



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

New solutions in focus at the End Violence Against Children Solutions Summit

Published 18 February 2018

As one of the currently 15 pathfinding countries, Sweden, was the first to host the 2030 Agenda for Children: End Violence Against Children Solutions Summit in cooperation with the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children and the WePROTECT Global Alliance on 14-15 February. During the Summit, both Japan and The United Arab Emirates made a commitment to become pathfinding countries, with Brazil expressing interest too. In addition, Japan announced that the country donated 6 million US Dollars to the Fund to End Violence Against Children.

Government ministers, youth delegates and high-level representatives of UN bodies, civil society, academia and the private sector from 67 countries attended the End Violence Against Children: Solutions Summit in Stockholm on 14-15 February 2018.

"Every country that has signed up to the 2030 Agenda has promised to achieve target 16.2: to end exploitation and all forms of violence against girls and boys. Violence against children is a disgrace, a disgrace that must be confronted with the full force of the global community. And this is not just something we wish or hope for – this is something we have promised," said Sweden's Prime Minister, Stefan Löfven.

Summit delegates presented and discussed good practices, concrete examples of legislation and collaboration, action plans that can be shared across the globe and new solutions – all with the potential to end violence against children.

"The purpose of this summit is to present and promote those solutions. But we also need leadership. Leadership in governments, in the United Nations and other governmental organisations, in civil society and in the private sector. I offer my leadership, and Sweden's leadership – but we need your leadership too. Let us all step up," urged the Swedish Prime Minister.

"The Global Partnership will continue to serve as a crucial platform for national government, civil society, academics, the private sector and international organisations to share knowledge and expertise on effective solutions to end violence against children. We need to keep learning from one another, support each other and accelerate action both globally and at home. The cost of inaction is simply too high. I believe that this summit has shown us what can be achieved if we work together to strengthen the rights of the child, by ending all forms of violence against children, supporting parents and building sustainable and equitable societies," said Sweden's Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality, Åsa Regnér.

The Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children

The Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, launched in July 2016, is a joint initiative by world leaders, UNICEF, WHO and others to promote international collaboration between governments, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders to put an end to violence against children. The initiative is linked to the Global Goals of the 2030 Agenda, particularly to target 16.2 to end exploitation and all forms of violence against girls and boys.



Article from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Prime Minister Stefan Löfven to open an international high-level conference on violence against children

Published 01 February 2018

The Swedish Government is hosting the high-level conference Agenda 2030 for Children, End Violence Solutions Summit in Stockholm on 14–15 February 2018. The participants include Prime Minister Stefan Löfven, HM Queen Silvia and UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohamed. The co-organisers of the conference are the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children and WePROTECT Global Alliance.

At least 1 of every 2 of the world's children have experienced violence and 18 million girls aged between 15 and 19 have experienced sexual abuse. As part of Agenda 2030 world leaders have pledged to attain 17 global goals, one aim being to realise human rights for all. Target 16.2 is about preventing and ending violence against and exploitation of girls and boys.

As part of action to attain this target an international high-level conference – **Agenda 2030 for Children, End Violence Solutions Summit** – is being held in Stockholm on 14–15 February 2018.

– I am proud and pleased that Sweden is the first country to host this extremely important conference. At present human rights are being questioned in many places around the world, and by hosting this summit we want to stress that it is possible to make progress in assuring the right of

children to grow up free from violence. Governments, the UN and the EU have a responsibility for achieving this, as do civil society and the private sector. I hope that the meeting can result in concrete examples of solutions, legislation, collaboration and action that lead to a reduction in violence against girls and boys, says Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér.

The purpose of the conference is to share good experience and new solutions in work to end violence against children. Government ministers from 75 countries, youth delegates and high-level representatives of UN bodies, civil society, the academic world and the private sector have been invited to attend the meeting.

The list of participants includes Prime Minister Stefan Löfven; Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér; HM Queen Silvia; Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus; Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Henrietta H Fore; UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohamed; the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Yury Fedotov; and, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, Marta Santos Pais.

During the conference several workshops will be held at which participants will be able to discuss and exchange knowledge and expertise on various themes concerning violence against children.

Sweden is a pathfinding country

Sweden was the first country to join the Global Partnership as a "pathfinding country". These countries identify successful solutions to eliminate violence against children in various settings, from the family to the community as a whole.

– Sweden aims to be the best country in the world for a child to grow up in. As part of this, all children must be safe from violence, abuse and violations. This also means that children must themselves be aware of their rights. Then we will see more children daring to speak out, and to tell adults close to them when and if they are victims of offences. One important step in achieving this is to make the Convention on the Rights of the Child law in Sweden, says Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér.

About the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children

The Global Partnership to End Violence against Children was launched in July 2016 and is a joint initiative by a number of governments, Unicef, the WHO and others for international collaboration between governments, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders to bring about change. The initiative is linked to the global goals in Agenda 2030, especially target 16.2 about preventing and ending violence against and exploitation of children.

Read more at end-violence.org/summit

Follow the conference and join the conversation on Twitter:

#EndViolenceSWE



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

The new Swedish Gender Equality Agency inaugurated in Gothenburg

Published 18 January 2018

On 12 January, the new Swedish Gender Equality Agency was inaugurated in Gothenburg, with speeches by Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Regnér, Director-General Lena Ag, County Governor Anders Danielsson and chair of the municipal executive board, Ann-Sofie Hermansson. The Agency will contribute to strategic, coherent and sustainable governance and effective implementation of gender equality policy.

One of the agency's main tasks is to increase the impact of the Government's gender equality policy and make a real difference to people's lives. This covers all of the Government's gender equality policy objectives: power and influence, economy, education, health, unpaid housework and care work, and an end to men's violence against women.

"It has been exciting and inspiring to follow the growth of the Swedish Gender Equality Agency. Professionals, organisations and private individuals have long been calling for an agency like this. There is a continuous and growing need for follow-up, analysis, coordination and support in the area of gender equality policy. This is a strategic and long-term task. We want to see real results," says Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Regnér.

"It feels fantastic to finally get started on the agency's work. Having our premises in Angered gives us major opportunities – we certainly noticed this today when we met pupils from Angered Upper Secondary School," says

Lena Ag, Director-General of the Swedish Gender Equality Agency.

In connection with Friday's inauguration, Ms Regnér and Ms Ag visited Angered Upper Secondary School to talk to pupils about gender equality, sexual harassment and violence. During the afternoon they also visited the family centre in Angered.

Tasks of the agency

- Contribute to strategic, cohesive and sustainable governance and the effective implementation of gender equality policy.
- Be responsible for follow-up, analysis, coordination and support based on the gender equality policy objectives.
- Coordinate the national strategy to prevent and counter men's violence against women, including honour-related violence and oppression, as well as prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes.
- Collect and disseminate knowledge in its area of responsibility.
- Examine matters concerning government grants for gender equality projects and women's organisations.
- Assist the Government in other respects on gender equality policy issues, such as international cooperation in the area.



Government Offices of Sweden

Article from Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Employment, Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice

The Government of Sweden's measures against sexual violence and harassment

Published 03 January 2018

One of the Swedish Government's gender equality policy sub-goals is that men's violence against women must stop. With reference to #metoo, the following lists some examples of implemented and forthcoming measures to counteract sexual violence, harassment and assault.

The Government's work involves preventive initiatives, stronger protection and support, more effective law enforcement, work environment investments and awareness-building measures.

Article: The Government of Sweden takes action against sexual violence and harassment

Work at an overarching level

- On 1 January 2017, the ten-year national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women, including honour-related violence and oppression, as well as prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes, came into effect. The strategy, which contains a package of measures, is intended to guide central government steering in this area and has a particular focus on developing efforts to prevent violence. In total, the Government is setting aside around SEK 1.3 billion for efforts to counteract men's violence against women in 2017–2020.

Fact sheet: National strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women

- A new gender equality agency begins working in January 2018. The agency will work with follow-up, analysis, coordination, knowledge and support for achieving the Government's gender equality policy goals. One of the sub-goals is that men's violence against women must stop, and that women and men, girls and boys must have the same right and access to physical integrity.

Summary of the Government Communication 'Power, goals and agency – a feminist policy'

Stronger protection and support

- At the end of 2017 the Government proposed to the Council on Legislation new sexual offence legislation that is based on consent. The Swedish Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority will receive resources to implement information and training initiatives in the area of sexual offences.

Press release: New sexual offence legislation based on consent

- The Act on special protection for workers against reprisals for whistleblowing concerning serious irregularities, the Whistleblowing Act, which entered into force on 1 January 2017, can be applicable in situations where an employer takes reprisals against an employee for reporting sexual harassment to a government agency or the media.
- In its bill on enhanced penal protection of personal integrity, the Government proposed that the protection against threats and violations be strengthened and modernised. Most of this enters into force on 1 January 2018.
- At the turn of 2016/17, the legislation for counteracting workplace discrimination was tightened.
- The issue of better protection against discrimination and violations in schools (based on SOU 2016:87) is being processed at the Government Offices.

More effective law enforcement and preventive efforts

- The Government is implementing a historic investment through additional funding to the Swedish Police Authority of just over SEK 9.8 billion over the period 2017–2020. Assignments in the appropriation directions to the Police and the Swedish Prosecution Authority allow the Government to follow how these authorities are working to develop their working methods for investigating rape and other sexual offences.
- The Government has an agreement with Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, SALAR, in 2017 to strengthen the focus of gender equality work on men, boys and questions of masculinity.

Work environment investments

- The Government has adopted a national work environment strategy in close consultation with the labour market and union partners, containing concrete measures in three priority areas, one of which is the psychosocial work environment. The strategy has been produced partly in light of gender segregation in the Swedish labour market. Research indicates that a gender unequal organisation goes hand in hand with psychosocial aspects such as conflict, harassment and high staff turnover.

A Work Environment Strategy for Modern Working Life 2016–2020

- The Government's strategy emphasises that initiatives are needed to strengthen the organisational and social work environment. The Swedish Work Environment Authority's regulations on organisational and social work environment were adopted in spring 2016 and entail a major step forward in work environment management. Victimisation is a focus area in the regulations.
- The Government has enhanced resources for its work environment policy by over SEK 100 million per year during this term of office. The funds have enabled the Work Environment Authority to strengthen its supervisory activities. Around a hundred new work environment inspectors have been hired.
- The Government has adopted some changes to the Swedish Work Environment Authority's instructions, which enter into force on 2 January 2018. The instructions now explicitly state that the Authority is to conduct its activities so as to promote diversity and gender equality and a work environment free from victimisation (Section 4 a).

Awareness-building measures

- The Children's Welfare Foundation Sweden is receiving SEK 500,000 from the Government to disseminate information and support materials on sexual harassment to all compulsory and upper secondary schools.
- In order to raise the basic competency of particularly relevant professional groups, the Government has decided to make teaching about men's violence against women and violence in close relationships, including honour-related violence and oppression, compulsory in a number of higher education programmes.
- The Swedish Schools Inspectorate is reviewing the sex and human relationships teaching of compulsory schools, compulsory education for pupils with intellectual disabilities, upper secondary schools and upper secondary education for pupils with learning disabilities. The completed assignment is to be presented by 16 February 2018 at the latest. The teacher's guide "Dags att prata om" [Time to talk about] has been launched for schools to improve their ability to talk to children about sexual abuse.



Government Offices of Sweden

Article from Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Education and Research,
Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs,
Ministry of Justice

The Government of Sweden takes action against sexual violence and harassment

Published 03 January 2018

The #metoo movement in Sweden strongly demonstrates that more needs to be done to combat sexual harassment and sexual violence in workplaces and society at large. The Swedish Government requires all employers to take responsibility for a secure work environment. In the area of work environment and discrimination there are already many tools and relevant legislation, but the power and size of the petitions show that there are deficiencies in compliance with the regulations. For this reason, Minister for Employment Ylva Johansson and Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Regnér have met with the labour market and union partners, and several ministers have in recent weeks convened meetings with heads of government agencies and business leaders in order to focus on the responsibility of employers to counteract sexual violence and harassment.

The testimonies regarding sexual violence and harassment in a great number of workplaces and schools that have emerged in the wake of the #metoo

movement confirm that more needs to be done. The Government has already adopted a number of initiatives, and the long-term measures against sexual violence and harassment already adopted by the Government include a proposal for improved legislation on sexual consent and sexual offence, the national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women, the establishment of the new gender equality agency, and a national work environment strategy.

"Thanks to the important petitions in industry after industry, with testimonies about violations and harassment, we have moved the focus from women's behaviour and appearance to talking about the responsibility of men. Feminist policy is needed, and the work against sexualised violence and harassment is a high priority for the Government. The new gender equality agency, which commences its activities in January, will play an important role in supporting government agencies and organisations to systematically achieve societal change," says Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Regnér.

"Several of the testimonies made public have clarified the frequent link between working conditions and vulnerability to sexual harassment and abuse. Criminal acts committed at workplaces shall of course always be reported to be dealt with by the judicial system. But in addition to punishable acts, many women also bear witness to a completely unacceptable work environment. It is obvious that not enough has been done to rectify these problems," says Minister for Employment and Integration Ylva Johansson.

Meetings with government agencies and the social partners

With reference to the #metoo petitions, the Government has initiated meetings about sexual violence and harassment with heads of government agencies, labour market and union partners, business leaders and the initiators behind the petitions.

Concrete measures against violence and violations

The Government has both ongoing and planned measures to counteract sexual violence, harassment and violations. This involves preventive initiatives, stronger protection and support, more effective law enforcement, improved supervision and awareness-building measures.

Article: The Government of Sweden's measures against sexual violence and harassment



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Ministerial conference on how gender equality can contribute to fair jobs and growth

Published 13 November 2017 Updated 13 November 2017

Sweden's Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Regnér hosted a conference on how gender equality can contribute to fair jobs and growth on 8 November in Gothenburg. Gender equality ministers from the upcoming EU presidencies took part and discussed gender equality in relation to the labour market and overall progress in the area of gender equality in the EU based on the Gender Equality Index of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE).

The conference was held ahead of the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth, which will take place on 17 November, and be hosted by the President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker and Sweden's Prime Minister Stefan Löfven.

The conference brought together ministers responsible for gender equality in several EU Member States, representatives of the EU institutions, the social partners, and civil society, as well as researchers working in this field.

Prime Minister Stefan Löfven opened the conference with a video message.

"A truly social Europe cannot be achieved without gender equality. Not only because gender equality is a fundamental right, but also because it is a prerequisite for economic growth, a well-functioning labour market and efficient social security systems," said Minister for Gender Equality Åsa

Regnér at the conference.

Each session opened with a speech, followed by a panel discussion that included ministers, experts, and representatives of the social partners and civil society.

- Session 1: Gender equality – a key to growth
- Session 2: Gender equality – a key to fair jobs
- Session 3: Work balance – a key to gender equality
- Concluding remarks: Integrating gender equality in the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth.

[Link to program, conclusion observations and list of participants](#)

"After hearing your thoughts and ideas during our discussions, it is even clearer to me that gender equality must be placed at the highest level of the EU political agenda. The outcome of these discussions will provide valuable input and a strong message to the Social Summit and to our heads of state and government on how gender equality can contribute to fair jobs and growth," said Ms Regnér in her concluding remarks.

The hashtags used for the meeting were #equalityworks17 and #socialsummit17.

Ministers in dialogue with citizens in Gothenburg

A social Europe must also be created in close dialogue with its citizens. For this reason, Minister Åsa Regnér at the end of the day organized an open forum in the Gothenburg area of Angered. Together with Estonian Minister of Health and Labour, Jevgeni Ossinovski, the attending citizens were told about the day's conference, followed by an exchange of views with the participants on how gender equality can contribute to fair jobs and growth.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Reforms for increased security and welfare in the Budget Bill for 2018

Published 27 September 2017

In the Budget Bill for 2018, the Government presents a range of proposals to increase security and welfare in Sweden. Here you can learn more about the proposals related to the areas of responsibility of the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs.

Children's rights

The proposal is presented in expenditure area 9 'Health care, medical care and social services'.

Summit on ending violence against children

In February 2018, Sweden will host the Solutions Summit, a high-level gathering bringing together representatives of governments, international organisations and other actors working to end all forms of violence against girls and boys. The Summit is part of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, of which Sweden is a member, launched at the initiative of UNICEF and WHO.

Disabilities

The proposal is presented in expenditure area 9 'Health care, medical care and social services'.

Increased standard amount for assistance allowance

The Government intends to increase the standard amount for assistance allowance by 1.5 per cent. This is a higher adjustment than in 2017, when the standard amount was increased by 1.05 per cent.

Improved interpretation services in working life

The Government is investing in greater access to interpretation services in working life. The aim is to strengthen the labour market opportunities of women and men who are deaf, deaf-blind or have a hearing impairment. The Government intends to allocate SEK 15 million per year for this purpose in 2018–2020.

Gender equality

The proposals are presented in expenditure area 13 'Gender equality and integration of newly arrived immigrants'.

Multi-year investment to combat honour-related violence and oppression

The Government intends to make a coordinated, multi-year investment to prevent and combat honour-related violence and oppression comprising measures worth SEK 100 million in 2018 and SEK 57 million per year in 2019–2020.

Appropriations to the new gender equality agency

The Government has decided to establish a gender equality agency to help ensure strategic, coherent and sustainable governance, and effective implementation of gender equality policy. The agency, which will be located in Gothenburg and open on 1 January 2018, has been allocated SEK 80 million for 2018.

