need to keep a strong focus on achieving this goal. We also need to focus on goal 5 regarding gender equality and other relevant goals of the Sustainable Development Agenda.

Sweden is proud to be a pathfinder country of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children. This is a crucial initiative and Sweden would like to urge more countries to join this partnership.

Finally, Mr President, we need to enable women and girls to decide over their own bodies, lives and futures in all contexts. We need to engage more women in both peacebuilding activities and action against trafficking. By implementing the women, peace and security agenda we can ensure that women's voices, experiences and solutions are brought to the table. Gender equality is about human rights.

Thank you.



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Speech by Minister Regnér at Université du Luxembourg

Published 17 October 2016 Updated 17 October 2016

Speech by Minister for Children, The Elderly and Gender Equality, Åsa Regnér, about violence prevention. Université du Luxembourg, 17 April 2016. Check against delivery.

I am very happy to have this opportunity to speak about violence prevention and to hear about your work here in Luxembourg. Later today I will attend the 3rd International Conference on Men and Equal Opportunities. In Sweden questions of men and gender equality, or equal opportunities, is a priority for the government and one area of specific importance is gender based violence.

The Swedish government is preparing a national long-term strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women to be decided later in the autumn of 2016. The strategy includes actions against domestic violence, honour related violence, and actions against prostitution and trafficking for sexual purposes.

The national strategy aims to improve the coordination of work to prevent and combat men's violence towards women within all relevant sectors. A large number of actions are being prepared within the framework of the new national strategy, for example new legislation to better protect children who are exposed or subjected to violence in intimate relationships, new commissions for government agencies concerning methods of identifying violence, risk and needs assessments, funding of NGO:s and government inquiries into specific issues. The target group for the strategy is decision-makers and professionals at all levels within all sectors as well as the general public.

Violence prevention will be highlighted throughout the strategy. Specific focus will be on universal violence prevention targeting stereotypical norms of masculinity as a cause of violence. This is something that the Swedish NGO Men for Gender Equality (MFJ) is working with and I am glad that they are here today and soon will give a brief presentation of their work.

I strongly believe that to end violence we need a wide and constructive engagement of men and boys, as well as a confrontation with norms of masculinity that justify violence and limit women and girls' possibilities and choices in life.

An objective within the strategy is for our youth to be reached by work done on violence prevention. And in our new strategy we aim to reach all young people in Sweden. Schools and universities are central arenas for this task. Work to prevent violence also involves efforts within the correctional system and other fields of crime prevention. There already exists work in these areas in Sweden and new actions will also be taken in our new strategy. I am therefore also very interested in hearing about the experiences of working with men to prevent domestic violence here in Luxembourg.

In the area of men's violence against women, a priority in the work against prostitution is the work against the demand for purchasing sex.

Persons in prostitution must never be punished. The reasons for people being involved in prostitution may vary but is often related to poverty and/or that the person has been exposed to sexual assaults or other forms of sexual violence earlier in life. It must also be easy for persons in prostitution to seek help from police and social services and or voluntary support services that could help sellers to leave prostitution.

The best way to counter demand is through criminalizing the purchase of sexual services. Our assessment of the prohibition of the purchase of sexual services law shows that street prostitution has been reduced with 50 percent since the prohibition came in to force and there has not been an increase of the Internet based prostitution in comparison with other countries. The assessment also shows that the prohibition has been as powerful tool in shifting people's attitudes toward prostitution. Surveys both in Sweden and Norway shows that attitudes shift where the purchase of sex is criminalized, and a consistent majority in Sweden, over 70% of the population, think purchasing of sex is unacceptable.

From our view, it is crystal clear who to blame for prostitution, which is the

buyer, and who should be prohibited from buying the body of another human being with the intent to use hers or his body for sexual purposes.

Thank you



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Speech by Minister Regnér at Charité University Hospital, in Berlin

Published 07 October 2016 Updated 07 October 2016

Speech by Minister for Children, The Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér on e-health at Charité University Hospital, during state visit in Berlin, 7 October 2016. Check against delivery.

I would like to thank the representatives of Charité for having us here.

Today I will share a few thoughts about the Swedish perspective on e-health. The experience we have is a very dual experience.

On the one hand, Sweden has come a long way. We have one of the highest percentages of internet users in the world. We have given birth to start-ups that have become global brands, such as Spotify and Skype. Both the business and public sectors have largely digitised their activities.

This is also true to a large extent if we look at Sweden's health care sector. Close to 100 per cent of patient records are digitised, and the percentage of pharmaceutical prescriptions that are made through our national, digital system is almost as high.

Sweden has national quality registries that contain vast amounts of data on patient outcomes – a gold mine for research and development.

On the other hand, however, we can see that the Swedish health care sector does not fully utilise the opportunities offered by digitisation. We still have problems when it comes to non-user-friendly systems.

Perhaps one of the most fitting examples is that despite our high degree of digitisation, the fax machine is still a common tool in our hospitals and health clinics. Patient records are printed, faxed and re-digitised, for both technical and legal reasons.

On a more official level, we decided upon a vision for Sweden's eHealth policy earlier this year. The vision is that by 2025, we aim to be the best country in the world at using the opportunities offered by digitisation and eHealth in both health and welfare.

This is a vision for both the health care system and social services, jointly decided by the cabinet and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions.

The two most significant aspects of eHealth and digitisation in the health care system in Swedish eHealth policy are the following.

For patients: to be able to interact with the health care system and take part in their own care.

For professional healthcare workers: to have access to good clinical decision support systems, and efficient systems for accessing and recording patient information.

E-Health offers also great opportunities in Social Services. For instance; we are currently supporting the local authorities in developing user-friendly, technical solutions to increase the communication between clients and staff in social care for children and young persons. This will ensure more accurate course of action in these often difficult cases.

Looking forward, I am sure that new digital solutions within our social services can help improve the service given. Though we have to take into account that the solutions must be user-friendly and flexible enough to meet the needs of different groups of people. Sometimes those groups are savvy-tech kids, and sometimes not so-savvy-tech grandfathers in need of elderly care.