Social insurance

The proposals outlined below are presented in expenditure area 10 'Financial security for the sick and disabled'.

Higher ceiling in the sickness insurance system

The ceiling for the sickness benefit qualifying income will be increased from seven and a half times to eight times the price base amount from 1 July 2018.

1. The housing supplement and the special housing supplement will be increased from 1 January 2018.
2. Tax will be reduced for people receiving activity and sickness compensation from 1 January 2018.
3. Guarantee compensation will increase by SEK 300 from 1 July 2018.

Improvements for people receiving activity and sickness compensation

The Government proposes reforms in three different areas that improve the financial situation of people receiving activity and sickness compensation.

4. The housing supplement and the special housing supplement will be increased from 1 January 2018.
5. Tax cuts for people receiving activity and sickness compensation will apply from 1 January 2018.
6. Guarantee compensation will increase by SEK 300 from 1 July 2018.

Proposal for sickness benefit pending a final decision

The aim of the proposal is to ensure that people on sick leave will not have their benefit suspended retroactively.

Under the proposal:

- A matter concerning sickness benefit may not be decided to the detriment of the insured without informing the insured of the content of the upcoming decision and giving them an opportunity to comment on it.
- Sickness benefit qualifying income will apply during the time the insured is waiting for the final decision.
- If sickness benefit has been paid previously, it will be paid until Försäkringskassan (Swedish Social Insurance Agency) has made a final decision.

Proposal for enhanced rehabilitation to promote return to work

The Government and the Left Party have together proposed measures to stimulate and ensure early assessment of rehabilitation needs and early measures for adaptation and workplace rehabilitation. The aim is to strengthen the individual's access to rehabilitation.

The proposals outlined below are presented in expenditure area 11 'Financial security for the elderly'.

Higher housing supplement for pensioners

The housing supplement, the special housing supplement and maintenance support for older people will be increased from 1 January 2018. The Government is investing SEK 655 million annually and 290 000 pensioners will be affected by the increase, 75 per cent of them women.

Tax cut for pensioners

On 1 January 2018, taxes will be cut by up to SEK 5 000 per year for 75 per cent of people over the age of 65. This will apply to 1.5 million over 65s, which means that 3 out of 4 older people will receive tax cuts in 2018.

The proposals outlined below are presented in expenditure area 12 'Financial security for families and children'.

Increased child allowance

The Government proposes that child allowance and extended child allowance be increased by SEK 200 per month per child from 1 March 2018.

New age-differentiated maintenance support

The Government wants to raise maintenance support for older children to improve the situation of families with children with the greatest financial needs. This is a twofold initiative for teenagers aged 15 and over, and children aged between 11 and 14.

Health care

The proposals outlined below are presented in expenditure area 9 'Health care, medical care and social services'.

Patient billion – enhanced health care guarantee in primary care and patient contract

The Government wants to support the introduction of an enhanced health care guarantee in primary care to improve patient accessibility. SEK 1 billion per year will be allocated for this in 2018–2021. The 'Patient billion' will also support the introduction of a patient contract to promote a more coherent approach to planned care. This is particularly important for patients with complex care needs and frequent contact with health care providers.

Good working conditions and new working methods for health care staff

The Government is investing to improve conditions for health care staff and develop health care activities. When health care staff have more time to provide their patients with treatment and care, patient safety is strengthened. SEK 2 billion will be allocated per year in 2018–2021 for this purpose.

More investments in maternity care

To address the problems and shortcomings experienced in maternity care, the Government proposes that the current investment be extended and expanded by SEK 1 billion per year up to 2022.

Increased general dental care subsidy

The Government intends to double the general dental care subsidy from SEK 300 to SEK 600 for the 22–29 age group, from SEK 150 to SEK 300 for the 30–64 age group, and from SEK 300 to SEK 600 for the over 65s.

Free cervical cancer screening

The Government is investing in free cervical cancer screening to ensure that no woman feels she is unable to afford a pap test.

Initiatives to improve mental health

The Government sees a major need to expand investments in mental health services and mental health. It is therefore strengthening efforts in this area by providing SEK 650 million in 2018 and SEK 1150 million per year in

2019 and 2020.

Strengthened child health services

The Government wants to increase accessibility to child health care services for groups with poor general health and poor dental health. SEK 137 million per year will be allocated for this purpose in 2018–2020. These funds will also be used to develop vaccine information and communication efforts to increase vaccination levels. The Government also intends to take a decision concerning the inclusion of the rotavirus vaccine in the national vaccination programme for children.

Social welfare services

The proposals outlined below are presented in expenditure area 9 'Health care, medical care and social services'.

Free holiday activities and swimming lessons

The Government is investing in free school holiday activities. It intends to allocate SEK 250 million per year in 2018–2020 to enable the municipalities to offer free activities during school holidays.

Support to older people with considerable health and social care needs

Older people with multiple illnesses and those in great need of care require the involvement of many different actors. Organisational changes are required and health care and social services need to be coordinated. The Government proposes that SEK 12 million per year be allocated for these initiatives in 2018–2020.

Falls prevention

Falls are the leading cause of accidental death, hospitalisation and visits to emergency departments. To achieve the goal of halving the number of fall-related accidents, the Government intends to enhance prevention efforts.

Staff reinforcements in social care for children and young people

The Government's ongoing investment to increase staffing levels in social care for children and young people will continue as planned. In 2018–2020, the Government intends to invest an additional SEK 250 million per year to strengthen initiatives for children subjected to or at risk of abuse.

Reinforced appropriation to the National Board of Institutional Care

Over the last three years, demand has been very high for residential care places provided by the National Board of Institutional Care (SiS). To enable SiS to expand its capacity, the Government intends to increase the administrative appropriation by SEK 40 million in 2017, SEK 110 million in 2018 and SEK 150 million per year in 2019–2021.

Central government initiative to combat acute homelessness

In 2018–2021, the Government will provide the municipalities with SEK 25 million per year as support for their work to combat acute homelessness.

Habilitation compensation

As of 2018, the Government intends to provide municipalities with a grant of SEK 350 million for their efforts related to habilitation compensation.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Questions and answers on the Convention on the Rights of the Child becoming law (adapted for children)

Published 14 July 2017

The Swedish Government wants to incorporate the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) into Swedish law. The CRC contains rules about children's rights. Here are answers to common questions children may have about this.

What is the CRC?

The UN adopted the CRC in 1989. The CRC contains rules about children's rights. These rules apply to all children under the age of 18. Nearly every country in the world has signed the CRC. When a country signs a convention, it promises to follow the various rules of the convention.

The rules of the CRC are divided into 54 articles. The articles say, for example, that children are to be treated equally, that adults must listen to children and that children have the right to go to school. In other words, children have special rights just because they're children.

Why does the Government want to make the CRC part of Swedish law?

An inquiry that examined the rights of the child in Sweden found that adults do not always use the CRC the way they should. The Government wants to change this by making the CRC part of Swedish law. The Government feels that this will raise the status of children's rights so that everyone will take

children's rights seriously.

If the CRC becomes Swedish law, all the rules of the CRC will be gathered in one act. This means that the CRC will be clearer and have better visibility.

With the CRC as Swedish law, the Government wants it to be clearer that children are to be considered rights holders. This means that children are to be seen as people with rights of their own.

What does this act mean for me as a child?

The act will make it clearer that you as a child have rights of your own and that those rights must be followed. With the CRC as Swedish law, it will be clearer that the CRC's rules must be followed.

The act means that you as a child can be more involved in decisions that concern you. Adults have to listen to what you say. When adults take decisions that concern you, they have to think about and talk about what is best for you. Adults cannot just talk with other adults about you, – they have to talk with you about matters that concern you.

Is the Government doing anything else to strengthen the rights of the child?

Yes. Sweden has a special policy area for children's rights. The Government wants Sweden to be one of the very best countries to grow up in.

The Ombudsman for Children in Sweden is a person appointed by the Government to represent the rights of children and young people, monitor compliance with the CRC, and provide information and spread knowledge about the CRC.

The Government wants everyone to know what rights children have and how the CRC should be used. The Government has therefore instructed the Ombudsman for Children to make sure that children and young people are able to learn about their rights, for example in school. The Government has also instructed the Ombudsman for Children to ensure that adults who work with children – in schools, hospitals, local government or other places – learn more about children's rights.

If you want to learn more about children's rights and the CRC, you can find more information on the Ombudsman for Children's website.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Questions and answers on incorporating the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child into Swedish law

Published 14 July 2017

The Swedish Government has decided to submit a proposal to the Council on Legislation to incorporate the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) into Swedish law. The Government considers that the CRC's strong position must be made clearer and that a child rights-based approach must have a major impact on how the law is applied.

Why does the Government want to incorporate the CRC into Swedish law?

Despite strategic measures and the fact that the rights of the child are regularly transformed into applicable law and have been reflected in new legislation, these rights have not had a sufficient impact on decision-making processes concerning children. Nor has the fact that, in relation to children, the CRC involves obligations for central and local government activities had a sufficient impact.

The Government considers that the CRC's strong position must be made clearer and that a child rights-based approach must have a major impact in on how the law is applied.

In what way do the rights of the child have insufficient impact?

The Inquiry on the rights of the child found in its surveys that the impact of

children's rights and of a child rights-based approach has been insufficient in many ways. This is most obvious with regard to the principle of the best interests of the child and a child's right to express their views.

How can the rights of the child be expected to have a greater impact on the application of the law in Sweden if the CRC is incorporated into Swedish law?

Incorporation of the CRC means that officials and decision-makers will have to take a different approach to the CRC than at present. Incorporation entails a clearer obligation on legal practitioners to consider the rights that follow from the CRC in deliberations and assessments in decision-making processes in cases and matters concerning children.

Incorporation of the CRC makes clear that the principle of the best interests of the child must be the approach used in decision-making processes in cases and matters concerning children, and be based on the rights a child has under the CRC. Incorporation means that a child's role as a legal entity with specific rights of their own is made clearer.

What will the difference be between the CRC as a legal act and as a ratified convention?

Incorporation of the CRC will gather the human rights that children are entitled to in a single act. The CRC as a whole will have greater visibility, and it will be clear that the rights in the CRC are connected and must be interpreted in relation to one another.

Incorporation of the CRC makes clear that other legislation concerning children, such as the provisions of the Parents Code, the Aliens Act, the Education Act, the Act concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments and the Social Services Act, must be interpreted on the basis of the CRC in its entirety and not only on the basis of the provisions transformed into each act.

Are other measures needed to strengthen implementation of the rights of the child?

For the rights of the child to have the desired impact, the CRC must continue to be transformed in addition to being incorporated.

In the proposal referred to the Council on Legislation, the Government also presents the measures taken to increase knowledge about the CRC among

children and young people, in local government and government agencies. In the proposal, the Government states that an inquiry will be appointed to conduct a broad study of how the CRC is dealt with in Swedish legislation and in the application of the law, and that the significance of the CRC's provisions will be systematically analysed based on Swedish conditions. In addition, the Government states that a guidance document will be produced on how to interpret and implement the CRC, based on rules of interpretation of international law, and that a new Swedish translation of the CRC should be published in connection with the incorporation.

How will children in Sweden notice that the CRC is part of Swedish law?

Incorporation of the CRC entails a clearer obligation on legal practitioners to consider the rights that follow from the CRC in deliberations and assessments in decision-making processes in cases and matters concerning children. In addition, incorporation means that the child's role as a legal entity with specific rights of their own is made clearer and can therefore be expected to contribute to greater focus on the child in situations concerning the child.

How do other acts relate to the CRC?

In principle, the proposed incorporation does not entail any new tasks for practitioners, since legislation is already to be interpreted in accordance with the CRC. However, incorporation entails a clearer obligation on legal practitioners to consider the rights that follow from the CRC in deliberations and assessments in decision-making processes in cases and matters concerning children, and interpret Swedish provisions in relation to the CRC based on principles of interpretation in international law.

Incorporation will make the provisions of the CRC applicable as law and may – with the reservation that all the provisions are not directly applicable in each individual case – form the basis of decisions by public authorities in cases and matters and so fill any gaps in the legislation. Incorporation of the CRC does not mean that it takes precedence over other legislation. How any incompatibility between the incorporated CRC and other legislation is to be settled must be determined by means of general legal principles of interpretation.

Why will entry into force of the act be delayed until 2020?

It is proposed that the act enter into force on 1 January 2020. The

Government considers that more time than the inquiry thought necessary is needed before the act enters into force. This is so law enforcement authorities have time to prepare.

The Government has concluded from earlier studies that Swedish law overall is well in line with the CRC, but it is of great importance that transformation continues both before and after incorporation to facilitate matters for legal practitioners and to increase predictability. Entry into force at a later date provides greater scope for transformation ahead of incorporation. The Government is also aware that there may be a lack of experience and knowledge of interpreting and implementing international conventions, and therefore considers that, prior to incorporation of the CRC, additional knowledge-enhancing measures are needed alongside the work already under way and the measures being taken, including by the Ombudsman for Children and within the framework of the Government's strategic human rights efforts. Entry into force at a later date also provides scope for additional analyses and studies, including of the significance of the CRC's provisions.



Article from Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Launch of gender equality web portal for newly arrived children and young people

Published 11 July 2017

On Thursday 6 April 2017, Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér inaugurated the multilingual Youmo.se website that provides information about health, gender equality, and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The website, which targets newly arrived children and young people aged 13–20, is part of the Government's efforts to provide more information for young people who did not grow up in Sweden and who do not have Swedish as their first language.

“The Youmo website has been eagerly awaited. Sweden has received many unaccompanied minors in a short period of time. The Government wants their reception to be as good as possible, and education is an important part of this. I hope this website will improve knowledge about gender equality among newly arrived children and young people,” says Ms Regnér.

In April 2016, the Government instructed the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society, in collaboration with the national internet-based youth clinic UMO, to promote information campaigns on health and gender equality for newly arrived children and young people. The result – Youmo.se – is based on content from the UMO.se website and contains easily accessible content in Swedish, English, Arabic, Dari, Somali and Tigrinya.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Sweden and Romania exchange experiences

Published 14 June 2017

It is two years since Romania and Sweden signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation and the exchange of knowledge about children's rights, gender equality and social welfare.

“The memorandum of understanding has strengthened our bilateral relations and served as a platform for exchanges in efforts concerning vulnerable groups at various levels. At the same time we are enhancing our expertise through study visits at expert level. The MoU has also facilitated cooperation at EU level,” said Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér.

To mark the second anniversary of the memorandum of understanding, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs hosted a dialogue meeting to provide information about ongoing efforts and learn about organisations' experiences, input and views. The dialogue meeting was co-chaired by State Secretary Pernilla Baralt of Sweden and State Secretary Adrian Marius Dobre of Romania.

Participants in the dialogue meeting included organisations active in Romania (Swedish Civil Society Network for Romania), representatives of the parties represented in the Riksdag, Romania's Ambassador Iulian Buga, head of the international department of Romania's social affairs ministry, Ivona Batali, and the coordinator for EU citizens without right of residence, Claes Ling-Vannerus, from the Stockholm County Administrative Board.

In general, the memorandum of understanding has contributed to a good climate for cooperation with Romanian representatives at central and local level. It has also been valuable for Swedish organisations working with

vulnerable groups and social inclusion in Romania.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

International high-level meeting in the Riksdag on displaced children

Published 28 April 2017

On 24 April, a high-level meeting on displaced children was held in the Riksdag. It was organised by the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden, the Children's Welfare Foundation Sweden and the Riksdag.

Sweden's Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér was one of the keynote speakers at the meeting, which was attended by children's representatives from a number of European countries and child rights experts from across Europe, as well as representatives of Swedish government agencies and civil society organisations working with child rights.

The aim of the meeting, which was a follow-up of a prior initiative on the same theme by the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children, was to exchange experiences and bring a child rights perspective to the ongoing discussions on a new Common European Asylum System.

"Displaced children seeking asylum in Sweden must have their rights guaranteed and receive protection and support. Girls and boys must receive the proper support, based on their different experiences and needs. Making the Convention on the Rights of the Child part of Swedish law, a process which is currently under way, is an important step for the Government, which has also reinforced social care for children and young people with more than SEK 1 billion during the period 2016–2019," says Ms Regnér.

Other keynote speakers included Tomas Bocek, the Council of Europe's

Special Representative on Migration and Refugees, and Ambassador Nicola Clase, the Swedish Government's Coordinator for Migration and Refugee Issues.

During the meeting, a panel discussion was held on child rights challenges in migration in Europe. Participants in this discussion included Fredrik Malmberg, Ombudsman for Children in Sweden, Anna Maria Corazza Bildt, Swedish Member of the European Parliament, George Moschos, Ombudsman for Children in Greece, Geneviève Avenard, Children's Ombudsman in France, Per-Anders Sunesson, Sweden's Ambassador to Combat Human Trafficking, and Livia Stoica, Children's Rights Division, Council of Europe.

A panel discussion was also held on the child rights challenges in the new Common European Asylum System. Pernilla Baralt, State Secretary to Ms Regnér, was one of the participants.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Sweden a strong voice for women's rights at 61st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

Published 16 March 2017 Updated 16 March 2017

"This year, it feels more important than ever to participate. Many of us view what is happening around the world today with concern. Human rights and gender equality are not at the top of the global agenda. In particular, the rights of young girls, women and LGBT people are questioned," says Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Regnér in connection with her participation at the 61st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York on 13–24 March.

The aim of the Swedish delegation is to be a strong and constructive voice for the rights of women and girls.

"Sweden has every opportunity to be a clear and brave voice and stand up for the rights of women and girls. We take this responsibility very seriously. In New York, I am meeting with women's organisations who are putting great personal effort into fighting for a better world for all of us. Through Sweden's international network and development assistance, we are strengthening these brave women activists. Partly because it is the right thing to do – but also because we realise that we all live in the same world," says Ms Regnér.

Women's economic empowerment

This year the main theme is 'Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work'. Sweden's priorities in relation to this include issues concerning:

- differences in pay and pensions between women and men;
- gender segregation in the labour market, including gender-stereotypical educational and vocational choices;
- conditions for women's participation in the labour force, through such means as parental insurance, child and elderly care and individual taxation, and measures that promote a modern working life such as a good working environment and good working conditions;
- women's opportunities to take part in working life on a full-time basis;
- an even division of unpaid housework and care work among men and women; and
- the role of men and boys in the promotion of gender equality.

The Government's feminist policy, gender equality policy objectives and the feminist foreign policy

On the ground in New York, the delegation is spreading knowledge about Sweden's national and international experience of the work to achieve gender equality. The priorities and starting points are based on the Government's feminist policy, which includes the national gender equality policy objective and targets as well as the feminist foreign policy.

Rights perspective central

Swedish starting points include reaffirming previous commitments and emphasising the importance of the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform and the 2030 Agenda.

For Sweden, the rights perspective is central, likewise the view that human rights are universal.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) have been prioritised by

the Government and are central to Sweden's international work for gender equality, human rights and health. Swedish experience and knowledge concerning SRHR have important added value. SRHR issues are always controversial on the international policy agenda. They can be expected to appear in connection with the CSW, regardless of the session's main theme.

Side event on prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes

During the CSW, member states, organisations, UN funds and programmes arrange 'side events'. Together with France and the Coalition for the Abolition of Prostitution (CAP International), Sweden hosted a side event at the French Embassy on prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes. Also taking part in the seminar was actor and gender equality debater Sissela Kyle, who is known in part for her role as women's rights activist Dagmar Friman in the drama series 'Miss Friman's War'.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

UN report gathers Swedish initiatives for the rights of older people

Published 18 November 2016 Updated 18 November 2016

On 31 October, the Government sent the Swedish report ‘National follow-up of the regional implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) in Sweden’ to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). “People do not become more alike simply because they get older. We continue to have different interests. Our needs continue to be individual. A modern policy for older people must not only take this into account – this must be an obvious starting point that informs this policy. The rights of older women and men must be in focus when we develop care for older people in Sweden,” says Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér in connection with Sweden having now submitted the report.

The Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) is a UN global action plan that highlights the rights of older people. The MIPAA encourages Member States to draw attention to and take measures to strengthen the rights of older people – against the background of the global challenge of an ageing population.

The MIPAA was adopted in Madrid in 2002 and is followed up every five

years; Sweden presented its report to the UN Economic Commission for Europe in October. A global report will subsequently be submitted to the Commission for Social Development in New York.

The report describes the measures taken in Sweden in 2012–2016 to strengthen the rights of older women and men.

To cover the breadth of the initiatives carried out, a number of government agencies and ministries have been involved in reporting, as have representatives of pensioners' organisations.

An active life and influence in society

The report to the UNECE contains facts and data that can be used by the Government and others in efforts to develop policy for older people and plans to meet the needs of older women and men, now and in the future.

Noteworthy in the Swedish report is that Sweden, compared with other OECD countries, has an ageing population with a large proportion of people over 80, but also that these older people are relatively healthy.

The Government has carried out several initiatives based on a rights perspective. The objective has been for older women and men to be able to lead an active life and exert influence in society and their own everyday lives, to be able to age in security, retain their independence, be met with respect and have access to good health and social care.

One example is increased staffing levels in care for older people. Staffing is crucial for the quality of care. The Government allocated SEK 1 billion for 2015 and has allocated SEK 2 billion per year to the municipalities for 2016–2018 for increased staffing levels in care for older people.

As a supplement to increased staffing levels, the Government has also set aside SEK 200 million this year for a training initiative targeting support staff in care for older people and people with disabilities.

To create long-term planning conditions for municipalities and county councils, the Government will allocate an additional SEK 10 billion per year to the municipal sector for 2017 and onwards. This money will strengthen welfare and develop the Swedish model.

Investment grant for housing for older people

Sweden's population is increasing dramatically and the need for housing has increased considerably. The Government has introduced a new investment grant for housing for older people. This grant is to stimulate the reconstruction and new construction of housing for older people. The aim is to improve accessibility and encourage older people to continue to live in their own homes. This year, the Government has allocated SEK 150 million for this purpose.



Article from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Education and Research,
Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice

Summary: National strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women

Published 14 November 2016 Updated 14 November 2016

Stopping men's violence against women is a priority issue for Sweden's feminist government. The Government is therefore now presenting a national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women.

The strategy contains measures that strengthen protection for and support to women subjected to violence, measures to combat violence in same-sex relationships as well as measures that counteract destructive masculinity and notions of honour. The strategy also emphasises the participation and responsibility of men in stopping the violence.

With a long-term strategy and a targeted action plan, the Government is laying the foundation for increasingly goal-oriented and coordinated action on men's violence against women. Developing violence prevention measures is particularly important. These measures must reach all groups in society and be developed in a variety of arenas. The national strategy is included in the Government's gender equality policy communication to the Riksdag (2016/17:10). The strategy spans a ten-year period and will come into force on 1 January 2017.

The strategy's four objectives

- Increased and effective preventive work to combat violence.
- Improved detection of violence and stronger protection for and support

to women and children subjected to violence.

- More effective crime-fighting.
- Improved knowledge and methodological development.

Special emphasis on preventive measures and men's participation

To date, measures have tended to deal with the consequences of violence rather than the causes. The Government's ambition is to shift the perspective and focus on preventing violence. This requires effective measures to prevent both the use and reoccurrence of violence. It also requires broader and more constructive involvement of men and boys than previously, and breaking with the norms that justify violence, the purchase of sexual services and other restrictions on the freedom of action and life choices of women and girls.

There are major challenges with regard to men's violence against women, honour-related violence and oppression, and action to combat prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes. Society must become better at detecting violence, and knowledge about the extent of the violence and effective practices needs to improve. Action to prevent violence must be well coordinated between relevant actors at all levels. Therefore, the control, coordination and follow-up of the measures to stop men's violence against women will be strengthened.

Long-term action plan for goal-oriented, coordinated and effective action

As a part of the strategy's implementation, the Government is allocating SEK 600 million to an action plan containing new measures for 2017–2020, in addition to SEK 300 million in development funds to municipalities and county councils. The role of the county administrative boards as regional coordinators will be clarified. The gender equality agency to be established by the Government will eventually be given overall responsibility for the work to end men's violence against women. Within the framework of the action plan, the Government intends to:

For *increased and effective preventive work to combat violence*

- support the development and spread of universal violence preventive efforts with the objective of reaching all young people,

- conduct a review of sex and relationship education in schools,
- counteract demand for the purchase of sexual services,
- strengthen professional treatment of men who have been violent and investigate the ability of municipalities to work with perpetrators of violence early on, and
- further strengthen prevention of reoffending by convicted perpetrators of violence, both within the Swedish Prison and Probation Service and with other stakeholders.

For improved detection of violence and stronger protection of and support to women and children subjected to violence

- provide training to professionals, in social services and health and medical care for example, and on routines for asking about exposure to violence,
- strengthen protection of and support to children who have witnessed or been exposed to violence,
- strengthen expertise in the field of honour-related violence and oppression,
- continue the development of knowledge support on prostitution targeted at health and medical care and social services.

For more effective crime-fighting

- develop police methods and practices for preventing repeated violence,
- evaluate the 2014 legislative amendments on forced marriages and child marriages,
- prevent online threats and abuse.

For improved knowledge and methodological development

- survey the extent of honour-related violence and oppression,
- develop national statistics on measures in social services and health and medical care, and provide guidance to municipalities on calculating the cost of violence,
- strengthen knowledge about effective violence prevention,
- amend the degree descriptions in the Higher Education Ordinance so that men's violence against women and domestic violence are included in education and training for professional groups who may encounter victims of violence,
- allocate funds for skills development for relevant professional groups.

Extensive initiative since Government took office in 2014

Since taking office, the Government has decided on a long list of measures to counter men's violence against women and domestic violence (these measures are presented on the Government website). For instance, the Government has provided increased support to local women's shelters for 2015–2019 totalling SEK 425 million. In addition, the Government has decided decided on, or in other ways taken, more than 20 measures directly related to proposals from the National Coordinator on Domestic Violence.



Article from Ministry for Foreign Affairs

#FirstGeneration Global Goals Forum – focus on young people and joint efforts for a better world

Published 10 October 2016 Updated 10 October 2016

More than 300 engaged young people, teachers, inspirers and representatives of civil society and the business sector gathered on 5 October for the #FirstGeneration GlobalGoals Forum in Stockholm. Optimism for the future permeated the entire day, which focused on young people and the UN Global Goals.

Swedish YouTube star and presenter Clara Henry was the moderator for the day, and a large number of inspiring young people from all over the world took part in the programme. The Forum was opened by Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér, and the UN Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, Ahmad Ahlendawi, sent a video message.

"Young people are not just the beneficiaries of the Global Goals, but rather they hold the key to their success. This is why I am especially encouraged by the #FirstGeneration campaign's focus on teachers and educators. Teachers have a unique opportunity to instil the importance of sustainability from a young age and to cultivate and enable the younger generation to serve as change-makers."

The day's activities offered many inspiring and educational moments. The audience were given food for thought in an interactive quiz, and Staffan Landin raised awareness of sustainable development. Audience members also had a chance to hold Minister for the Environment Karolina Skog and representatives from businesses including IKEA and E.ON to account in a

Global Goals grill, arranged by We_change. The #FirstGeneration Award was also presented for the first time. State Secretary Ulrika Modéer and Mats Djurberg, Secretary-General of the Swedish National Commission for UNESCO, presented the award to educators and inspirational figures from 17 countries, in recognition of their efforts to inspire and engage young people on issues to do with fair and sustainable development, peace and climate change. Following the award, Swedish-Sami hip-hop artist Maxida Märak performed a Sami joik. The Forum concluded with a video message from Minister for International Development Cooperation and Climate Isabella Lövin. Her message was clear – global challenges require global solutions.

"We need role models around the world if the Global Goals are to become reality. Global challenges need global solutions. I'm sure you will continue your work to find these solutions together."

The Forum was held on World Teachers' Day, 5 October, as a fitting date to highlight the important role of educators and others in inspiring and engaging young people on issues to do with a just and sustainable future. The event, which was held at Norra Latin, an old school, went viral both nationally and internationally, with the hashtag #FirstGeneration trending on Twitter with more than 13 000 tweets.

The Swedish initiative #FirstGeneration aims to encourage young people to engage in the UN Global Goals for sustainable development. It is for this reason that the initiative particularly highlights educators and inspirers as those with an important role in engaging the young. The #FirstGeneration Global Goals Forum gave recognition to individuals around the world who, in their day-to-day work and in various ways, inspire young people on issues to do with fair and sustainable development. The educators and inspirers who were invited to the Forum were selected in collaboration between Swedish embassies and local partners including UN Women, the UNDP, UNESCO and various universities. Along with their young attachés in Stockholm, these educators and inspirers now form a network to exchange knowledge and ideas for a better world.

[Click here to watch #FirstGeneration Global Goals Forum \(Youtube\)](#)



Article from Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, Ministry of Finance, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Chilean State Visit ends

Published 18 May 2016 Updated 13 June 2016

On the afternoon of 12 May, Chile's President Michelle Bachelet left Sweden following a three-day State Visit. The President was in Sweden at the invitation of HM the King. This was the first State Visit by a Chilean president to Sweden. Several of the Government ministers took part in the programme. The purpose of the visit was to broaden and deepen bilateral relations between Chile and Sweden.

Swedish companies have long had a strong presence in Chile. Bilateral trade has increased over the past 15 years. Cooperation exists in various areas, such as mining, forestry, environment and CSR. Further steps to enhance cooperation were taken during the State Visit. Chile and Sweden have a common view on many foreign policy issues, not least with regard to the rights of smaller countries, UN cooperation, gender equality, marine issues and free trade. Several global challenges were discussed. Representatives of both countries also discussed issues concerning cooperation for social and gender equality.

The State Visit began on Tuesday with the traditional welcoming ceremony at the Inner Courtyard of the Royal Palace. The King and Queen, many members of the Government and other representatives of the Swedish public sector were present to welcome the President. This was followed by a lunch at the Royal Palace which was also attended by Princess Victoria and Prince Daniel.

Talks on increased trade and investment

In the afternoon, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven received the President for talks at Rosenbad. Topics discussed by the President and the Prime Minister included the conditions for increased trade and investment. Within this framework, memorandums of understanding were signed on sustainable mining, forestry, urban development and CSR. Political, economic and cultural cooperation was another area in which memorandums of understanding were signed on welfare and holiday agreements. Issues concerning multilateral cooperation in gender equality, human rights and peacebuilding were also addressed. Minister for Enterprise and Innovation Mikael Damberg, Minister for Rural Affairs Sven-Erik Bucht, Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér and Minister for Finance Magdalena Andersson also took part in the talks.

Following a visit to Olof Palme's grave at Adolf Fredrik's Cemetery, President Bachelet travelled to Fryshuset where she and the King and Queen were met by the managing director of Fryshuset, Johan Oljeqvist. This part of the visit was also attended by Anja Frey, head of Fryshuset in Stockholm, and Camila Salazar Atias, responsible for social projects, as well as Stockholm City Commissioner Emilia Bjuggren.

The day concluded with a state banquet at the Royal Palace.

Wednesday's programme included a Swedish-Chilean Business Forum, a gender equality seminar, lunch at Stockholm City Hall and a meeting with Speaker of the Riksdag Urban Ahlin. President Bachelet delivered a speech in the Riksdag and took part in a ceremony at which a bust of Swedish diplomat Harald Edelstam was unveiled. During the afternoon, the President met part of the Chilean diaspora in Sweden. Afterwards, she took part in a seminar on social dialogue and the Global Deal, together with Prime Minister Stefan Löfven.

Research and innovative companies in Gothenburg

On Thursday morning, the King and Queen and President Bachelet left for Gothenburg, where they were welcomed by the County Governor of Västra Götaland County Lars Bäckström and President of the Gothenburg City Council Lena Malm. Minister for Infrastructure Anna Johansson was also present. The first programme point was a visit to Astra Zeneca, where the President and the King and Queen learned about the work done there on research, development and cooperation with smaller, innovative companies. This was followed by visits to Volvo Torslanda and Lindholmen Science Park. The day concluded with lunch at the County Governor's residence.

In the afternoon, the King and Queen bid farewell to President Bachelet and the Chilean delegation at Landvetter Airport.



Article from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

State Visit from Chile under way

Published 12 May 2016 Updated 12 May 2016

On 10 May, Chile's President Michelle Bachelet began her State Visit to Sweden. The President is visiting Sweden at the invitation of HM the King. The Visit will last from 10 to 12 May and is the first incoming State Visit from Chile to Sweden.

The purpose of the visit is to broaden and deepen bilateral relations between Chile and Sweden. Swedish companies have long had a strong presence in Chile.

The first day of the State Visit began with an official welcoming ceremony at the Inner Courtyard of the Royal Palace, as is tradition. Following an inspection of the guard of honour of the Life Guards, the President, the King and the Queen greeted the Speakers of the Riksdag, the Prime Minister and the ministers present.

Prime Minister Stefan Löfven then received the President at Rosenbad for talks.

Several memorandums of understanding were signed during the visit to Rosenbad.

Following a visit to Olof Palme's grave at Adolf Fredrik's Cemetery, President Bachelet travelled to Fryshuset where she and the King and Queen were met by the managing director of Fryshuset, Johan Oljeqvist. This part of the visit was also attended by Anja Frey, head of Fryshuset in Stockholm, and Camila Salazar Atias, responsible for social projects, as well as Stockholm City Commissioner Emilia Bjuggren.

The day ended with a state banquet at the Royal Palace.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Assignment for the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society to inform young newly arrived immigrants about health and gender equality

Published 21 April 2016 Updated 24 January 2017

The Government has tasked the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society with creating a digital platform containing information in relevant languages about health and gender equality for newly arrived children and young people. The assignment – for which SEK 5 million has been set aside – will be conducted in collaboration with the internet-based youth clinic UMO.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Government action to combat men's violence against women

Published 02 March 2016 Updated 24 January 2017

Men in all social groups and age groups use physical, psychological and sexual violence against women. And it is not decreasing, writes Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér in an opinion piece. It is essential that newly arrived girls and boys have access to a good introduction to Swedish society, with knowledge about our society and values as important elements. This of course includes sex and relationship education.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

National Board of Health and Welfare and Ombudsman for Children in Sweden launch website about social services

Published 16 February 2016 Updated 24 January 2017

On instructions from the Government, the National Board of Health and Welfare and the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden have developed a national website containing information tailored to children and young people about social services and what social services can offer children and young people in need of support and protection.