We are currently working on action plans to put this vision into practice. It is a joint commitment between the government and the local authorities. At the same time, considerable work is being done at national, regional and local levels in Sweden.

Both Swedish and international companies are taking part in this effort –

offering their competence and their solutions.

An example of this is an EU-initiated project in Hudiksvall municipality where a number of homes for elderly has been equipped with specially configured tablet for video communication. Healthcare personnel communicate through the tablet via moving image as an alternative to house visits. The provider of the technical solution is a Swedish company called nWise AB from Uppsala.

The best results are often achieved when we work together. This is true at both national and international levels.

This delegation trip and this visit are being conducted with that as a guiding principle.

Together we are here to learn from your experiences but hopefully also to share some of ours.

The private sector has always been a driver for development and we are looking forward to meeting companies, and also care givers and researchers, here in Germany that can stimulate and give us new ideas that we can use when we come back to Sweden.

Sweden and Swedish companies have much to share. But we also have much to learn. And that is why we are here.

Thank you.



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Speech by Swedish Minister Åsa Regnér at the launch of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children

Published 12 July 2016 Updated 12 July 2016

Speech by Minister for Children, The Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér at the launch of the Global Partnership to end violence against children in New York, July 12th, 2016. Checked against delivery.

A child is not only dependent on a parent, but also on a society

A child is not only dependent on a parent, but also on a society.

We – as adults, as political leaders, as teachers, as social workers or as experts – can all make a difference.

Investing in children and protecting children against violence, exploitation and abuse is one of my Government's priorities. Making the rights of the child a reality for every child is at the heart of our work. This is also why we want to incorporate the Convention on the Rights of Child into national law.

With the 2030 Agenda we have committed ourselves to ending poverty and hunger, combating inequalities within and among countries, building peaceful, just, and inclusive societies, protecting human rights, and promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The Swedish Government is preparing a national action plan to implement the goals and targets. All government ministers will be responsible for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda within their own areas of responsibility.

Children's rights will be a key priority.

Across the world, including in Sweden, girls and boys face unacceptable levels of violence – physical, sexual and psychological. To end this violence against children we need a systematic and holistic approach in which children's development and protection is placed at the heart of cooperation, of policy development and of investments.

The Swedish Government therefore welcomes the explicit targets in Sustainable Development Goal 16.2 to eliminate all forms of violence against and exploitation of children.

The Global Partnership – a crucial platform for stepping up action, promoting an integrated approach and delivering results

The target to end violence against children – and to leave no child behind – can only be reached if we all take both our individual and our common responsibility.

We are convinced that the Global Partnership will be a crucial platform for national governments, civil society, academics, the private sector and international organisations. We need to learn from each other, support each other and step up efforts both globally and at home.

Sweden is proud to be one of the first Pathfinder countries within the Partnership. We are fully committed to cooperating and contributing.

We want to learn from and be inspired by others, as we develop and strengthen our work to end all forms of violence against children in Sweden.

As the first feminist government in the world, we have put the fight against inequalities and social exclusion at the centre of our work. This means, for example, working on gender budgeting and knowing the consequences for women and men, girls and boys of every budget proposal we put forward. National budgets, our financial resources, need to be used to get it right!

Achieving equality between women and men, implementing children's rights, leaving no one behind – this cannot be conducted as a project. We need an integrated and systematic approach.

Gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights are fundamental to reaching all of the development goals. As a feminist government, we also take a gender perspective when it comes to eliminating

violence against children.

We need to take into account the situations, threats and needs that are specific to girls and boys, and in particular children with disabilities. The new national strategy – including new national goals for equal opportunities – that my Government will present this autumn will also be an important step in eliminating violence against children and in particular stopping children from having to witness violence.

Another experience we want to share is the important role played by local social services. I want to underline the contribution of social services for the protection of and the development of the child.

The Swedish Prime Minister, Stefan Löfven, gave himself as an example of the result of this support. I quote: "... if we work together to strengthen children's rights, supporting parents and building sustainable societies, the results are positive. I came to my family as a foster child, 10 months old. I had nothing. But through the work of loving parents and a supporting society I got it all."

Many children live in constant fear, many in situations of armed conflict. More women, men and children than ever are migrating. Women and girls face particular challenges. Unfortunately, it seems that child marriage in this context is on the rise. International cooperation, the sharing of responsibilities and of knowledge, is crucial.

Sexual violence and abuse against children is unacceptable in all settings and situations, also in conflict. Sweden is working actively to prevent these crimes also when committed by UN staff and personnel in UN peace keeping operations.

Sweden is taking a great responsibility for refugees and especially children in need of international protection. Last year, over 70 000 children arrived in Sweden, 36 000 of whom were unaccompanied. These children need protection, suitable accommodation, schooling and adult support. This is essential for both the individual child and society as a whole.

Our commitments as a Pathfinder country

As a Pathfinder country, we will undertake both strategic and immediate measures against the exploitation of and violence against children in three areas. Sweden's experience builds on both general welfare and specific

actions.

1. Increasing knowledge on violence against children, including information developed especially for and by children

The Swedish Government will continue to increase its efforts to ensure that knowledge on violence against children is further developed and better communicated and spread to both professionals and children themselves. One important measure is therefore to set up and develop a new national knowledge centre, 'Barnafrid', ('Peace for children'), with the mission to collect and disseminate knowledge about violence and other abuse of children to professionals who meet children.

We have commissioned a new national study on the prevalence of corporal punishment, as well as attitudes on corporal punishment.

A third initiative is a new website, developed in cooperation with children by the National Board of Health and Welfare and the Children's Ombudsman, on what social services can offer children in need of assistance and protection.

Finally, the Swedish Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority has just produced education material for teachers and children as victims. These are some actions, and the results need to be further spread and shared.

2. Developing and investing in the social protection system for children

The Swedish Government has taken several measures to strengthen the social protection system for children, both by improving skills and knowledge and by reinforcing staffing. This is about professional introductions for social workers, and training and money for municipalities to employ more social workers. A national coordinator for children's social services has been nominated and she will identify and then share best practices with our 290 Swedish municipalities. A national solutions conference will be held in August this year.

Developing and investing in the welfare state, not least in the protection of the most vulnerable children, is an investment in society and development for society as a whole, to come back to the words of the Swedish Prime Minister.

3. A roadmap to protect children from human trafficking, exploitation and sexual abuse

Finally, only a few weeks ago, the Swedish Government adopted a roadmap as a Pathfinder country: the Action Plan to protect children from human trafficking, exploitation and sexual abuse for the period 2016–2018. I have with me some copies of an English summary you can take with you.

The key goals of the proposed measures are:

No child is to be the victim of human trafficking. No child is to be the victim of sexual abuse or exploitation, either in Sweden or through travel and tourism. All child victims of human trafficking, sexual abuse or exploitation are to receive the protection and support they need. Promoting children's awareness of their right to protection and giving them knowledge to counteract their vulnerability. Enhancing the protection of children in situations in which they may be particularly vulnerable.

We will achieve these goals by increasing the efficiency and coordination of the government agencies concerned, developing the knowledge and skills in these areas, preventing and prosecuting crimes against children and, finally, giving children appropriate support when they need it. A systematic, integrated and inclusive approach.

To conclude

To end violence against children we – as political leaders, as adults, as teachers, as social workers or experts – can make a difference!

I am convinced that together in this new Partnership – and in close dialogue with children themselves – we will ensure that we have what it takes to finally eliminate violence against children. Only then can the 2030 Agenda be a reality for every child.

Thank you.



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Speech by Minister Regnér at the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities, New York

Published 14 June 2016 Updated 14 June 2016

Speech by Minister for Children, The Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér. UN General Debate, 14 June 2016. Check against delivery.

Thank you chair,

I would like to thank the Secretariat for preparing this conference.

I also want to thank representatives for the Civil Society for your presence here today. Your contributions and valuable insights are crucial.

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As Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality, and responsible for policies regarding persons with disabilities I am specially honoured to be here today.

I want to contribute to the work of developing modern welfare states. The model implies central aspects as rights issues, opportunities for influence and supporting and empowering the most vulnerable in society.

The Swedish Government is aiming for a society with reduced social, economic and political inequity. Increased gender equality and increased participation and accessibility in society benefits everyone.

Representing the Swedish feminist government, I truly welcome the clear references in the new agenda 2030 to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls and the clear references to people with disabilities.

This is a break through.

Women and girls, men and boys must enjoy equal access to quality education, equal access to economic resources and have equal opportunities to political participation.

The Swedish government is ready to take its responsibility for the Agenda 2030 implementation both nationally and internationally. All cabinet ministers will be responsible for the implementation within their respective areas, in dialogue with the civil society.

* * *

It is an honour and privilege for me to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

During the 10 years since the adoption, progress has been made and more attention has been paid to the rights of persons with disabilities, both nationally and internationally.

Sweden has developed a strategy based on the Convention with an annual reporting to the Parliament. Sweden has also had its first dialogue with the Committee and has received recommendations in 2014.

We are about to incorporate the Convention of the Rights of the Child into Swedish legislation. This will strengthen also the rights for children with disabilities, we believe.

Implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is a continuous process that requires ongoing dialogue as well as systematic monitoring at both national and international levels.

Progress has been made but we also have challenges ahead of us, for example promoting gender equality, creating inclusive education, making the labour market more accessible and combatting negative attitudes. We should also be aware about challenges and possibilities which the global migration brings.

* * *

Mr Chair,

I want to specifically mention violence against women and children with disabilities. They are more often victims.

We have to take this into account in efforts to combat violence.

Also, I want to emphasize sexual and reproductive health and rights in the context of the Convention. Everybody's right to information, services and bodily integrity is crucial.

As Member States we have the primary overall responsibility to live up to our obligations and commitments by ensuring that the requirements of the Convention are fulfilled. We should be held accountable for any gaps in the implementation.

Efforts to strengthen rights for boys, girls, women and men are investments – and should be considered as such.

So, let us use this conference as a platform to continue the work on the full enjoyment of rights of persons with disabilities - Leaving no one behind and creating sustainable societies.

Thank You!



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Speech by Sweden's Minister for Gender Equality about gender budgeting at OECD meeting

Published 09 June 2016 Updated 09 June 2016

Speech by Åsa Regnér, Minister for Gender Equality, at the OECD-meeting for Working Party of Senior Budget Officials (SBO), at "Tekniska Museet" in Stockholm, June 9th 2016. Check against delivery.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am proud to address this meeting of the OECD as Minister for Gender Equality, representing a feminist government, and talk to you about gender budgeting. We, in declaring ourselves a feminist government, are committed to making a difference in people's lives: to promote gender equality with a policy agenda that combats inhibitive gender roles and structures, so that women and men, boys and girls can live their lives to their full potential. It is a matter of recognizing gender inequality, that women and men do not have access to resources and power on equal terms, and committing to make a change.

In this endeavour we recognise the crucial role that economics play. To advance gender equality in society, not only here in Sweden, but everywhere, we must allocate adequate resources to that end.

Sweden's feminist government is now stepping up our ambitions to make a change, and achieve our goal of a gender-equal society in which girls and boys, women and men are given the same power to shape society and their own lives. That goal requires dedicated work and we are realising it through choice of priorities, paths and allocation of resources, that promotes gender equality.

Gender equality is an engine driving social development and genuine change in society and people's lives. Gender equality is a prerequisite for sustainable economic development, as well as development of the labour market, and the welfare state. It is clear that gender equality is part of the solution to many of the challenges we face in our societies today. Hence, including gender equality in policy making is smart – it makes better use of resources spent and it makes policy more efficient. Gender equality is also a matter of human rights, of democracy and of justice. It is not a gift to women.