The Ombudsman for Children in Sweden has been responsible for involving children and young people in the implementation of the assignment. On Tuesday 16 February 2016, Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér attended the first showing of the webbsite.

"I am pleased to launch the new website today. Children can find information on the site about how to get help and support from social services. This is an important platform for vulnerable children," says Ms Regnér.



Government Offices of Sweden

Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Swedish Agency for Health and Care Services Analysis to survey homes for care or residence

Published 12 February 2016 Updated 24 January 2017

The Swedish Agency for Health and Care Services Analysis is to survey and analyse homes for care or residence, as well as foster homes and emergency foster homes providing support from advisers. The Agency is conducting this work from the perspective of child protection and the rights of the child. Particular attention is to be given to the quality and costs of care. This was decided by the Government on 11 February.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Talks with trade unions about security situation in homes for care or residence

Published 08 February 2016 Updated 24 January 2017

On 8 February, Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér met the relevant trade unions. The purpose of the meeting was to talk about the security situation in homes for care or residence and supported accommodation.

"I am pleased that we have a close and open dialogue with the social partners. It is important that we approach this challenge with social services and social care services for children and young people," said Ms Regnér.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Coordination responsibility for vulnerable EU citizens to county administrative boards

Published 01 February 2016 Updated 19 January 2017

On Monday 1 February, the national coordinator for vulnerable EU citizens presented his final report, *Framtid sökes* (Wanted: a future), to Åsa Regnér, the minister responsible for the issue, at a press conference. Martin Valfridsson, whose remit now ends, proposes that county administrative boards be instructed to coordinate this work, with the overall responsibility resting with the Stockholm County Administrative Board.



Government Offices of Sweden

Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

New model to distribute unaccompanied minors fairly between municipalities

Published 28 January 2016 Updated 24 January 2017

Unaccompanied minors are not distributed fairly between municipalities, their reception is unpredictable and the conditions for planning could be improved. The Government has therefore instructed the Swedish Migration Agency to produce a new allocation model for unaccompanied children and young people. The model entered into force on 1 April 2016.



Government Offices of Sweden

Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

National Board of Health and Welfare to analyse reception of unaccompanied refugee children

Published 14 January 2016 Updated 24 January 2017

The Government has tasked the National Board of Health and Welfare with conducting an in-depth analysis of the consequences for social services of the current refugee situation and the increase in the number of unaccompanied minors. The vulnerability of girls, access to interpreters and the skills needs in social services are three areas that are included in the remit.



Article from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani visits Sweden

Published 04 December 2015 Updated 08 December 2015

Prime Minister Stefan Löfven today met Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani. In connection with the meeting, it was announced that negotiations will begin on an agreement concerning migration issues and readmission of those Afghans whose asylum applications in Sweden have been rejected. More than 30 000 Afghans have come to Sweden this year, of whom more than 20 000 are unaccompanied minors.

The Swedish measures in Afghanistan are long-term and have focused on political, diplomatic, police, military and aid-related areas, covering both humanitarian support and development cooperation. Afghanistan is one of the largest recipients of Swedish aid. Sweden has announced an aid package of up to SEK 8.5 billion for the period 2015–2024. A significant part of our aid focuses on improving the situation of women and children.

During the visit, Minister for International Development Cooperation Isabella Lövin and President Ghani signed a cooperation agreement on aid. This is the first time that Sweden has signed an agreement of this kind with Afghanistan. The agreement affirms Sweden's aid commitments and deepens the countries' relations. It means that there will be regular, structured follow-up meetings at political level on aid and development in the country, which will complement the ongoing dialogue. Swedish aid is long-term and contributes to creating jobs, helping more children attend school, strengthening women's rights, fighting corruption and strengthening democratic institutions.

The difficult security situation in Afghanistan was also discussed. Since 2002, close to 10 000 Swedes have helped try to improve the security situation in the provinces that were part of the Swedish military area of responsibility in Northern Afghanistan. Today, the Afghan security forces have assumed responsibility for security throughout the country, which is an important step towards Afghan ownership and leadership. The Government recently presented a bill on an extension of the Swedish training mission in 2016.

President Ghani also held bilateral talks with Minister for Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström. The talks were followed by a lunch hosted by Ms Wallström. Ms Wallström began by thanking Mr Ghani for coming to Stockholm and pointed out that this year marks 75 years of diplomatic relations between Sweden and Afghanistan. Topics discussed during the lunch included foreign, security and defence issues. The agenda also included development policy, economy and social issues, and the topical migration issues.

Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér also took part on behalf of the Government.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Meeting with NGOs

Published 27 November 2015 Updated 19 January 2017

On Friday 27 November, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs held a consultation at official level with NGOs and agencies that work with vulnerable EU citizens in Romania. The Ministry listened to the NGOs' and agencies' problems, ideas, project proposals, topical issues and expertise.

The NGOs' and agencies' networks and coordination in Romania were discussed, among other issues. Some NGOs expressed an interest in taking part in work under the agreement that Sweden and Romania have concluded. Others expressed an interest in taking part in the network of organisations that was established following the conference on 11 September.

The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs provided information about the content of the agreement between Sweden and Romania, feedback from the work with the Romanian-Swedish working group, upcoming meetings in Bucharest and ongoing negotiations with Bulgaria on an agreement similar to the cooperation agreement recently entered into between Romania and Sweden.



Article from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Gender equality part of the solution to challenges in society

Published 11 November 2015 Updated 22 December 2017

“The world’s first feminist government is now implementing a policy to increase gender equality”, the Prime Minister established in the Statement of Government Policy.

Sweden has a feminist government. We place gender equality at the heart of both national and international work. Economic policy will be used to increase economic equality and help increase gender equality in society. The overall objective of the Government’s gender equality policy is equal power for women and men to shape society and their own lives. This is ultimately a question of democracy and social justice. At the same time, gender equality is part of the solution to creating jobs and growth. It contributes to economic development by making use of both women’s and men’s potential.

Gender equality policy aims to provide girls and boys, women and men with conditions to develop without being held back by structures, prejudices or stereotypical conceptions. Here it is important to note that also other identities, factors and power structures affect living conditions and circumstances for different groups of women and men.

Gender equality perspective from the start

A feminist government carries out a gender equality analysis early in the decision-making process, before the decisions are taken, to ensure that the gender equality perspective is present from the outset as a natural part of the solution to the problem. This strategy – gender mainstreaming – contributes not only to gender equality, but also to more effective measures.

One of many examples of inequality in Sweden is that women often take greater responsibility for care of relatives and children. Many women reduce their working hours to do so. According to Statistics Sweden's labour force survey, 170 000 people work part time to take care of children and/or an adult relative. The majority of these, 88 per cent, are women, who pay a high price for their efforts in the form of lower incomes and future pensions. To promote a more even distribution of unpaid household and care work, the Government has submitted a proposal to the Riksdag to introduce a third reserved month of parental insurance for each parent. Currently, two months of the parental insurance are earmarked for each parent, and cannot be transferred to the other parent. The Government wants to see a more gender-equal division of parental benefits days, and a third earmarked month will be introduced to promote gender-equal parenting. Gender-equal parenting is important in terms of a child's right to both parents, but it also contributes to increased gender equality in the labour market.

The Government has also announced funding for increased staffing levels in elderly care and targeted resources to stimulate access to childcare during unsocial working hours.

Internal work at the Government Offices increases pressure for gender equality perspective

The Minister for Gender Equality has convened a special ministerial group to develop gender equality policy and all ministers and state secretaries have taken part in gender equality training. This work is reflected in the Budget Bill, where the Government, as a first step and on the basis of the gender equality policy objectives, is now presenting concrete objectives for gender equality in a number of key policy areas and measurement criteria to follow up the work.

So far, it has been mainly women pursuing gender equality efforts. In recent years, however, there has been a growing awareness, both globally and in Sweden, of the role of men and boys in gender equality work. Participation by men and boys is an important part of the Government's strategic gender equality efforts, for instance through our commitment to the UN campaign HeForShe.

Gender equality is not just a question of social justice; it also helps establish growth and development.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

A feminist government ensures that decisions increase gender equality

Published 11 November 2015 Updated 11 November 2015

Below are a selection of the reforms and proposals that will contribute to increased gender equality presented in the Budget Bill for 2016 and the Spring Fiscal Policy Bill for 2015.

Boards of listed companies – at least 40 per cent representation for each sex

The Government aims for the boards of listed companies to have at least 40 per cent representation for each sex by the end of 2016. If this aim is not achieved, the Government will propose legislation on quotas.

Swedish Public Employment Service activities to promote gender equality

One clear expression of the lack of gender equality is the persistently large income disparities between men and women. One reason for this is gender segregation in the labour market. The education and labour market authorities have an important task in promoting work in professions outside traditional gender roles. The Swedish Public Employment Service has therefore been assigned the task of tailoring its activities to promote gender equality and combat gender divisions in the labour market.

Third reserved month of parental insurance for each parent

The Government has submitted a proposal to the Riksdag on the introduction of a third reserved month of parental insurance for each parent. Currently, two months of parental insurance are earmarked for each parent, and cannot be used by the other parent. The Government wants parental benefit days to be shared in a more gender-equal way.

Parental insurance better tailored to modern family life

The Government intends to appoint an inquiry to review the parental insurance system as a whole. The Government wants a parental insurance system that contributes to gender-equal parenting and good conditions for all children to grow up in. The parental insurance system must be better tailored to the modern labour market and its requirements, and to modern family life. Parental insurance must also be designed to be effective regardless of the form a family takes, and the Government therefore wants the upcoming review to investigate the possibilities to make it easier for non-nuclear families to use parental insurance.

Higher basic level of parental benefit

Single parents, particularly women, often have weaker finances than parents who live together. The Government has therefore raised the national maintenance support that is paid to single parents who do not receive child support from the other parent. The Government also proposes to raise the basic level of parental benefit, which would mean a higher amount of parental benefit for people on very low or no incomes.

Expertise in elderly care and care for people with impairments

The Government is investing in increased staffing in elderly care, and expertise in care of the elderly and of people with impairments. A gender equality perspective is to be integrated into these initiatives, not least in needs assessments, where particular attention is to be paid to differences between women and men. When it comes to resources and interventions, everyone – regardless of sex or gender identity – must be treated equally, based on their needs.

Basic income tax allowance for pensioners leads to tax reduction

The increased basic income tax allowance for pensioners will lead to a tax reduction for both women and men. More women than men have low pensions and, on average, women also live longer than men. The proposal will therefore benefit women more than men and will consequently help reduce economic differences between men and women.

Women's health

The Government is prioritising initiatives for women's health. In the 2015 Spring Fiscal Policy Bill, the Government announced investments in maternity care and women's health. The Government is now proposing further reinforcement in this area through a targeted primary care initiative on women's health. The Government also proposes that mammography screening be offered regularly and free of charge to women aged between 40 and 74 to increase coverage, particularly among socioeconomically disadvantaged groups. To safeguard young women's right to their own sexuality without unwanted pregnancies, the Government also proposes that contraception that comes under the pharmaceutical reimbursement system be offered free of charge to people under the age of 21.

Funding for non-profit women's and girls' refuges

Preventing and combating men's violence against women is a top priority for this Government. The Spring Fiscal Policy Bill therefore announced funding for non-profit women's and girls' refuges. The initiative, which has begun in 2015, will receive SEK 100 million annually from 2016.

Reforms in the Budget Bill for 2016 that contribute to greater gender equality

SEK millions, public finance impact

	2016	2017	2018	2019	Perm
Training initiative in care services	200				
Increased basic level of parental benefit	261	283	286	270	270
Women's health	130	130	130	130	

Free mammograms	100	207	207	207	207
Free contraception	3	27	27	27	27
Raised child maintenance element of national standard	181	181	181	181	181

Reforms in the Spring Fiscal Policy Bill for 2015 that contribute to greater gender equality

SEK millions, public finance impact

	2016	2017	2018	2019	Perm
Increased staffing levels in elderly care	2000	2000	2000		
Maternity care and women's health	400	400	400	400	
Increased support to women's refuges	100	100	100	100	
Higher maintenance support	624	629	625	625	625

Impact of the Government's reforms on individual incomes

- Together, the tax and transfer changes proposed in the Budget Bill for 2016 will help to strengthen economic equality.
- The increase in the child element of income support in this bill will

increase income more for women than for men, as it is more common for women to be single parents.

- The increase in the basic level of parental benefit is another reform that mainly benefits women, as women claim more days of benefit at this level.
 - The increased basic income tax allowance for pensioners leads to a tax reduction for both women and men. More women than men have low pensions and, on average, women also live longer than men. The proposal will therefore benefit women more than men and will consequently help reduce economic differences between men and women.
 - Among the budget consolidation measures, the gradual reduction of the earned income tax credit and no upward adjustment of the lower threshold for levying state income tax have a greater impact on men's incomes than on women's. This is because more men have an income above the threshold for state income tax and the threshold where the gradual reduction of the earned income tax credit begins. More men than women are therefore affected by the proposals, and on average, the men who are affected will also have a higher tax increase.
 - The proposed restrictions of tax-subsidised deductions for various kinds of work carried out in the home, e.g. repairs, maintenance and remodelling, and household services, will reduce the disposable incomes of both women and men. On average, men claim deductions for larger amounts, which means that the impact on men will be greater.
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Article from Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Efforts for gender equality are prioritised - excerpt from the Budget Statement

Published 11 November 2015 Updated 11 November 2015

Here you can read about the Government's gender equality policy – excerpt from the Budget Statement.

Economic policy is crucial for women's living conditions. How it is shaped, how resources are distributed and what is considered important and is prioritised has a major effect on women's lives and conditions. Sweden's government is a feminist government. The overall objective of the Government's gender equality policy is equal power for women and men to shape society and their own lives. Gender equality is ultimately a question of justice and democracy. At the same time, gender equality is also important for jobs and growth. To safeguard jobs, all skills must be put to good use on the labour market and women's employment rate and working hours must increase. The equal worth of all people is one of the fundamental principles of the Government's policy.

A feminist government is not content to merely analyse the consequences of its political decisions – it carries out the analysis before decisions are taken, to ensure that decisions are taken with the gender equality perspective in mind. This also leads to more effective actions. In view of this fact, the Government has begun work on gender-responsive budgeting (see the box entitled 'Gender-responsive budgeting' for more details). Economic policy is to be used to increase economic equality and help increase gender equality in society.

One clear expression of the lack of gender equality in society is the persistently large income disparities between women and men. In 2014, women's incomes were more than 13 per cent lower than men's incomes, if

all women and men had worked full-time. However, a much larger proportion of women than men work part-time, which means that the difference in actual earned incomes between women and men is approximately 25 per cent.

Women's work is valued less than men's work. Sectors dominated by women often have lower income levels. Income disparities between women and men can also be explained by gender segregation on the labour market and the fact that the equalising effect of the welfare systems has declined. The use of parental benefit days is currently unevenly distributed. The objective is completely gender-equal sharing of parental benefit days. This is important for tackling women's less favourable working conditions and lower incomes. The education and labour market authorities also have an important task in promoting work in professions outside traditional gender roles. The Swedish Public Employment Service has therefore been assigned the task of tailoring its activities to promote gender equality and combat gender divisions in the labour market.

It is also important to eliminate unjustified gender pay differentials. Reintroducing the requirement of annual pay surveys is an urgently needed action. Social partners' responsibility for wage formation is a cornerstone of the Swedish model. It is important that wage formation leads to closing the gap between women's and men's incomes.

Another expression of inequality in working life is that women are under-represented at the very top of the business world. Although the predominance of men on the boards of listed companies has dropped since the early 2000s, women only made up 29 per cent of board members in these companies in June 2015. The Government's objective is that the proportion of women on the boards of listed companies should be at least 40 per cent by 2016. If this aim is not achieved, the Government will propose legislation on quotas.

A more even distribution of unpaid housework and care work is crucial for achieving the objective of economic equality. Women often taken greater responsibility for care of relatives and children. Many women reduce their working hours to do so. According to Statistics Sweden's labour force survey, 170 000 people, mostly women, work part-time to take care of children and/or an adult relative. To achieve a more even distribution of parental benefit days, the Government has submitted a proposal to the Riksdag to introduce a third reserved month of parental insurance for each parent. Currently, two months of the parental insurance are earmarked for

each parent, and cannot be transferred to the other parent. The Government wants to see a more gender-equal division of parental benefits days, and a third earmarked month will be proposed to promote gender-equal parenting. Gender-equal parenting is important in terms of a child's right to both parents, but it also contributes to increased gender equality in the labour market. In addition, the Government wants to review the parental insurance system as a whole. The Government has also announced funding for increased staffing levels in elderly care and targeted resources to stimulate access to childcare during unsocial working hours.

Single parents, particularly women, often have weaker finances than parents who live together. The Government has therefore raised the national maintenance support that is paid to single parents who do not receive child support from the other parent. The Government also proposes to raise the basic level of parental benefit, which would mean a higher amount of parental benefit for people on very low or no incomes. The Government has also submitted proposals to abolish the municipal child-raising allowance, as it tends to counteract economic equality between women and men. The child-raising allowance is a cash payment that municipalities can give to parents with children aged 1–3 years, if the parent stays at home with the child instead of the child going to preschool. More than 90 per cent of the parents who receive the child-raising allowance are women.

Men's violence against women is one of the ultimate expressions of inequality between women and men. This violence must stop. Preventing and combating violence and other abuse against women is a top priority for this Government. As announced in the Spring Fiscal Policy Bill, the Government therefore proposes that funds be allocated to non-profit women's and girls' refuges.

In the area of health and medical care, unacceptable differences between women and men persist. Illnesses that affect women more than men tend to be less prioritised in the health care system. In light of this, the Government proposes several investment initiatives in women's health. The Government is proposing further reinforcement in this area through a targeted primary care initiative for women's health, and free mammography screening. To safeguard young women's right to their own sexuality without unwanted pregnancies, the Government also proposes that contraception that comes under the pharmaceutical reimbursement system be offered free of charge to people under the age of 21 (see Section 1.6).

The Government intends to conduct a survey of the work environment and

working conditions in the household services sector, in response to reports of shortcomings in the work environment in this sector.

Gender-responsive budgeting

Sweden has a feminist government that works to achieve gender equality between women and men at all levels of society. The budget process and the Budget Bill are of key importance in realising the Government's policy and it is therefore important that budget work is conducted in a way that includes the effects and consequences for gender equality when taking decisions on the direction and distribution of resources.

Gender-responsive budgeting means that choices of priorities, direction and allocation of resources should as far as possible promote gender equality and make a tangible difference in people's daily lives in the short or long term. It is a matter of justice, but it is also an important prerequisite for economic growth, the development of the labour market and welfare.

To produce a central government budget that contributes to gender equality, this perspective must be included at the earliest possible stage, and in all areas of the budget process.

Since the 1990s, gender mainstreaming has been the central policy strategy for achieving a gender-equal society. This means that a gender perspective is to be included in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making. Gender-responsive budgeting is the application of the principle of gender mainstreaming in the budget process. This means evaluating budget policy gender equality effects, integrating the gender equality perspective at all levels of the budget process, and redistributing revenue and expenditure to promote gender equality. There can be a variety of solutions to the challenges and problems facing society. Gender-responsive budgeting makes gender equality an active part in resolving problems, and, if necessary, investigating alternative solutions, so as to ultimately choose the alternative that best contributes to equality between women and men.

Development work is under way at the Government Offices to strengthen gender-responsive budgeting efforts. In spring 2015, the focus was on methods development and implementation of gender analyses, which formed part of the decision-making data for the reforms presented in the Budget Bill. The Government has also set new goals on how gender equality is to progress in key areas, and indicators to follow up this progress. Work is

progressing on developing guidelines for how gender analyses should be carried out and included so as to better integrate gender-responsive budgeting in the ordinary budget process.

With the aim of maintaining serious, knowledge-based development work, the Government is allocating resources specifically to evaluating and developing efforts on gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive budgeting from 2016. The conclusions and analyses that emerge in the evaluations will be fed back into and put to use in the work being conducted in the Government Offices and government agencies. The aim is for efforts now being made to develop work on gender mainstreaming to lead to clear progress on gender equality.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Supported accommodation – a new form of placement for children and young people

Published 05 November 2015 Updated 24 January 2017

The Government has presented the Government Bill 'Supported accommodation – a new form of placement for children and young people' (Govt Bill 2015/16:43) to the Riksdag. In the Bill, the Government proposes a new form of placement for children and young people aged 16–20 under the Social Services Act – supported accommodation.

The Government wants to develop foster home care. In the Bill, the Government therefore clarifies the National Board of Health and Welfare's responsibility for its support and development. Developing foster home care should involve long-term, continuous and cohesive measures. Foster home care must maintain high standards and be sufficiently available. The experiences of foster parents and children placed in foster homes are important for developing this care.

The legislative amendments entered into force on 1 January 2016.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Pernilla Baralt visited Sofia

Published 03 November 2015 Updated 20 January 2017

Between 31 October and 3 November, State Secretary Pernilla Baralt visited Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, to discuss a draft of a bilateral cooperation agreement on social issues.

In addition to the bilateral talks, Ms Baralt carried out a number of study visits and a field visit to meet relevant authorities and non-governmental organisations.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

The National Board of Health and Welfare coordinates information on foster homes for children

Published 29 October 2015 Updated 24 January 2017

On 29 October, the Government tasked the National Board of Health and Welfare with initiating and nationally coordinating initiatives to raise awareness of foster homes, emergency foster homes and legal representatives for unaccompanied minors and specially appointed custodians.

The idea is to highlight the need for accommodation and increase knowledge about what the assignment involves in order to secure access to foster homes.



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



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Call function supports municipalities in their work with the refugee situation

Published 22 October 2015 Updated 24 January 2017

On 22 October, the Government tasked the National Board of Health and Welfare with setting up a call function for the purpose of responding to questions from and providing support for the municipal social services in connection with the current refugee situation. The call function will be based on relevant legislation and available knowledge within the Board's areas of responsibility.



Government Offices of Sweden

Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

How we are developing reception of unaccompanied minors and young people

Published 12 October 2015 Updated 23 January 2017

On 12 October, the Government arranged the national action 'Sweden together'. Participants were invited to around ten seminars as part of the event. One of the themes was 'How we are developing reception of unaccompanied minors and young people'.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Interest in de-institutionalisation of orphanages

Published 09 October 2015 Updated 19 January 2017

Romania and Sweden have appointed a working group comprising officials from both countries. The group met for the first time in Stockholm on 8–9 October. The group consisted of staff from Romania's Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly, the Ministry of European Funds and the Embassy of Romania.

The visit included presentations, workshops, study visits and discussions on the cooperation agreement entered into between Sweden and Romania.

Romania has good prospects, knowledge and capacity to apply for EU funds to finance projects covered by the agreement.

The Romanian working group wants to gain knowledge about Swedish experiences of de-institutionalisation of orphanages and homes for people with impairments. The group visited the City Mission's operations for vulnerable and homeless EU citizens and daytime activities for people with impairments.

The next meeting of the working group will be in Bucharest in mid-December.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice

Government presented measures in response to refugee situation

Published 08 October 2015 Updated 08 October 2015

In early October 2015 the Government presented a number of measures in response to the refugee situation.

The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency is to coordinate at national level the management of the refugee situation by responsible actors

Stronger coordination is required to enable the actors taking part in dealing with the refugee situation – including central government agencies, municipalities, county councils, non-governmental organisations, faith communities and private actors – to work effectively together. The Government has therefore tasked the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency with coordinating the management of the current refugee situation at national level. The Agency is to produce national situation reports, with information on areas in need of measures that have not yet been adequately taken. The Agency is also to identify and report on other circumstances that the Government should know about in order to assess the Government's need to take action.

The Government is responsible for the overall coordination, priorities and direction of society's emergency preparedness. The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency's mandate will not change this. The mandate expires after 31 December 2015.

Financial support granted to the Swedish Red Cross for voluntary efforts to help refugees

The Government will pay out SEK 10 million in support without a requisition to the Swedish Red Cross to strengthen the organisation's role and civil society's management of the refugee crisis. The funds are to be used to perform, organise and coordinate humanitarian aid activities for refugees in Sweden. The funds are also aimed in particular at supporting and making use of the voluntary engagement in the refugee crisis, and the Swedish Red Cross is to collaborate with other organisations in carrying this out.

How these funds have been used will be presented to the Government Offices by 2 May 2016.

Health and Social Care Inspectorate to strengthen capacity in permit application processing activities

The sharp rise in the number of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in Sweden is a major contributing factor to the increasing number of children and young people needing to be placed outside the home. Forecasts from the Swedish Migration Agency indicate that the number of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum will not decline. The Government has therefore tasked the Health and Social Care Inspectorate with strengthening capacity in its activities to ensure that the processing of permits for homes for care or residence takes place as quickly and effectively as possible.

In a referral to the Council on Legislation, the Government will also soon propose the introduction of an additional form of placement known as supported accommodation. Supported accommodation is intended for children and young people between the ages of 16 and 20, and is to be combined with individually adapted support for each person. The intention is that supported accommodation will also require a permit from the Inspectorate.

It should be possible for the new provisions to enter into force in the first quarter of 2016.

Government provides extra funding to the World Food Programme in Syria

The World Food Programme (WFP) has reported major and acute shortfalls in funding to ensure access to food supplies for refugees in Syria and neighbouring countries. Sweden is one of WFP's largest donors. The Government now intends to grant an additional SEK 25 million to WFP's

Syria response.

In addition to this extra funding to WFP, the Government also intends to grant an extra SEK 25 million to the Central Emergency Response Fund, which can rapidly respond to the increasing needs around the world. The Fund is a particularly effective instrument for funding ‘forgotten’ or chronically underfinanced humanitarian crises.

National Agency for Public Procurement to draw up guidance document on the current refugee situation

According to the Swedish Migration Agency, it has not been possible to complete procurements of asylum accommodation as a result of ongoing court proceedings, despite the fact that there are a large number of empty accommodation places available. The Government notes that from human and socio-economic perspectives, there is a need to offer guidance to central government and municipal agencies, and other relevant actors, on the opportunities procurement legislation provides to quickly meet asylum accommodation needs.

The National Agency for Public Procurement has therefore been tasked with providing information and guidance on legislative provisions that can be brought up in procurements related to asylum seekers. The Agency is to supplement and give tangible form to the European Commission’s communication on public procurement rules in connection with the current refugee crisis that was adopted on 9 September 2015. The Commission states that contracting authorities must consider all possibilities to substantially reduce the timeframes and assess on a case-by-case basis which procedure is to be used in order to find a solution to the crisis.

The report is to be submitted to the Government Offices no later than 1 November 2015.



Government Offices of Sweden

Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

The National Board of Institutional Care to set up 1000 places

Published 08 October 2015 Updated 24 January 2017

On 8 October, the Government tasked the National Board of Institutional Care with looking into the possibility of setting up and providing at least 1000 places in supported accommodation and homes for care or residence for children and young people aged 16 to 20.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Billion kronor investment in social services will strengthen social care services for children and young people

Published 20 September 2015 Updated 23 January 2017

In the Budget Bill for 2016, the Government proposed that SEK 250 million should be allocated annually during 2016–2019 to strengthen and develop these activities. The funds will be devoted primarily to increased staffing, as well as to initiatives to promote skills and quality.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Romanian state secretary participated in conference

Published 11 September 2015 Updated 19 January 2017

Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér and the Government's National Coordinator Martin Valfridsson hosted a conference on Friday 11 September. Conference participants included Romanian Secretary of State Ciprian Necula.

The aim of the conference was to promote cooperation between Swedish values-based organisations working with vulnerable EU citizens in Bulgaria and Romania. Mr Necula, State Secretary at the Romanian Ministry of European Funds, participated in a press conference held in connection with the conference.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Working together to find effective ways to manage the situation

Published 09 September 2015 Updated 20 January 2017

"In recent years we have seen an increase in the number of EU citizens staying in Sweden temporarily, many of whom come from Romania and Bulgaria. These people are in a vulnerable situation. We need to find effective ways to manage this situation, and cooperation between our countries is of course very important," said Ms Regnér when meeting her Bulgarian counterpart Mr Kalafin on 9 September.

Ms Regnér met Mr Kalafin at the informal meeting of the EPSCO Council in July and invited him to talks on vulnerable EU citizens.

At this meeting on 9 September, Ms Regnér and Mr Kalfin discussed subjects of common interest, including vulnerable EU citizens. A desire for increased cooperation was expressed during the talks.



Article from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Gender equality in health

Published 21 July 2015 Updated 21 July 2015

Avoidable health inequalities will be eliminated in a generation. The long-term goal is to eliminate the disparities between women's and men's sick leave, while reducing sick leave rates in general to a low and stable level. Men's violence against women must stop.

Current challenge

Sick leave

Sick leave in Sweden, as in many other countries, exhibits a considerable bias in its gender distribution. Women are off sick to a far greater extent than men; two out of three people on sick leave are women. This is a historic pattern that has persisted over time.

Psychiatric diagnoses are now the most common cause of sick leave and are increasing among both women and men; however, the increase is greater among women.

Mental ill health

The risk of a young woman attempting to take her own life is three times as high as the risk of a young man doing so. Self-reported mental and somatic problems are increasing, particularly among girls aged 13 to 15. In addition, the difference between girls' and boys' perceived health increases with age.

Men's violence against women

Many women are still subjected to abuse. In 2014, a total of 28 200 cases of

abuse of women were reported to the police. This is an increase of 5 per cent compared with 2013. The number of reported rapes increased by 13 per cent between 2013 and 2014, to 6 620 reported offences. Around 17 women are killed each year by a man they have or have had a close relationship with.

HeForShe goals

Avoidable health inequalities will be eliminated in a generation. The long-term goal is to eliminate the disparities between women's and men's sick leave, while reducing sick leave rates in general to a low and stable level. Men's violence against women must stop.

HeForShe initiatives

- The Government has appointed a national commission for health equity. Consistent attention will be given to gender health disparities in this work.
- To respond to women's higher sick leave rates, all relevant stakeholders in society need to be mobilised. This includes public authorities, employers, and health and medical care, as well as measures for women's work environment.
- The Government is considering a future long-term initiative to strengthen preventive work in the area of mental health and improve early action for young people suffering from mental health problems.
- The Government is investing in sport and expects the sports movement, at all levels, to redouble its efforts to achieve gender equality in sports to give those who are actively involved the same opportunities to realise their interest in participating, regardless of gender.
- A national strategy will be drawn up for work on men's violence against women. The Government will strengthen its support to women's shelters that support and protect women subjected to violence. The rape legislation will be reviewed so that more sexual offences are cleared up. Sentences for aggravated sexual offences will be made tougher. More will be done to promote increased participation by men in these efforts to promote change. The Government has extended support to a national telephone line which people, primarily men, who risk committing sexual assaults can call for advice and assistance in obtaining treatment. Work will be stepped up on changing gender stereotypes surrounding masculinity, violence and destructive masculine behaviour.



Article from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Convention on the Rights of the Child about to become Swedish law

Published 19 February 2015 Updated 10 October 2017

The Swedish Government has decided to submit a proposal in July 2017 to the Council on Legislation to incorporate the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) into Swedish law. The Government considers that the CRC's strong position must be made clearer and that a child rights-based approach must have a major impact on how the law is applied. Preparation of the proposal is now under way.

It is proposed that the act enter into force on 1 January 2020. This will give law enforcement authorities time to prepare for the introduction of the new act.

"Another important step is now being taken to highlight the importance of the CRC in Swedish law and clarify its strong status. With the CRC as Swedish law, officials and decision-makers will have to take a different approach to the CRC than at present. It will be more clearly required that legal practitioners must base any decisions concerning children on the rights contained in the Convention," says Sweden's Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér.

Incorporation of the CRC will gather the human rights that concern children in one act, contributing to a holistic view and making it clear that the CRC's

articles must be interpreted in relation to one another.

Colloboration with child rights organisations on stronger rights for children

The Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva has reviewed Sweden's compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. One of the Committee's recommendations involves strengthening the legal status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs has initiated a dialogue with a number of child rights organisations on the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. It is proposed that the act enter into force on 1 January 2020.

Dialogue between the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Government

The dialogue between the Swedish Government and the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva was conducted in January 2015. The Committee on the Rights of the Child stated that while Sweden in many ways is a leader on child rights, there are also areas in which it needs to strengthen child rights. In early February the Committee on the Rights of the Child presented its recommendations on how Sweden can continue its efforts to strengthen child rights. For the Government, these recommendations are part of the work to realise the vision of Sweden as one of the very best countries to grow up in.



Article

Coordination concerning socially vulnerable EEA citizens staying in Sweden

Published 03 February 2015 Updated 02 March 2015

Sweden wants to coordinate work throughout the country concerning vulnerable EEA citizens staying temporarily in Sweden. On 29 January, Martin Valfridsson was appointed national coordinator for this work.

Martin Valfridsson's remit is to support work being conducted by government agencies, municipalities, county councils and organisations that come into contact with vulnerable EEA citizens staying temporarily in Sweden, i.e. no longer than 3 months, and who do not have the right of residence.

The aim is to support these actors in their efforts to create long-term sustainable conditions for cooperation. Better cooperation means that the temporary support provided to these people can be designed appropriately.

Need for coordination between actors

Municipal support to these people varies. Some municipalities put great focus on outreach activities, while others give funding to values-based organisations so that they are able to provide support to these people. There are also those who, in cooperation with values-based organisations, have started shelters or provide emergency funds for tickets to return home. Civil society shows a strong commitment to support these people.

There is a great need to promote efficient forms of cooperation, exchanges

of experience and spread good examples of actions among municipalities, county councils, government agencies and organisations that, in their respective areas of responsibility, come into contact with these socially and economically vulnerable EEA citizens who are staying in Sweden temporarily. Better cooperation means that the support can be designed appropriately. The national coordinator is to present his report to the Government Offices by 1 February 2016.



Opinion piece from Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

“New Swedish ambassador to combat trafficking in human beings”

Published 04 May 2016 Updated 09 May 2016

Opinion article, Dagens Nyheter (DN Debatt), 4 May 2016 Sweden is intensifying its efforts to combat the exploitation of women, children and poor people in the world. As the world’s first feminist government, we are creating a new position for an ambassador to combat trafficking in human beings. The position may serve as an important instrument in international cooperation, write Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Regnér and Minister for Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström.