In Sweden, we have a telling experience that demonstrates the connection between economic reforms, allocation of resources and the advancement of gender equality in society: In the 1970's important reforms were implemented within the labour market and social policy, such as separate income taxation [for wife and husband]; gender-neutral parental leave; and development of affordable public childcare. These reforms pushed gender equality, and increased women's access to the labour market on an equal footing with men. Women gained access to gainful employment, and greater financial independence, which increased their well-being and bargaining power in the household. These reforms also contributed to the development of a modern welfare state in Sweden.

Gender equality has contributed to Sweden's high levels of employment and growth. But it has not happened by itself; it is largely the result of political decisions. There needs to be commitment to create fair and gender equal conditions for women and men, girls and boys. Ladies and gentlemen, as Senior Budget Officials you all play important roles in this. You can make a difference.

To achieve gender equality the strategy of gender mainstreaming is crucial. Gender equality is created where resources are allocated, where standards are set and where decisions are made. In a feminist government, each minister is also a minister for gender equality, responsible for the advancement of gender equality in their policy areas. As the Minister responsible for gender equality policy, I work with my colleagues in the government to ensure that we continue to develop our feminist policy and work strategically to achieve real change.

While gender mainstreaming is an essential tool it must be combined with special measures for gender equality. This dual approach is necessary to move ahead on gender equality. While we must include a gender perspective when formulating reforms and developing policy we must also be willing to implement specific policies and actions - and spend money - targeting gender

inequality. For Sweden, this dual approach has been a strategic choice for implementation of gender equality policy since the mid- 1990's.

Economic policy is crucial for shaping living conditions; how resources are distributed and what is considered important and is prioritised has a major effect on women's and men's lives and conditions. The budget process and the Budget Bill are of key importance in realising the government's policy and it is therefore imperative that all budget work is conducted so that effects and consequences for gender equality is taken into consideration when decisions are made about policy direction or distribution of resources.

Consequently, gender budgeting is an important part of the government's efforts to implement a feminist agenda. Economic policy in Sweden is to be used to increase economic equality and support advancement of gender equality in society. An extensive effort to further develop gender budgeting in the state budget is now under way in Sweden. We define gender budgeting as an application of gender mainstreaming in the budgetary process. Thus, a gender perspective must be included in the preparation of the government's Budget Bill from the outset, and by the actors normally involved in the process.

Our renewed focus on gender budgeting has resulted in improved and more extensive gender equality analysis and a more systematic use of statistics disaggregated by sex, among other things.

However, it is not enough that we conduct an analysis of gender impact for a specific policy, and we must not stop at just presenting statistics disaggregated by sex. The conditions that apply to women and men, girls and boys must inform our policy making. As policy makers we have an obligation to use the data we have at our hands, to rectify gender inequality that we see.

To move from words to action, we must make gender equality part of all policy making and we need to allocate adequate resources to implement policy for gender equality. To this end we have initiated a work to formulate objectives for gender equality in several highly prioritised and strategic policy areas. These objectives constitute a way to make concrete how we can move forward on implementation of our gender equality policy goals, and realise the government's feminist aspirations. Customised policy objectives and actions for gender equality, along with indicators to follow up the result, have been formulated. These strategic policy areas are labour market, health and social policy, education, foreign and development policy,

and juridical policy.

The Swedish government has recently taken important steps to ensure that the preparation of the Budget Bill for 2017 is gender mainstreamed. Among other things, we have a formalised requirement [in the budget circular] that policy proposals and reforms presented in the Budget Bill must be based on gender equality impact analyses, and new policy should be developed with a gender-sensitive approach.

Moreover, a step-by-step guide on how to conduct a gender equality analysis [in the budget process] has been developed, and trainings are provided for officials in the Government Offices. Policy statements and formal requirements are important but we must also provide hands-on, operative support to people in our organisations.

Let me illustrate the significance of a gender analysis in policy development, with an example from the realm of education: in Sweden school results differ significantly between girls and boys, girls perform well and get good grades while boys lag behind. Girls, on the other hand, suffer from stress related health issues, and report a higher degree of socio-psychological problems than their male peers. So, measures to deal with these challenges must take gendered differences into consideration: health work in schools and efforts to improve school results must be designed so that they are apt for the needs and conditions of both boys and girls.

The Swedish government will now continue to enhance our work with gender budgeting, with a view to ensuring that policy will contribute to gender equality. A feminist government's policy agenda must be paired with allocation of resources and a true commitment to making a change.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am convinced that we need to work with gender budgeting to move ahead on gender equality, create sustainable growth, development, and social justice. I hope that this afternoon will present an occasion to exchange thoughts, ideas and experiences that will inspire us to take new steps towards gender equal budgets. Investments in gender equality are investments in the future. Half of the world's talent must have the opportunity to blossom.

Thank you.



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Speech by Minister Åsa Regnér at global high-level conference Towards Childhoods free from Corporal Punishment in Vienna

Published 01 June 2016 Updated 01 June 2016

Speech by Minister for Children, The Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér. Vienna, 1 June. Check against delivery.

Mr. President, Her Majesty, Ministers, Ambassadors, Special Representative of The United Nations Secretary-General On Violence Against Children, Distinguished experts, Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you all for attending this global high-level conference - Towards Childhoods free from Corporal Punishment.

Let me congratulate our hosts, the Austrian government, for very fine arrangements and a much inspiring conference here in beautiful Vienna.

I am very proud that Sweden is a part of this truly global process, where leaders of the world join together in committing to end corporal punishment of children.

Today, 49 states have prohibited all corporal punishment of children, including in the family home. And, at least 54 more states have expressed a commitment to full prohibition. Still there is a long way to go. According to The Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, only 10% of the world's children are fully protected in law from all corporal punishment.

Almost 40 years ago, the Swedish world famous author Astrid Lindgren asked how we, as human beings and as a society, could learn to distance ourselves against using violence. I think that we all can agree upon that this remains a much urgent question. Her own answer was that it has to start with the children, as the children of today will eventually take the running of our world.

Astrid Lindgren thought that what decides if a child was going to become a warm, open and trusting person or a callous and desctructive one, was up to those who bring the child into the world. Astrid Lindgren corresponded to Goethe' belief that: "Uberall lernt man nur von dem den man liebt."

Today, her thoughts on these issues to a large extent have been verified by research, demonstrating that adults who hit their children in the name of discipline usually began doing so because they themselves were hit as children.

According to article 19 of the Convention on the rights of the child, the child has the right to be protected from all forms of violence. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is a powerful document. But it only has the power we, as leaders and representatives, give to it. That's the core reason for my government's work of making the convention Swedish law.

We have to acknowledge that not all children grow up in an environment free from violence. Sweden has long supported the The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Ms Marta Santos Pais. Let me express our appreciation of her work and her initiative The High Time to End Violence against Children.

Considering the many challenges ahead of us and the need for global action, the Swedish government welcomes that the elimination of violence and exploitation of children are explicit goals in the Agenda 2030.

We are very positive of the establishment of a Global Partnership to end violence against children in order to support the implementation of these goals. It is our hope and belief that this Global partnership can bring together governments, civil society and the private sector to promote and protect the

rights' of the child all over the world. Sweden has expressed interest in participating in the partnership as a pathfinder country.

As such, we will share good practices and experiences with others. As many of you know, Sweden was the first country in the world to prohibit all corporal punishment of children. This legislation, combined with sustained public education and awareness-raising of the law and of children's right to protection, together with promotion of positive, non-violent relationships with children, has proved to be effective. Hopefully, others can learn from our experiences.

At the same time, we need to learn as well. Being minister not only for children but for the Elderly and Gender Equality as well, I would especially like to draw attention to the relation between gender equality, violence against women and violence against children. This is something that I think we need to increase our knowledge about in order to successfully take measure against violence against children.

A Norwegian study on gender equality among Norwegian parents found that gender-equal childhood homes were characterised by a lower level of violence. In fact, the risk of violence in "father-led" homes was almost three times greater than in gender-equal homes.

As minister for children, gender equality and the elderly, I very agree with the conclusion of the Norwegian study, that what is "best for the children" cannot be isolated from issues of gender equality and democracy among adults."

The Swedish government currently works on a national strategy for a national strategy against men's violence against women. No doubt, this work will be beneficial for children as well.

Let me conclude by once again express my gratitude to our host, the Austrian government and the distinguished experts who have participated at this conference. I think that these days illustrate that if we work together to strengthen children's rights, protect children from all kinds of violence, supporting parents and building sustainable and equal societies, the results can be truly amazing.

Thank you.



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Speech by Minister for Children, The Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér on Policy Answers to the Refugee Crisis

Published 06 May 2016 Updated 06 May 2016

Women in Parliaments Summit 2016 Amman, Jordan, 5
May 2016 Check against delivery.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished delegates and excellences in the audience and in the panel,

Our world is bleeding. We are faced with unprecedented humanitarian needs and levels of global forced displacement. Today, more than 59,5 million people are displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or human rights violations – the highest number since the Second World War. UNHCR estimates that the average length of displacement has stretched to around an astonishing 17 years. This means that for many, becoming displaced is a life sentence.

This situation certainly concerns us all – and is a fitting reminder as we speak about Flight and Migration. It is also a fitting narrative for me as the representative of the world's first Feminist Government.

Among the unprecedented numbers of refugees and internally displaced people, there are tens of millions of women and adolescent girls. Natural disasters and conflict impact women, girls, men and boys differently. In crises, patterns of gender discrimination can be exacerbated leaving women and girls uniquely vulnerable. The risk for women and girls to become targets of sexual and gender based violence is furthermore multiplied. A specific vulnerability in some contexts is child marriage.

Policy answers to the current refugee crisis need both short-term and long-term interventions.

In the short-term, all humanitarian responses should include a gender perspective and address the occurrence of sexual and gender based violence, a key protection concern and lifesaving activity. Sweden is honoured to take on the leadership of the "Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies". A central priority is to promote the inclusion of the initiative's principles and actions in the outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit.

We must all increase our efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in humanitarian settings. The Call to Action constitutes an important platform for this work. I encourage all those here present today – governments, parliamentarians and other stakeholders - to join the Call to Action and to make concrete commitments to implement the initiative's Road Map.

In the long-term, it should be underlined that women should not be seen only as victims, but also as important actors for peace, stability, security and prosperity. Therefore, I want to emphasise that the agenda on women, peace and security is a top priority for the Swedish Government. For Sweden, the women, peace and security agenda is about promoting change. For that to happen it takes committed and pro-active political leadership. We need to act differently to create peaceful and secure societies for all. It is precisely at times like these – times of crisis and unrest – that we must not hesitate, but instead be persistent in our efforts to strengthen women as agents for peace.

The rights of women and girls must be ensured in their countries of origin, along the migrant route, as well as in the country of destination.

I look forward to further discussion on this theme by our distinguished panellist. Thank you.



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Speech by Åsa Regnér at Commission on the Status of Women 2016

Published 16 March 2016 Updated 16 March 2016

The General Assembly of the United Nations, New York,
15 mars 2016 Check against delivery.

Mr/Madam Chair,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

It is an honour for me to address the 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women. Sweden aligns itself with the statement made by the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

Sweden regards this year's CSW session as an occasion for a strong and resolute reaffirmation of the 2030 Agenda and of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The adoption last year of the 2030 Agenda is an achievement for UN-led multilateralism. Sweden is fully committed to engaging with other Member States, and all stakeholders, to ensure its effective implementation both nationally and internationally.

Mr/Madam

Sweden has a feminist government. This reflects a strong commitment and strong leadership. The Swedish Prime Minister clearly stated his intention to increase gender equality in the Statement of Government Policy.

One of the expert reports on this year's session points out that the lessons of the last three decades have taught us that the state has a key role to play in

facilitating a development strategy that promotes gender equality. I am firmly convinced that this is the case. In Sweden, the welfare state has played a pivotal role in advancing gender equality, which has yielded substantial social and economic returns.