Trafficking in human beings is one of the most serious forms of organised crime and a modern form of slavery. It is a violation of human rights and has a very strong gender equality and child rights perspective. This is why, as the world's first feminist government, we are now creating a new position for an ambassador to combat trafficking in human beings.

It is estimated that more than two million people are trafficked into slavery each year. Almost four fifths of the victims – mostly women and underage girls – are sold into the sex industry. Human trafficking does not affect individuals alone; it impacts the very structure of a democratic society by stripping individuals of their integrity and human dignity. It is a consequence of poverty and corruption, but also of a lack of gender equality. In many parts of the world, women and children are in an extremely vulnerable situation.

The offence of trafficking in human beings is a supply chain offence, consisting of many different stages, including the recruitment and transportation of victims, prostitution, trafficking in human organs or exploitation on the labour market. This criminal activity most often crosses national borders and involves serious violations of human rights.

The Government wants Sweden to be a strong voice in the world for gender equality and human rights. Women and men must have the same power to shape society and their own lives; children's rights must be strengthened. This means that the particular vulnerability of women and girls to human trafficking must be combated with the best possible measures. Sweden's efforts must contribute to achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda on gender equality and children's rights. The transnational nature of the crime also demands effective international cooperation and increased coordination alongside national measures.

This is why the Government is creating a new position as Sweden's ambassador to combat trafficking in human beings. It will send an important political signal to the international community that Sweden is intensifying its efforts to combat human trafficking and the exploitation of women and children and of poor and desperate people throughout the world. Ongoing wars and conflicts, and the ensuing migration, have further aggravated the situation for many women and girls at risk of being exploited and abused.

The ambassador will strengthen Sweden's international profile as a leading human rights defender. At the same time, the position may serve as an important instrument for concrete measures to improve the effectiveness of international efforts and cooperation. Through the ambassador's work, Sweden will also help to ensure that particular attention is paid to the gender equality perspective in international efforts to combat trafficking in human beings. Sweden has much to contribute, and as a nation it can serve as a good example through the Swedish Sexual Purchases Act.

The ambassador will facilitate dialogue between various governments, national agencies and international organisations on issues focusing on the prevention of and protection against trafficking in human beings, and on the prosecution of perpetrators. The position will contribute to increased knowledge and quality in the work of relevant Swedish government agencies.

Sweden's ambassador to combat trafficking in human beings will work to:

- identify and encourage the interest of other countries in cooperating to combat trafficking in human beings, possibly through concluding bilateral agreements with Sweden, focusing on combating human trafficking and other serious crime, and actively contributing to this work;
- help share Swedish experiences of discovering and prosecuting the perpetrators of human trafficking, and protecting and supporting its victims internationally;
- advance and strengthen the gender perspective in international efforts to combat trafficking in human beings by influencing other countries to adopt legislation that criminalises the demand for sexual services, similar to Swedish legislation;
- ensure that abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children come to an end;
- identify success factors and positive experiences in efforts to combat trafficking in human beings, and make them known both internationally and among relevant Swedish government agencies;
- represent Sweden at various international events focused on issues related to trafficking in human beings;
- contribute, through international advocacy work, to a more uniform interpretation of the Palermo Protocol's definition of trafficking in human beings in the countries that have acceded to the Protocol to increase, in the long run, the chances of prosecuting involved perpetrators;
- create/resume an international network of actors (international NGOs, religious leaders, companies, professional associations, media and other opinion-makers) who through their actions can contribute to both combating human trafficking and its social and economic root causes;
- generate interest in, spread knowledge about and increase expertise on trafficking in human beings among employees at Swedish missions abroad and other Swedish actors stationed abroad, as well as at Swedish companies and organisations that have representatives who work abroad;
- conduct a dialogue at home with the Swedish government agencies and NGOs that work on human trafficking issues;
- report to the Government on the progress of international efforts to combat

trafficking in human beings, and contribute to Sweden's periodic reports to international convention committees or to other international reviews of Sweden's human rights commitments;

- strengthen the image of Sweden as a driving force in efforts to combat human trafficking and its causes, through contacts with other governments and through identifying future partners; and
- consult and cooperate with specialised structures in the UN, the EU, the Council of Europe, the Council of the Baltic Sea States and other relevant intergovernmental organisations in their work to combat human trafficking, and actively push to coordinate their action.

International cooperation on these issues involves a number of actors. At global level, the UN has a coordinating role concerning the efforts of relevant UN organisations. At EU level, there is an Anti-Trafficking Coordinator. INTERPOL and Europol are also dealing with the issue.

The Government and relevant government agencies are working constantly to combat human trafficking. Sweden is associated with human rights and democracy. Human rights are women's rights. Trafficking in human beings must be stopped.

Åsa Regnér

Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality

Margot Wallström

Minister for Foreign Affairs



Government Offices of Sweden

Opinion piece from Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

“We must teach more countries about our Sexual Purchases Act”

Published 23 April 2016 Updated 29 April 2016

Opinion article, Expressen, 23 April 2016 France is the fourth European country to criminalise sexual purchases. We hope that more countries will take decisions in this direction, writes Sweden’s Minister for Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström and Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Regnér.

The French National Assembly recently voted to criminalise sexual purchases in accordance with the Swedish model. With this new law, the French government also wants to combat trafficking in human beings and trafficking networks – the modern slave trade.

France's position is a major success for all of us who are fighting for women's rights and the equal value of all people. It goes without saying that it should never be possible to buy another person or conduct trade in people's bodies. Prostitution is the exploitation of people and consolidates a sense of social superiority and inferiority that is harmful to individuals and to society as a whole. Everyone who is exploited is a victim, regardless of their gender, but we know that it is mainly women and girls who are exploited in prostitution and that it is often men who purchase sexual services.

Taking a stand for those who are exploited in prostitution and at the same time criminalising those who buy sex is the only right thing for a civilised society to do. People selling sex are often in a vulnerable situation and there must be no barriers to them seeking support to change their situation. This is why it is so important that selling sex is not a criminal act.

Sweden was the first country in the world to introduce a ban on purchasing sexual services. We are proud of this. In January 1999, it became a criminal offence to buy sexual services but not to sell them. France has become the fourth country, after Sweden, Norway and Iceland, to criminalise sexual purchases. We now hope that more countries will take decisions in this direction.

It is unworthy of a gender-equal society that men claim the right to have temporary sexual liaisons with women in exchange for payment, which is taking on increasingly organised forms in international criminal networks, where women's bodies are regarded as commodities.

When Sweden introduced the law against sexual purchases, it was thought that it could have a deterrent effect on potential sex buyers and reduce the interest from various groups or individuals abroad in establishing a more organised prostitution business in Sweden. This has proved to be true. Sweden is not as attractive a 'market'.

Support for the Sexual Purchases Act has remained constantly high in population studies going back several surveys. In the latest survey from 2014, 72 per cent took a positive view of the act (85 per cent among women and 60 per cent among men).

It is clear that the ban on purchasing sexual services has had a normative effect on potential buyers and has thus influenced the scope of prostitution in Sweden.

The Government has commissioned an inquiry into whether the ban on purchasing sexual services should also apply to Swedish citizens abroad. The inquiry has been tasked with investigating whether there is a need for measures aimed at ensuring greater protection in criminal law against trafficking in human beings, the purchase of sexual services and the purchase of sexual acts from children. The inquiry has received supplementary terms of reference to also look into the exploitation of vulnerable people for forced labour and begging, and it will present its report in June 2016.

The Government is now pushing for other countries to follow suit on the issue of criminalising sexual purchases, on the basis of both Article 6 (on prostitution and trade in women) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the EU Directive against trafficking in human beings. We are therefore pleased that France has now

taken this step. As Minister for Gender Equality and Minister for Foreign Affairs, we will prioritise this issue this year so that more girls and women can get the legislation on their side, against exploitation and oppression based on gender.

Sweden's feminist government feels a great responsibility to keep knowledge about the Swedish Sexual Purchases Act alive, both nationally and internationally.

Åsa Regnér
Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality

Margot Wallström
Minister for Foreign Affairs



Opinion piece from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Challenging Cyber Harassment for Women and Girls Worldwide

Published 20 April 2016 Updated 20 April 2016

Blog text in the Huffington Post, 8 March 2016 Gender equality issues are a high priority for Sweden's feminist government. An important aspect in this context is women's right to internet safety, writes Åsa Regnér, Sweden's Minister for Gender Equality.

Gender equality issues are a high priority for Sweden's feminist government. An important aspect in this context is women's right to internet safety.

Cyber harassment takes different forms based on gender. Girls are often exposed using photos with sexual undertones and disparaging remarks about their sexual habits. For women it often involves disparaging remarks or offensive name-calling, online and via text message, telephone calls or face-to-face meetings.

Men often experience harassment in which they are presented as criminal, whereas boys are often subjected to threats of violence. Another gender difference is that women are much more likely to be threatened or harassed by a partner or a former partner.

Changing norms

Developing early prevention measures is a high priority for the Swedish Government. Part of this involves changing norms linking masculinity and violence. Being a boy or a man is often about being strong, having power and, if necessary, using violence. Men's violence is normalised and it is also mostly boys and men who use violence in our society. To reduce violence we need to focus on the causes and on preventive measures. The causes are

complex but some are definitely linked to destructive masculinity.

Efforts to change gender norms need to cover all levels and are part of the Government's broader gender equality work. They need to target children from an early age, as early as pre-school and primary school age.

It is important that the methods used are based on knowledge about what yields positive results. A Swedish government agency responsible for youth issues has the task of preventing and combating boys' and young men's use of violence. It has reviewed the research and identified a number of violence prevention programmes with successful outcomes in other countries.

Involving more men in gender equality efforts

More men need to get involved in gender equality efforts. All too often, harassment and violence committed by boys and men against girls and women are met with silence and tolerance by other boys and men who stand by without reacting. This means that such actions are easily normalised. But as friends, citizens, fathers and decision-makers, boys and men have an important role to play in this work. Men who take a stand against sexualisation, harassment and abuse show that there are different male ideals and serve therefore as role models for other men.

Sweden's Prime Minister, Stefan Löfven, is deeply involved in this issue and is an ambassador for the United Nation's 'HeForShe' campaign to get men to break the silence and raise their voices against violence.

Strengthening the role of young people online

Another crucial issue is strengthening the role of young people online and improving their knowledge about what is not permitted on the internet. We want to give young people tools to be better able to stop not only hate but also harassment and bullying on the internet.

During the CSW session in New York, I will be participating in a seminar about internet hate. It will focus on the importance of combating destructive masculine norms, sexism and internet hate against girls and women.



Opinion piece from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Speech on Olof Palme by Minister Åsa Regnér, given at the Swedish Consulate in Peru

Published 28 February 2016 Updated 28 February 2016

Speech given at the Swedish Consulate on 22 February 2016 Check against delivery.

'From Vietnam to Nicaragua, from El Salvador to Palestine, from Sahara to South Africa, across the face of the globe, the flags hang limp and half-mast in loving memory of this giant of justice who had become a citizen of the world, a brother and a comrade to all who are downtrodden.'

- Oliver Tambo (President of the African National Congress, 1986)

Few Swedish politicians are as widely known and renowned throughout the world as Olof Palme. His anti-colonialist and pro-democracy views and actions attracted admiration and support across much of the world.

However, those same views made Olof Palme a controversial figure, both in Sweden and on the international stage.

His style of politics was characterised, above all, by the championing of pacifism and respect for human rights. At global level, Palme was an ally to developing countries. He condemned the abuses of dictatorships on the right and the left, criticising the United States for its bombing of civilians in the Vietnam War, as well as the Communist dictatorships of the Soviet sphere. He supported the government of Salvador Allende, the cause of the Palestinian people and the Czechoslovak uprising of 1968. He spoke out for the boycott of the South African Government during apartheid.

In short, Palme was the founder of Sweden's activist foreign policy. For him,

its position as a neutral country between opposing Cold War blocs was no reason to keep quiet. On the contrary, he recognised the opportunity to play the role of mediator. His views and actions in the international arena prompted admiration and debate. He gave legitimacy to and generated international respect for the social democratic model.

At home, Olof Palme worked to strengthen the Swedish welfare system, which had come into being at the beginning of the 20th century. The success of the Swedish model continues to be measured by falling income inequality between the different social classes. Palme enabled those who had previously been excluded, vulnerable sections of the population and minorities, to participate in various areas of society.

During his time as Prime Minister, he carried out reforms to improve working conditions, including employee involvement in decision-making and a 40-hour working week, and introduced state pensions from the age of 65.

He brought in separate taxation of husbands and wives and a new abortion law, and expanded state childcare provision, through both public day nurseries and paternity leave. These reforms created the conditions for women to be able to enter the job market, which was crucial to the improvement of their status in Swedish society.

Olof Palme's legacy is still evident in Swedish politics today. Support for a welfare state, the rule of law, global solidarity and gender equality remain fundamental pillars of our society.

Since the World Conference on Women in Beijing, now 20 years ago, the gender equality agenda has been gaining ground all over the planet. However, progress has been too slow and lack of political will has seen insufficient funding granted for the implementation of a gender equality policy in every country.

The present Swedish Government is the first feminist government in the world. We are working to change this situation, in Sweden and in many countries around the world, as well as within the European Union and the United Nations.

Thirty years ago, on 28 February 1986, the Prime Minister, Olof Palme, was assassinated by an unknown killer while walking around central Stockholm with his wife after leaving a cinema.

Following his death, Anna Lindh, later Foreign Minister, said: 'A person can be killed, but ideas cannot. Your ideas will live on through us.' Thank you.



Opinion piece from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Opening statement by State Secretary Pernilla Baraltat at the sixty-third session in Geneva of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Published 26 February 2016 Updated 26 February 2016

Geneva 19 februari 2016 Check against delivery

Madam Chair,

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for me and for the Swedish delegation to present Sweden's combined eighth and ninth report on the implementation of the CEDAW Convention.

This dialogue is of great importance to my Government, not least because we are a feminist Government. With this clear statement come high expectations both from us and from society at large.

The composition of our delegation reflects the broad mandate and scope of Sweden's policy for promoting gender equality in all areas of governance. I am joined by representatives from seven ministries who are all actively involved in the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Gender equality is a fundamental matter of human rights, democracy and social justice. It is also a precondition and a driver for sustainable growth and

for sustainable welfare.

To combat the discrimination against women and girls is also crucial to reach the goals of the new 2030 Agenda.

To fight discrimination against women and girls and to reach gender equality is a means to ensure that every girl and boy, every woman and man, can reach their full potential.

We are committed to take decisions and to allocate resources to promote real change, in the daily life of women and men.

Sweden was among the first countries to ratify the Cedaw Convention in 1980. Since then a large number of important laws and transformative policies have laid the foundation for the level of gender equality we have today. This progress has to a large extent been driven by the women's movement.

The Swedish Government is proud of our record on gender equality. However, we acknowledge that women and girls are still at a disadvantage relative to men and boys. We therefore welcome this opportunity to be reviewed and to engage in today's dialogue on how to fulfil the obligations of the Convention.

We as a government will also - together with NGOs - step up our efforts to make the convention more known. As a first step we will translate and distribute the concluding observations.

Madam Chair,

Distinguished experts,

Since Sweden presented its combined eighth and ninth CEDAW report in 2014, a new Government has taken office.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of our priorities and initiatives.

Gender mainstreaming is the main strategy to implement gender equality and achieve the national gender equality objectives.

Vital for the success of gender mainstreaming is strong leadership. It has therefore been crucial that the Prime Minister, Mr Stefan Löfven, is

committed and outspoken on the importance of gender equality. Each minister has the task to deliver on gender equality. It is everyone's responsibility. Training on gender mainstreaming has been provided to all ministers and state secretaries as well as to key government officials.

Engagement is important but so is competence and knowledge on gender mainstreaming. Our feminist government has initiated extensive work to ensure that gender equality has a broad impact in all policy areas. Objectives and indicators to monitor progress have been set in all key policy areas. This is also important when it comes to communication and in order to med accountable as a Government.

Another initiative is the Government's programme to strengthen gender mainstreaming of government agencies. Since we took office the number of agencies has increased from 18 to 60.

The national budget is a key tool to reach gender equality.

Ahead of the 2017 budget Bill the Ministry of Finance has stated that all measures provided by the various ministries must include a gender equality analysis.

In 2014 the Government commissioned an inquiry to review the gender equality policy objectives and assess gender equality progress over the last ten years. A government communication is now being prepared to be presented to the Swedish Parliament in September 2016. The aim is to have a systematic approach and to move from projects to sustainable programmes.

Madam Chair,

Most of the decisions that impact the daily lives of girls and boys, women and men are taken at the local level: in school, social services and health care. The Government has taken an active role in supporting municipalities and regions in their efforts to mainstream gender into their public services. One example is an agreement between the Government and Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions to implement measures that involve men and boys in gender equality activities at local level.

The fight against all forms of discrimination is one of the key human rights objectives of my Government. This includes all forms of discrimination based on sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age. Persons exposed to discrimination

on multiple grounds are particularly vulnerable.

An effective legal framework is important in combating discrimination. An inquiry has been appointed and they will propose ways of better streamlining anti-discrimination efforts.

To combat discrimination will also be an important part of the new Government policy on disabilities. As well as to make the Cedaw Convention more well known.

As part of Sweden's efforts to strengthen the protection of national minorities, the national strategy for Roma inclusion has a gender equality perspective. In addition, the Sami Parliament is preparing a new action plan on gender mainstreaming. It is intended for both staff, members of the Parliament and the Sami public at large.

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Madam Chair,

I now turn to a few of our policy priorities.

Let me start by underlining that gender equality is not just a 'women's issue'. It is a responsibility of and a benefit to the society as whole. It requires the active contribution and input from women and men, girls and boys.

For instance we have recently introduced a third month of parental leave reserved for each parent. It has a positive impact on men's role as fathers and on women's employment. It also enables the access of the child to both parents.

A top priority is to combat men's violence against women. Despite extensive work, crime data show that men's violence against women is still a very serious societal problem.

The Government is presently preparing a new holistic strategy to end men's violence against women. It will be guided by a set of objectives and indicators to enable improved evaluation and follow up results.

In order to stop men's violence against women, the Government is investing in violence prevention measures involving schools, counselling centres for perpetrators and rehabilitation programmes for male offenders, provided by the Prison and Probation Service.

Furthermore, the Government has allocated more than EUR 10 million per year to women's shelter organisations, including shelters for women with substance abuse, women with disabilities and women trapped in prostitution or human trafficking for sexual purposes.

Women with disabilities are an integrated part of all general programmes targeting violence against women.

The Swedish Agency for Participation has also recently been commissioned to prepare a specific action plan targeting this group.

Strong legal protection against men's violence against women, including sexual offences, is of the outmost importance. The Government has appointed an inquiry to review the Penal Code's provisions on rape and is considering introducing a consent-based regulation and a negligence offence regarding rape.

I would also like to mention our efforts to combat human trafficking and prostitution. Street prostitution in Sweden has decreased by 50 percent since 1995 as a result of the sexual offenses legislation.

In addition a recent survey indicates that the number of individuals in prostitution has not increased. An important part of our work is to focus on preventive and protective interventions and to discourage the demand for sexual services.

In September 2014 an inquiry was commissioned to analyze the possible removal of the requirement for dual criminality for purchase of a sexual service, and thereby making possible a legal trial also when the purchase of a sexual service has been made abroad.

According to the Government, purchases of sexual services are unacceptable regardless of where in the world they take place.

Distinguished members of the Committee,

In the area of health and medical care, unacceptable differences between women and men persist and seem to increase in certain areas.

Illnesses that affect women more often than men tend to be less prioritised in the health care system.

Mental illness and stress problems are common causes of sick leave, which is

increasing both for women and men; however, the increase is greater among women. In light of this, the Government has appointed a National Commission for Equity in Health, which includes a gender perspective in its work.

The Government has also provided additional funding for health services for school pupils, in response to findings in national studies that a growing number of girls and young women are experiencing mental health problems. Investments in parental support is also done on in order to promote the psychological health of young boys and girls.

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Promoting equal economic opportunities between women and men is a fundamental part of the gender equality policy.

Parental insurance, combined with an extensive system of public child care and elderly care, has made it possible for parents to combine work and family life.

The Government has commissioned the Swedish Public Employment Service to tailor activities to promote gender equality in the labour market.

The Government has also commissioned an inquiry to investigate how the parental insurance scheme can be tailored to contribute to gender-equal parenting. The Government has also raised the temporary parental benefits, which are more often used by women.

In recent years, we have seen an increase in temporary employment in the labour market, which affects women to a greater extent than men. A legislative amendment has been introduced. It ensures that general fixed-term employment will be converted into indefinite-term employment if the aggregate length of employment in a general fixed-term position exceeds two years.

Another important issue is the right to full-time employment for women. Full-time should be standard and part-time a possibility. This is a question to be handled by the social partner on the labour market.

Increased employment levels are particularly important for women born outside Sweden as well as among women with disabilities. The Government is working on relevant initiatives.

To prevent gender-based wage discrimination by employers, the Government has put forward a bill on reintroducing mandatory annual pay surveys.

Another expression of inequality in working life concerns women's representation. While the Government has attained gender-balanced boards and management teams in state-owned companies, the private sector is lagging behind in making use of women's talents. The Government has emphasised that the proportion of women on boards should be at least 40 per cent by 2016. If this objective is not achieved by voluntary measures, the Government will propose legislation on quotas.

Gender equality is also a prerequisite for sustainable regional growth. Women in rural areas have the same access to basic services, such as health care and education, as their urban peers, but women leave rural areas for job opportunities in cities to a greater extent than men. This problem also exists in some suburban areas.

The need for further efforts to promote gender equality linked employment and the labour market becomes evident when you look at the pension gap between men and women. Women have low pensions and, on average, women also live longer than men.

Measures have therefore been taken to increase women's pensions as part of the reform to increase the income tax allowance for pensioners.

Madam Chair,

Distinguished experts,

Education is crucial to enable all girls and boys to claim and defend their rights and achieve their full potential.

The Education Act and the school curricula emphasise that gender equality should permeate and guide all levels of the school system.

Sadly, there is strong gender segregation in education. A particularly prominent feature is the existence of 'typically female' fields of study and 'typically male' fields of study.

In order to change this pattern, measures have been taken to improve educational and vocational guidance to pupils in compulsory, upper secondary and adult education, so as to provide support for pupils to ensure their study and career choices are not limited by their gender.

More women than men choose to go on to higher education and there has been a steady increase in the number of women in academic positions, except among professors. The proportion of female professors is now about 25 per cent. This is not good enough. We are currently reviewing recruitment objectives in order to further increase the number of female professors. The Government has appointed an inquiry to propose measures to create more attractive conditions for both women's and men's research careers.

Madam Chair,

Distinguished experts,

Recently the Government presented its action plan for a feminist foreign policy. The aim is to achieve concrete results that enhance both gender equality and the full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls

In 2016 particular attention will be devoted to:

To promote the inclusion and meaningful participation of women in peace processes, and thereby making women visible as agents of change for peace.

Other priorities will be:

to strengthen the human rights of women and girls in humanitarian settings, to combat gender-based and sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations, and to enhance the economic empowerment of women as a human right and a means for inclusive and sustainable development.

The Swedish Foreign Service will also continue to be a driving force for women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. In 2016 it will devote special attention to the rights of girls and young people in this context.

Sweden welcomes the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. The effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda is of the utmost importance, and Sweden recently initiated the implementation process.

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Sweden and Europe are providing security and safety to women and men fleeing war, persecution and oppression.

The number of people seeking asylum, particularly unaccompanied minors,

has increased dramatically in Sweden. In 2015 Sweden received 160 000 asylum applicants of which about 35 000 were unaccompanied minors. This is of course a great challenge for Sweden and also an opportunity. The reception system and responsible social services are however under a lot of pressure.

In relation to this situation the government has taken several decision and new initiatives, including large financial support to the local and regional level. Initiatives are also taken in order to improve education and entrance on the labour market.

We also recognise the challenges related to gender and women's rights in this new situation and are in the process of preparing relevant measures including increased knowledge on women's rights.

Madam Chair,

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Ladies and gentlemen,

During the preparatory work, women's organisations and other non-governmental organisations were given the opportunity to comment on the periodic report. These organisations have played and continue to play a critical role in pushing for gender equality and women's rights.

On behalf of the Swedish Government, I would like to commend the Committee on its important work. The discussion today and the comments on our periodic reports are a vital and inspiring input for us as we continue the challenge of creating a gender-equal society. My colleagues and I welcome this opportunity to have a dialogue with the Members of the Committee.

The Government will organise a press conference in Sweden after the Committee has issued its recommendations.

Madame Chair, Members of the Committee, thank you for your attention.

We are now prepared to answer any questions you may have to the best of our ability.



Government Offices of Sweden

Opinion piece from Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice

Strengthen the right of LGBTQ people to be themselves

Published 12 February 2016 Updated 12 February 2016

Opinion article, Newspaper Expressen, 8 february 2016
Legislation must keep pace with developments in society. The Government therefore plans to implement changes that aim to offer the same conditions for everyone, regardless of their choice of partner and type of family, write five government ministers.

People have the right to be themselves in all areas of life. This includes the right to live with the person you love and to have your family formation treated with respect. Efforts to break old norms that limit people from fully living their lives must continue. This applies particularly to policies for the rights of those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ people).

Proactive organisations in civil society and courageous politicians before us have helped to move the situation of LGBTQ issues in the right direction. Society is constantly evolving, and perceptions of parenthood, family, gender and the rights of the child in the family evolve with it. Today, there are numerous family constellations other than the traditional nuclear families: single, friends with children, step-families or families with several mothers or fathers. Our social systems must also meet the needs of these families.

Legislation and its application must keep pace with developments in society. It must accommodate various ways of forming a family and ensure the right of all people to good health. The Government is therefore planning to implement changes that aim to offer the same conditions for everyone, regardless of the choice of partner and type of family that each of us chooses

to live with:

- Parental support and family law issues in social services need to be more modern, equitable and gender equal. Family constellations vary and have different needs. In light of this, the Government has concentrated responsibility for these issues at the Family Law and Parental Support Authority. An important task for the Authority is producing knowledge support for relevant actors so that these, in turn, can provide better support and guidance to parents and children.
- Families can take many different forms, but when the parental insurance system was designed, it was still based on the idea of a nuclear family with two co-habiting parents. The living conditions of families with children have changed over time.

More than one in five children grows up in a family constellation other than one including both their biological parents. The inquiry on parental insurance that is now to be conducted has therefore been tasked with identifying problems and investigating possibilities for facilitating the use of parental insurance by different family constellations.

- There are currently large health disparities between different groups in society. To close the avoidable health gaps within a generation, the Government has appointed a commission for equitable health. We know that LGBTQ people in general have poorer health and young LGBTQ people are particularly vulnerable with regard to mental health. In its work, the commission will therefore take into account health disparities between LGBTQ people and the rest of the population.
- The treatment of LGBTQ people in health and medical care is unequal across the country. Unfortunately, in their contacts with different authorities, individuals are sometimes doubted and treated ignorantly. This leads to LGBTQ people in some cases refraining from seeking care.

The National Board of Health and Welfare has been tasked with analysing care and treatment of intersex people (persons whose gender cannot be determined due to biological reasons) and implementing measures in the various areas of activity of social services. The objective is to raise awareness of LGBTQ people's living conditions and the various forms discrimination can take. The National Board of Health and Welfare and the Public Health Agency of Sweden will also review how issues concerning the health of young transgender people could be highlighted within the

framework of other mental health initiatives.

- There have been several high-profile cases where information was registered in the population registration regarding a person who had changed gender in such a way that the link between individuals, such as a child and a parent, was lost. The Swedish Tax Agency has now been tasked with describing what has been done or will be done to prevent problems that may arise.
- Current regulations regarding paternity and parenthood are based on heterosexual marriage. There is reason to review whether the regulations should be updated and for this reason, the Government intends to appoint an inquiry in the spring to conduct a review of the legislation.

These are some of the initiatives the Government is now implementing. We know there is a lot left to do. Discrimination, inequitable treatment and violence are still part of daily life for many LGBTQ people all around the country. This is never acceptable. The Government will continue its efforts to strengthen the possibility for LGBTQ people to fully be themselves in all areas of life.

Gabriel Wikström

Minister for Health Care, Public Health and Sport

Åsa Regnér

Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality

Morgan Johansson

Minister for Justice and Migration

Alice Bah Kuhnke

Minister for Culture and Democracy (Green Party)

Annika Strandhäll

Minister for Social Security (Social Democratic Party)



Opinion piece from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

New measures for housing of unaccompanied children

Published 25 November 2015 Updated 25 November 2015

Opinion article, Aftonbladet, 4 november

Every child, regardless of background, has the right to security and to have their basic needs met. It is important to remember this, and never more so than now, when Sweden is taking in a very large number of unaccompanied refugee children. Children arriving alone in Sweden are currently placed in a municipality, where they are processed by social services and placed in appropriate accommodation. Sweden's municipalities, and in particular their social care services for children and young people, have been under great pressure for a long time, and the Government is anxious to support them in this important work in a number of ways.

As part of endeavours to improve social care services for children and young people, the Government proposed SEK 1 billion over four years in its budget. This investment is based on an agreement between the Government and the Left Party. In addition, we have issued mandates to improve the working conditions of social workers throughout the country in a variety of ways. In terms of the refugee situation, it is worth pointing out that the compensation paid to municipalities for schooling is being substantially raised. The agreement between the parties allocates SEK 10 billion to the municipalities in 2015. These are much-needed resources in local efforts.

As mentioned above, all children who arrive unaccompanied are placed in some form of accommodation under the Social Services Act. This may be a foster home or a home for care or residence. No other forms of placement are available. Unaccompanied children arriving in Sweden are often highly motivated and capable. They want to study and establish themselves in this country. Many municipalities report that newly arrived children often act as inspiration to other children in school. Not all of them have a qualified need

for the care offered in the home for care or residence system. For this reason, the Government today decided to propose a new form of placement under the Social Services Act: supported accommodation. It is proposed that the legislative amendment should enter into force on 1 January 2016.

Supported accommodation should be used for the placement of children and young people aged between 16 and 20 and represents an important reform for unaccompanied children, but also for other young people deemed by social services to be in need of their own accommodation and support, but not care or treatment.

At the same time, many people in Sweden have shown very practical solidarity and engagement in the situation that has now arisen. This has manifested itself not least in the declarations of interest in becoming foster parents, legal representatives or specially appointed custodians. Foster homes are a very important form of placement, perhaps primarily for younger children but in some cases also for older children. The need is not fully met: there is plenty of room for more people to contribute to this important social function. To gather information and knowledge and to provide information on this function, the National Board of Health and Welfare has been tasked with initiating and coordinating initiatives to raise awareness of these activities. It should be easy for people to be engaged and show their solidarity.

We find ourselves in a unique situation with respect to the reception of unaccompanied children. Many municipalities have pointed to a need to receive rapid support on various points. This may include interpreting the relevant legislation, and access to tools and practical advice in this area. The National Board of Health and Welfare will therefore set up a call centre to answer questions from municipal social services and support them in their work. This is a much sought-after function, not least among smaller municipalities that do not always have resources available at local level.

These are some of the measures in the area of social services taken by the Government in recent weeks with respect to unaccompanied refugee children. I am convinced that there is more to be done to facilitate work at local level. The current high-pressure situation must not lead to regular activities being forgotten or children's needs being neglected. I and the Government will monitor developments closely and take all necessary measures.

I am in close contact with, and have visited, municipalities, homes for

unaccompanied children, and staff of social care services for children and young people, to hear and see what is needed and how central government can support them. I would like to express my great respect for the efforts being made, and my humility in the face of the challenges our society is coping with in this situation. Social workers whose work situation was already manifestly tough are doing everything they can to ensure a good reception.

Åsa Regnér

Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality



Opinion piece from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Åsa Regnér: Men need to be involved in fight for equality

Published 17 November 2015 Updated 17 November 2015

Opinion article, The Local, 17 november Politicians need to consider gender equality early on in their decision making and involve both women and men in the process, argues Åsa Regnér, Sweden's Minister for Gender Equality.

As Minister for Gender Equality in the world's first feminist government, I am pleased to represent a government that is demonstrating a greater resolve to achieve a gender-equal society.

The overall objective of our gender equality policy is equal power for women and men, and girls and boys, to shape society and their own lives. This is about making a difference through our choice of priorities, paths and resource allocation, so that women and men, girls and boys can live equal lives in which they can realize their full potential and use it for the good of society. Gender equality is created where resources are allocated, where standards are set and where decisions are made.

Gender equality is also a priority issue in our government's foreign policy and EU activities. All around the world we see that women have the lowest incomes; that the labour force participation of women with low levels of education is at an unsustainably low level; that child care and elderly care are still not feasible options and in many countries do not offer women a chance of economic independence; that violence against women remains widespread; that the proportion of women in parliaments is astonishingly low. The list goes on.

To date, gender equality has typically been driven by women. However, in recent years, the role of men and boys in advancing gender equality has received increasing attention, both globally and in Sweden. The involvement of men and boys is an important part of the government's gender equality strategy, as demonstrated by our commitment to the UN's HeForShe campaign. We are also allocating significant resources to efforts to preventing men's violence against women and children.

Sweden's feminist government has attracted a great deal of international attention and we receive many visitors interested in knowing more about what this means in practice. By global standards, we have come a long way in our endeavors, but we also know there are many issues that still need to be tackled.

A feminist government carries out a gender equality analysis early in the decision-making process to ensure that the gender equality perspective is present from the outset across all policy areas. This strategy – gender mainstreaming – means not only greater gender equality, but also more effective measures.

Our gender-responsive budgeting means that we evaluate the gender equality effects of budget policy. We integrate a gender perspective into all levels of the budgetary process and redistribute income and expenditure to promote gender equality and eliminate injustice based on gender.

All ministers are responsible for ensuring that a gender perspective is included in policy formulation in their areas of responsibility. The aim is better opportunities and, in the longer term, better lives and living conditions for us all.

Åsa Regnér

Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality



Opinion piece from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Åsa Regnér: Give to organisations on the ground in the home countries

Published 28 September 2015 Updated 28 September 2015

DN Debatt 11 September “Values-based organisations, representatives of the business sector and municipalities, and politicians from Sweden, Romania and Bulgaria are meeting today to discuss the situation of vulnerable EU citizens. Our message is that the greatest difference is made when people give money to professional NGOs on the ground in the home countries. Giving to them is one way to break the cycle of vulnerability,” says Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér and Martin Valfridsson, the Government’s National Coordinator for vulnerable EU citizens.