In the creation of the Swedish welfare state, gender equality has been a major factor in many reforms, and particularly important in the labour market. Access to affordable child care services and a more equal division of parental leave have been essential for women's and men's participation in the labour market. So have individual taxation and sexual and reproductive rights, including abortion rights. All these reforms have had an important impact on women's earnings, well-being and bargaining power in the household.

Gender power relations and traditional gender stereotypes of masculinity associated with violence stand in the way of women's and girls' empowerment and gender equality. This is why, we as leaders, must focus much more on the root causes of violence. More effective prosecution of perpetrators is essential, as is a greater emphasis on lowering the threshold for men to seek help to change their violent behaviour. We also need to invest in violence prevention in schools and municipalities to change norms and attitudes associated with destructive masculinity, violence and sexist behaviour.

To promote healthier gender norms to engage men and boys has been shown to reduce men's violence against women and children.

Mr/Madam Chair,

Sweden will continue to stand up for the rights of all women and girls. Their access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, including contraception and safe and legal abortion are crucial. Sweden is deeply concerned that every year (more than half a million) women die in pregnancy and childbirth, or from unsafe abortions that disproportionately affect poor women. Investments in these areas are investments in women's empowerment, in social justice and in human rights. Unfortunately, women and girls have been let down in many parts of the world in this respect. They pay a high price for religious and political fundamentalism.

Like many other countries around the world, Sweden is currently providing security and safety to people fleeing war, persecution and oppression.

For women and adolescent girls, a crisis can lead to even greater risks of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, early marriages, and unintended and unwanted pregnancy. Sweden reaffirms its commitment to UN Security Council resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions. While important steps have been taken, women are still underrepresented in peace building efforts and in peace negotiations. Therefore, within the framework of our feminist foreign policy, we have increased our contribution to women, peace and security issues, with a specific focus on promoting women's participation in mediation and peace processes.

Sweden is deeply concerned about the rise of new forms of extremism and fundamentalism that often have the explicit aim of suppressing women's and girls' enjoyment of their human rights, including honour related violence and oppression. The Swedish Government therefore stresses the importance of incorporating a gender perspective in all measures to prevent violent extremism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Investments in gender equality are investments in democracy and economic growth for the future. As stated in both the 2030 Agenda and in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, domestic resource mobilisation and political will is crucial in financing for sustainable development. Governments must allocate resources to set clear targets and to take action.

Let us continue to work together to ensure that we fulfil the commitments we made in Beijing and Cairo over 20 years ago and in New York last year. And let us recall that the empowerment of women and girls is the empowerment of all humanity!

Thank you.



Speech, Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Gender equality and children in focus as Åsa Regnér visits Japan

Published 23 October 2015 Updated 23 October 2015

Gender equality and children were in focus when Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér visited Japan on 13–16 October. During her visit, Ms Regnér had talks with Japanese government representatives and members of parliament and also took part in a roundtable discussion on gender equality.

UN, gender equality and elderly housing

Ms Regnér began the day on Friday by visiting the UN Women Japan Liaison Office.

“I met with Director Kayoko Fukushima and we discussed the need for countries to preserve UN funding. We also spoke about the UN HeforShe campaign,” says Ms Regnér.

Ms Regnér later visited a home for elderly people in Shinjuku, where she spoke with some of the residents. In talks with local politicians and officials, Ms Regnér learned about the conditions and challenges facing care of the elderly in Japan. This home for elderly people has a sister home in Vendelsö.

“At the home for the elderly we met an older couple who had chosen to live in separate rooms. We also visited the preschool located on the premises. Interaction between the generations is important,” says Ms Regnér.

During a discussion on gender equality, organised by the Swedish Embassy and *Yomiuri* newspaper, participants talked about wider gender equality

issues from the Japanese and Swedish perspectives in the business world and public sector.

The day ended with the 'Kids Week' event, hosted by Business Sweden and the Embassy, at which Ms Regnér spoke about children's rights, equality and future cooperation between Japan and Sweden.

Finally, Ms Regnér presented the 'Most stylish dad' award in support of paternity leave and men's participation in the lives of their children.

Progressive reforms in Japan are important

On Thursday morning, Ms Regnér met Japan's newly appointed Minister of State for Gender Equality Katsunobu Kato. The ministers discussed women's participation in the labour market and opportunities for future collaboration between Japan and Sweden.

"Sweden's relations with Japan are important from a promotional perspective and as a partner in areas such as elderly care and gender equality. Japan is at a crossroads with an ageing population. Gender equality and women's increasing labour force participation are central to many issues. What is happening in Japan is significant for the rest of the world, and progressive reforms here will play an important role. In Japan there is great interest in Sweden, and we are interested in learning from each other," says Ms Regnér.

Ms Regnér gave the opening address at a seminar on children's literature in the afternoon, with the aim of supporting Swedish children's literature but also presenting the Swedish view of children's rights.

Speech by Minister for Children Åsa Regnér on children's literature in Tokyo, October 2015

Common interests in the UN Security Council

On Wednesday, Ms Regnér took part in roundtable discussions on the importance of highlighting the significance of UN Resolution 1325. Participants discussed opportunities for how Japan and Sweden can cooperate concerning women, peace and security from the perspective of Sweden and Japan taking seats as non-permanent members of the UN Security Council. Participants focused the discussions on suggestions that could be highlighted and further developed at a later stage.

“We spoke about future cooperation in the Security Council on women’s participation in conflict resolution and post-conflict work,” says Ms Regnér.

Cooperation with Japan developed further

The introductory meetings on Tuesday were productive. Both delegations stated in the discussions that cooperation should be developed.

The Swedish delegation met politicians, entrepreneurs and stakeholder organisations, and also visited some workplaces.

Gender equality and women’s participation in the labour market were the main focus of discussions.

“I am very pleased that there has been a strong focus on gender equality and women’s participation in the labour market during our visit,” says Ms Regnér.

Press release: Gender equality and children’s rights issues in focus during Åsa Regnér’s visit to Japan



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Speech by Minister for children Åsa Regnér about children's literature in Tokyo, oktober 2015

Published 15 October 2015 Updated 15 October 2015

Seminar on childrens literature at International Children's Library in Tokyo.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

“Reality is fairy tale enough! No princesses, adventures and men from space are needed. And above all; no sweet lies.” These words come from Gunilla Bergström, creator of one of the most famous Swedish boys Alfons Åberg. Over 40 years ago the first books about Alfons was published and it was followed by many more. Alfons is about five years old and lives with his father in a suburban area in Sweden. He is using his imagination to solve the trickiest situations in life.

Sometimes when I listen to Swedish authors like Gunilla Bergström and Pija Lindenbaum and recordings from interviews with Astrid Lindgren I am amazed how much they still, as adults, can identify themselves with a child.

In my work as Minister for Children this is very inspiring and above all important. If you cannot put yourself in the child's position is difficult not to say impossible to make the right decisions.

The fact that these authors bear the emotions of childhood within them is reflected in their literature. Their deeper understanding of childhood is used to write exceptional books, loved by generations of children and their parents.

Some authors have also changed people's mindset on childhood, childrearing

and children's rights. And one author in particular has had an exceptional impact on children's lives.

Astrid Lindgren's authorship was truly ground breaking in many ways, starting with Pippi Longstocking who needs no further presentation. Astrid Lindgren was very dedicated and involved in the debate in Sweden against corporal punishment of children. Sweden was the first country in the world who introduced a ban against corporal punishment of children in all settings in 1979. The year before the legislation was passed Astrid Lindgren held an unforgettable speech when she received one of her many prizes. The speech was entitled "Never Violence" and is still today remembered as a very important viewpoint and has ever since been referred to constantly in the debate on the abuse of children and the mechanisms of violence. The speech is sadly just as relevant as it was then. Only 9 percent of the world child population are protected by law against corporal punishment. 45 countries have joined us in giving children protection under the law and an encouraging development is that 51 other countries have publicly committed to achieving a ban. In Sweden we are proud to see the line of original authors following Astrid Lindgren, reaching out to an increasingly growing audience internationally.

Childhood is not an experience isolated from the rest of life. Far from it, it is the base on which we stand on for the rest of our lives and therefore it must be handled with the outmost of respect. Whether we want to see it or not, we all have had to learn that childhood doesn't consist of a row of sunny days with adults who always know and do what is right. Not even children are spared the sometimes harsh reality of life such as unreliable friends, disharmonious relationships, loss and death. And make no mistake, even if children are spared the direct experience, they know all about it and as adults we must admit that and treat them as equals. If we pretend that those parts of life don't exist, we fail our children.

Many of the new Swedish authors reflect this in their books. Themes like death, love, friendship, sexuality, different shapes of families are being dealt with from the child's point of view, always done with the greatest respect for the child as a reader.

For me, representing a feminist government who has the protection of children's rights and gender equality as top priorities, this makes me even more proud.

In Sweden the work to make our children good readers are engaging a

growing number of institutions. We can see some worrying figures on the ability to read among Swedish schoolchildren and this is a very serious problem, not at least from a democratic point of view. Authors like Martin Widmark, the creator of the amazingly popular detective stories for young readers, has taken on this task and are working actively to encourage children to read, and to read a lot. We all know what we have to achieve in this fight and we can't lose it.

Japanese literature has indeed enriched Swedish youth culture through manga, which has not only attracted young readers but also inspired cartoonists and artists. The artist Ryoij Arai has been awarded the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award and has trough that reached many Swedish readers. Authors like Suekichi Akaba and Michio Mado are also appreciated and known in our part of the world.

And I know a middle aged man living with his cat in a somewhat unconventional, but still charming, house has reached your hearts. We are very happy and proud that Pettson and Findus are appreciated by our Japanese friends.

Gunilla Bergström says that life is a peerless enigma. We as adults can with the help of books guide our children to discover the world around them with curiosity and respect. With these words I would like to invite you into the world of Swedish literature for children. Take your time and bear in mind that many of these books are real masterpieces, having conquered enthusiasm of our most critical readers!

Thank you!

Åsa Regnér
Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Opening statement by State Secretary Pernilla Baralt at the sixty-eighth session in Geneva, Committee on the Rights of the Child

Published 14 January 2015 Updated 17 May 2015

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Madam Chair,
Distinguished members of the Committee,
Ladies and gentlemen.

As the State Secretary in charge of Swedish policy on the rights of the child, it is an honour and a privilege for me to represent the Swedish Government and lead the Swedish delegation in this dialogue.

I am happy for this opportunity to discuss with you the fifth periodical report of Sweden on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Promoting and protecting the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights, including the right of the child is a core value and a central priority for the Swedish Government in national as well as in foreign policy.

To bring about real improvements in the lives of children is a priority for the government. In the statement of the new government the prime minister clearly declared that it is our vision is to make Sweden one of the best countries for all children to grow up in. To further strengthen the implementation of the CRC is crucial in this work.

Children's rights also need to be a cross cutting political priority with impact on several policy area such as education, social security, legislation and justice, migration policy and health.

The composition of my delegation reflects this broad mandate of Swedish policy on the rights of the child in all areas of government.

Madam Chair, members of the committee

Some weeks ago the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2014 to Kailash Satyarthi and Malala Yousafzay for their struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education. The work and engagement of Malala and Kailash are an inspiration to us all not least to ensure that children and young persons have a say.

The right of the child to have a say and be taken seriously in all matters affecting the child is a real challenge for decision-makers at all levels. Legislation and economic resources are not enough. We need much more - awareness rising, training, new working methods, skills and experience in listening to children. The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs plans to take further action in order to promote awareness and knowledge about how to promote and protect the rights of the child.

One of the goals of the Swedish policy - and clearly stated in our strategy – is that children have opportunities to influence and participate in society. Important work has been done by the Ombudsman for Children who has developed methods on how decision-makers and professionals at all levels of society can learn from children's and young people's knowledge and experience.

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Let me turn to another area of great importance to Sweden - which is the protection of children at risk.

In this context, the social services are an important actor, as a primary interface between the state and the child.

In the past few years, there has been tragic cases where children have suffered maltreatment and even deadly violence. These cases have received

a lot of attention from decision-makers, professionals and the general public. The Swedish Government will do everything in its power to avoid similar situations in the future.

We need to enhance the ability and competence of all parts of society, including the social services, to act promptly when they receive signals or information about children at risk.

New legislation has already resulted in several changes. For instance, procedures must be in place for preventing, detecting and combating risks posed to children's safety and wellbeing. When suspected child abuse and neglect is reported, the social services must immediately assess whether or not the child needs emergency protection.

Education is crucial for all children to enable them to claim and defend their rights and achieve their full potential.

One of the fundamental principles of the Swedish school system is inclusion. Educational institutions shall take into consideration the different needs of all pupils, strive to weigh up differences in preconditions to give each girl and boy the same opportunities.

The best interest of the child is the starting point in all education. It is the task of the school to create conditions that allow all pupils as far as possible to develop in accordance with the educational goals.

International comparisons show that Swedish school results have declined. This development is taken very seriously and a series of reforms have been launched such as to increase the amount of teaching time, clarify further the evaluation of pupils' results as well as to reinforce teachers' expertise, role and status.

The Education Act was amended on 1 July 2014 to further enhance the right of pupils to support. If there is reason to believe that a pupil will not achieve the minimum performance standard, this child shall promptly be given adequate support.

It has also been clarified that children with disabilities are to receive the individualised support that is required.

There is also a need to further improve educational conditions for children

who have recently arrived in Sweden. Therefore the Government has instructed the National Agency for Education to produce and distribute support and training material for schools. The Government is also preparing a new bill for adoption in 2015.

Children in homes for care or residence have a right to high quality education. To strengthen and promote this right the Government last month decided that such children are entitled to attend a school in the same municipality as the institution.

Madam Chair,

The Swedish Ombudsman for Children is responsible for informing the Government about deficiencies in the implementation of the rights of the child by government agencies. The Ombudsman's annual report is a valuable source of information and a catalogue of possible remedies for fulfilling the rights of the child in various circumstances.

Children who for various reasons have been taken into care are especially vulnerable. Through in-depth interviews with children and young people, the Ombudsman has received information that coercive and intrusive measures such as physical restraints and solitary confinement are still widespread in psychiatric institutions. The Government is therefore taking several steps to reduce coercive measures against children.

One example is a current proposal to stipulate that coercive measures may only be taken against a child if it is in the child's best interests. The use of belts is also proposed to be limited to two hours. An official inquiry is also examining possibilities for restricting solitary confinement.

Another observation made by the Ombudsman for Children refers to children suspected of crimes and the use of restrictions against children in pre-trial detention.

A working group under the Prosecutor-General is preparing proposals aimed at reducing the use of isolation and other restrictions. The Prosecution Authority is expected to finalise its work on this issue in April 2015.

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Children arriving in Sweden as asylum seekers, whether with their parents or unaccompanied, must be met by a humane and legally secure asylum system. Their application must be considered in a process where their voice is heard

and their needs are taken into account.

The Swedish Aliens Act contains a number of provisions ensuring that the rights of the child are considered in all parts of the migration process. Further measures are continuously being taken to strengthen the position of children in the asylum process.

The number of asylum-seeking children in Sweden is increasing. During 2014, about 6 900 unaccompanied children sought asylum in Sweden. This is an increase of 80 per cent compared with 2013. Next year, Sweden expects about 8 000 unaccompanied children to seek asylum. The Swedish authorities take great responsibility when it comes to providing protection for these children.

The National Board of Health and Welfare has published specific guidelines on the reception of unaccompanied children and young people. They clarify the division of responsibilities between different actors, the social services' work and responsibility to provide good care.

I also want to underline that the Swedish Government and relevant authorities are making continuous efforts to combat trafficking in children and to assist victims of trafficking. A new action plan for the protection of children against human trafficking, exploitation and sexual assaults was adopted in February 2014. We have informed you about the measures included in this action plan in our written replies to your list of issues. We intend to further update this action plan.

We are deeply concerned about the cases of unaccompanied children disappearing from reception centres. One of the measures in the action plan is therefore for the Swedish Migration Board to report on the measures taken to identify cases in which children are exposed to, or at risk of, human trafficking.

Madam Chair,
Distinguished committee members,

As you know, Sweden was the first country in the world to ban corporal punishment of children in all settings.

Sweden recently hosted a governmental conference on corporal punishment . This process will continue and we hope that this international dialogue can help to speed up the process of banning corporal punishment.

Allow me also to underline Sweden's strong political support for the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children. Throughout her mandate period, Marta Santos Pais has received financial support from Sweden.

Madam Chair,
Distinguished members of the Committee,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Over the last 25 years, we have transformed the articles of the Convention into provisions in relevant Swedish laws. This is the traditional Swedish way of implementing international treaties which Sweden has ratified.

However, we are constantly seeking ways to improve the implementation of the rights of the child in our country. That is why the new Swedish Government decided this autumn to begin the work to incorporate the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Swedish law system as a national law.

A first important step in this process has already been taken by setting up an inquiry to analyse how, in particularly important areas, the application of laws and other regulations complies with the Convention. This work is in progress and will be finalised as soon as possible.

The Government has noted that the third optional protocol to the Convention has entered into force. Since the Government took office in early October, investigatory work concerning the incorporation of the Convention into Swedish legislation has been prioritised and the Government has yet to consider a ratification of this latest protocol.

Madam Chair,
Distinguished members of the Committee,

To conclude, I want to stress that my government will put the rights of the child at the heart of our work and we will stand by our word to ensure that Sweden is be one of the best counties for children to grow up in.

Therefore the Swedish government we will continue to promote and to ensure respect of the human rights of ALL children, together with relevant public entities at all levels with continued important input from childrens rights organisations.

I now look forward to your comments, questions and any recommendations

you may have on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Sweden.

Thank you very much for your attention.