Close to 200 people from civil society, public authorities and municipalities, as well as representatives from Romania and Bulgaria, are gathering today for a major conference in Stockholm. The aim of the conference is to promote cooperation between Swedish values-based organisations working with vulnerable EU citizens in Bulgaria and Romania.

Our message during the day deals with how we can best work together to fight the poverty that drives people to beg and forces them into vulnerable situations. It is up to each individual to decide how they want to help. Giving to professional NGOs and supporting their work on the ground in Romania and Bulgaria are good ways to contribute to sustainable change for these

people.

Extensive poverty

Over the past several years, Sweden and our neighbours have been confronted with poverty, the scope of which extends beyond that which we are accustomed to seeing. Europeans from primarily Romania and Bulgaria are coming to our country. A large number of these are Roma who, due to their social exclusion in Europe, find it particularly difficult to receive education and find work in their home countries.

We have met with vulnerable EU citizens in camps in Stockholm and discussed their situation with them. Many of them have their children back in their home country. We visited a school in a rural area of Romania where half of the pupils had parents who were absent, trying to make a living in other countries. We also met with politicians from both Romania and Bulgaria to discuss solutions.

This group is residing in the country temporarily, but it is a question of some 4000–5000 people here in Sweden. Everyone who lives in the EU has the right to move freely within the Union and temporarily reside in other Member States for three months. Free movement is an important pillar of the EU. At the same time, each EU citizen must have real opportunities to live a decent life in their own home country.

The Government's work

The Government has been working on the issue of the situation of vulnerable EU citizens since day one. Martin Valfridsson was appointed National Coordinator for vulnerable EU citizens in January. Part of his mandate is to facilitate cooperation among municipalities, public authorities, county councils and values-based organisations as regards this group.

There are three areas in need of reform to ensure that fewer people are forced to beg and to combat the problems that arise in Sweden:

1. Clearer rules and measures in Sweden to combat illegal settlements, exploitation of vulnerable people and violence against vulnerable EU citizens in Sweden.
2. Increased cooperation within the EU, with Romania and with Bulgaria for better living conditions and access to jobs, education, housing, and health and medical care. Increased efforts to combat prejudice and social exclusion.
3. Closer cooperation with civil society organisations that make a major

contribution in organising and channelling funds and commitment.

On Wednesday, Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér met Bulgarian Minister of Labour and Social Policy Ivailo Kalfin to discuss signing a cooperation agreement that focuses on welfare issues. It is similar to an agreement Sweden signed with Romania in June this year. The agreement with Romania, which concerns children's, gender equality and welfare issues, aims to improve the situation of vulnerable people in both countries. On Monday, Ms Regnér will also raise the issue of vulnerable EU citizens and EU responsibilities with relevant European Commissioners in Brussels.

Choose long-term change

Swedes in general are open and generous. This is something we want to protect and nurture. This generosity also means that we give to fellow human beings when they ask for money.

We want to emphasise that there are alternatives to giving to needy people in Sweden and instead helping to build a better situation for vulnerable people locally in Romania and Bulgaria. A number of Swedish organisations, churches and faith communities conduct activities in countries of origin. Many of them started their activities as a result of the reports we received in the 1990s on such matters as children with impairments in Romanian orphanages. Many of these organisations currently work with vulnerable minorities in the relevant countries and have long experience of practical work on the ground. Giving to them is one way to break the cycle of vulnerability.

Today's conference is therefore being arranged to spread knowledge of these organisations' work on behalf of vulnerable groups in Romania and Bulgaria. We will discuss what is important to focus on to lift these women and men out of extreme poverty. During the day, many of the country's foremost experts will gather to discuss how to support vulnerable people so that a change is actually achieved. How can organisations cooperate with one another and make their operations effective – and also cooperate with the business sector and municipalities?

It is a question of combating poverty.

By supporting long-term, sustainable efforts for better education, ways to earn a living, health and structural reforms, more people will see a meaningful future for themselves and coming generations in their home

countries. The agreement between our countries provides a framework for this and illustrates our countries' will to change, as well as the continued efforts in the EU.

Let us continue to give money and tell our children that it is important to help people in their time of need. Let us do so in a way that leads to change that is real and lasting. Combating poverty will not be accomplished in the blink of an eye. That is why we must use our will, our knowledge and our resources in a way that brings about real change.

**Åsa Regnér, Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality,
with coordination responsibilities in the Government for issues dealing
with vulnerable EU citizens**

Martin Valfridsson, National Coordinator for vulnerable EU citizens



Opinion piece from Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

We are taking a stand for women's rights

Published 01 June 2015 Updated 01 June 2015

The EU's voice on women's sexual and reproductive health and rights must be strengthened. "Ahead of today's meeting in Brussels, we have worked hard for the EU to be on the front line of the fight for gender equality", write ministers Margot Wallström, Isabella Lövin and Åsa Regnér in Swedish daily newspaper SvD.

Although the fight for gender equality is gaining ground globally, in many parts of the world we are seeing a growing resistance to women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). This is why Sweden is working down to the wire to ensure that the new Council conclusions on gender equality to be adopted today take a clear stance. The EU ministers gathering in Brussels this afternoon have the opportunity to put their differences behind them and stand up for the fundamental right of all individuals to have control over their own bodies – at a time when a strong EU voice is needed more than ever.

In the vicinity of the EU, violent fundamentalist groups are emerging that want to deprive women of the opportunity to participate in political life, achieve economic empowerment and gain access to health care. The desire to control women's bodies is expressed in its most extreme forms in fundamentalist groups such as ISIL, which uses sexual abuse to instil fear and gain ground. But it is not just on the battlegrounds that the fight for women's rights is being fought. Resistance to and questioning of the rights of women and LGBTQ people are also seen in international negotiation rooms

and among conservative forces making headway in Europe. A study by the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation and the magazine *Expo* shows how right-wing extremist and nationalist parties that are on the rise in the EU see the rights of women and LGBTQ people as a threat to the nation state and thus to their vision of society.

We are living in a time of great change in which women's economic and political influence is being strengthened and there is a growing consensus in the international community in favour of gender equality. Current resistance can be seen as a reaction to the successes achieved and proof that the fight for women's and LGBTQ people's rights must be relentless. The most controversial issue is also the most fundamental one – the right to exercise control over one's own body, sexuality and reproduction. Women's rights activists say that they can go and vote, but they cannot decide who to marry, who to have sex with or when to have children. This oppression restricts women's and girls' lives and opportunities to fully participate in society on the same terms as men.

In Sweden, we know that measures for gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights pay off. A century ago, more women died during pregnancy and childbirth in Sweden than in Namibia today. Today, maternal mortality in Sweden is among the lowest in the world. Forty years ago, Swedish women gained the right to free, legal and safe abortions. Over the last 30 years in Sweden, no woman has died from the complications of an abortion. These are successes that have helped to build the Swedish welfare society that we all benefit from today. This year, 2015, is a year of unique opportunities to move forward on gender equality, including sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The ground-breaking UN Conference on Women in Beijing celebrates its 20th anniversary, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security celebrates its 15th anniversary, and the world is set to agree on new development goals to ensure sustainable development and eradicate poverty and injustice. The EU plays an important role in this work.

While there is a great deal of support for gender equality in the EU, opinions on the SRHR issue are divided. Unfortunately, a small number of countries have so far blocked a strong and united position, which has weakened the EU's voice on these issues in the world.

Ahead of today's meeting, the Government has been working hard with likeminded countries in the EU to bring about a change. During the six

months we have been in government we have managed to push through changes. At our initiative, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, recently announced that she plans to appoint a high-level representative for 1325 issues, in accordance with Sweden's proposal. This will strengthen the EU's work to combat sexual violence in conflict and to promote women's participation in peace-building efforts.

We are hopeful that our hard work will bear fruit today as well. Our feminist foreign policy is yielding results. By joining forces we will continue to push for the EU to be at the forefront of the fight for human rights, gender equality, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. This requires clear leadership at all levels in the EU, strengthened accountability and greater knowledge about gender equality. Cooperation with civil society must be deepened and the action plan for the EU's international gender equality work that is currently being drawn up must cover all areas of EU external action, which is not the case today. Sweden has an important voice internationally, but if we can get the entire EU on board we will increase the impact of a feminist policy that fundamentally challenges oppression, injustice and violence.



Government Offices of Sweden

Opinion piece from Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

We will fight in the EU for women's rights

Published 27 May 2015 Updated 27 May 2015

First published in Svenska Dagbladet 26 May 2015

Although the fight for gender equality is gaining ground globally, in many parts of the world we are seeing a growing resistance to women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). This is why Sweden is working down to the wire to ensure that the new Council conclusions on gender equality to be adopted today take a clear stance. The EU ministers gathering in Brussels this afternoon have the opportunity to put their differences behind them and stand up for the fundamental right of all individuals to have control over their own bodies – at a time when a strong EU voice is needed more than ever.

In the vicinity of the EU, violent fundamentalist groups are emerging that want to deprive women of the opportunity to participate in political life, achieve economic empowerment and gain access to health care. The desire to control women's bodies is expressed in its most extreme forms in fundamentalist groups such as ISIL, which uses sexual abuse to instil fear and gain ground. But it is not just on the battlegrounds that the fight for women's rights is being fought. Resistance to and questioning of the rights of women and LGBTQ people are also seen in international negotiation rooms and among conservative forces making headway in Europe. A study by the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation and the magazine *Expo* shows how right-wing extremist and nationalist parties that are on the rise in the EU see the rights of women and LGBTQ people as a threat to the nation state and thus to their vision of society.

We are living in a time of great change in which women's economic and political influence is being strengthened and there is a growing consensus in

the international community in favour of gender equality. Current resistance can be seen as a reaction to the successes achieved and proof that the fight for women's and LGBTQ people's rights must be relentless.

The most controversial issue is also the most fundamental one – the right to exercise control over one's own body, sexuality and reproduction. Women's rights activists say that they can go and vote, but they cannot decide who to marry, who to have sex with or when to have children. This oppression restricts women's and girls' lives and opportunities to fully participate in society on the same terms as men. In Sweden, we know that measures for gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights pay off. A century ago, more women died during pregnancy and childbirth in Sweden than in Namibia today. Today, maternal mortality in Sweden is among the lowest in the world. Forty years ago, Swedish women gained the right to free, legal and safe abortions. Over the last 30 years in Sweden, no woman has died from the complications of an abortion. These are successes that have helped to build the Swedish welfare society that we all benefit from today.

This year, 2015, is a year of unique opportunities to move forward on gender equality, including sexual and reproductive health and rights. The ground-breaking UN Conference on Women in Beijing celebrates its 20th anniversary, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security celebrates its 15th anniversary, and the world is set to agree on new development goals to ensure sustainable development and eradicate poverty and injustice. The EU plays an important role in this work.

While there is a great deal of support for gender equality in the EU, opinions on the SRHR issue are divided. Unfortunately, a small number of countries have so far blocked a strong and united position, which has weakened the EU's voice on these issues in the world. Ahead of today's meeting, the Government has been working hard with likeminded countries in the EU to bring about a change. During the six months we have been in government we have managed to push through changes. At our initiative, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, recently announced that she plans to appoint a high-level representative for 1325 issues, in accordance with Sweden's proposal. This will strengthen the EU's work to combat sexual violence in conflict and to promote women's participation in peace-building efforts.

We are hopeful that our hard work will bear fruit today as well. Our feminist foreign policy is yielding results. By joining forces we will continue to push

for the EU to be at the forefront of the fight for human rights, gender equality, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. This requires clear leadership at all levels in the EU, strengthened accountability and greater knowledge about gender equality. Cooperation with civil society must be deepened and the action plan for the EU Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development that is currently being drawn up must cover all areas of EU external action, which is not the case today.

Sweden has an important voice internationally, but if we can get the entire EU on board we will increase the impact of a feminist policy that fundamentally challenges oppression, injustice and violence.

Margot Wallström, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Isabella Lövin, Minister for International Development Cooperation

Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality



Opinion piece from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

“Gender equality will be a priority in the amending budget”

Published 22 January 2015 Updated 17 May 2015

Dagens Nyheter 22 januari 2015

The World Economic Forum is currently taking place in Davos. One of the key issues Sweden will highlight there is the importance of greater gender equality between women and men. Sweden is, and must be, a leading country in the area of gender equality.

The Swedish Government is a feminist government. We place gender equality at the core of both national and international work. Gender equality is ultimately a question of democracy and social justice. Everyone should be free to be the person they are without being locked into gender norms. This is also part of the Government's idea of the modern welfare state. Gender equality contributes to economic growth.

Employment levels should therefore be equally high among women as they are among men. Women should be in gainful employment to the same extent as men, with a good working environment and career opportunities. The pay gap between the genders must be reduced. Everyone must have the right to work full-time and be financially independent.

But we have a long way to go. There is still a difference of SEK 3.5 million in lifetime earnings between women and men in Sweden. Women still account for the majority of unpaid work and men only take a quarter of parental insurance days. We are currently seeing a situation in which many women are forced to reduce their working hours because welfare provision is not up to standard, because staffing levels in elderly care are too low or because preschool opening hours are too inflexible.

In its budget, the Government planned major investments to reduce the

gender equality gap. We proposed major investments in increased staffing levels in elderly care so that people do not have to reduce their working hours to care for their elderly relatives, a responsibility that women often shoulder. We planned major investments in maternity care and women's health. We also raised maintenance support for single parents and we wanted to extend preschool opening times to cover unsocial working hours, so that single parents – often mothers – are able to accept the jobs that are offered and support their children. Unfortunately, the Alliance – together with the Sweden Democrats – voted against the Government's budget.

We now want to make parental insurance more gender-equal by introducing a third insurance month that is reserved for the other parent. The centre-right parties and the Sweden Democrats have so far chosen instead to continue supporting the strongly criticised child-raising allowance, despite the fact that evaluations have shown that this allowance keeps the most financially vulnerable women out of the labour market. This is a reactionary policy that is leading Sweden in completely the wrong direction.

Sweden's new Government is now moving forward in building up the world's first gender-equal central government administration, and we are attaching much greater weight to gender equality policy in the Government Offices as well. It is already clear that the new Government Offices is completely gender-equal in terms of women and men in politically appointed positions. Thanks to a conscious appointment and recruitment process, we have an equal number of women and men as ministers, state secretaries and political advisers.

A feminist government is not content merely having analysed the consequences of its political decisions; it also ensures that they lead to greater gender equality. Feminism must be a central theme running through all of the Government's policies, through all of its priorities and decisions. For this reason, we have taken the initiative to create a steering group within the Government Offices to provide all ministers with tools to ensure that a gender equality focus is reflected in all of the Government's work. We are also starting work on gender equality budgeting.

In addition, all ministries will be instructed to work on gender mainstreaming in all of their activities. This means that decisions in all policy areas must have a clear gender perspective.

A development programme for gender mainstreaming is currently under way in 18 government agencies. The lessons from this programme will now be

shared with more agencies. The Government will therefore expand this initiative to cover 41 agencies, including the Swedish Social Insurance Agency and the Swedish Tax Agency. In their appropriation directions, the agencies will report on how they plan to work on gender mainstreaming during the period 2015–2018 to help achieve the gender equality policy objectives. Each agency will describe how gender equality can be embedded in the mainstream of its regular activities, such as the agency's management processes.

Swedish gender equality efforts have served our country well. Besides being morally right, 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, such as reserving the first and second months of parental benefit for fathers, and removing joint taxation.

A feminist government's ambitions for greater gender equality apply both nationally and in terms of our international cooperation. Developments in the world are moving forward. Today, we have as many girls as boys starting primary school throughout the world, the proportion of women in the world's parliaments has grown, and more women are working in sectors other than agriculture in a global perspective. This is a positive trend, but much remains to be done.

Swedish aid is to help combat the systematic subordination of women and girls in society. The absence of all forms of violence against women and girls is key to this. The Government is prioritising work to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights.

So far, it has been mainly women pursuing gender equality efforts. In recent years, however, there has been a growing awareness, both globally and in Sweden, of the role of men and boys in gender equality work. The participation of men and boys is an important part of the Government's strategic gender equality work. This is clear, for example, through our commitment to the UN campaign HeForShe.

It is our strongly held conviction that politics must continue to advance gender equality work. We want a gender equality policy that reflects the Sweden of today and everyone who lives in our country. This is not an issue that will resolve itself. The Government will therefore prioritise reforms that lead to greater gender equality in the coming Budget Bill and in the amending budget we will be presenting this spring.

Current and future generations must be met by a gender-equal society in which every individual can reach their full potential. Gender equality is not just right; it is a smart policy that creates growth and development. Half of the world's talent must have the opportunity to blossom.

Stefan Löfven, Prime Minister

Åsa Regnér, Minister for Gender Equality



Opinion piece from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Children come first - in Sweden and around the world

Published 20 November 2014 Updated 17 May 2015

Aftonbladet 20 november 2014 Today we are in New York, attending the 25th anniversary celebrations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. A quarter of a century has passed since the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Since then, almost every country in the world has signed the CRC and it has become the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history.

Our new cooperation Government declared in the Statement of Government Policy that we want to make the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child law in Sweden. The rights and living conditions of children in Sweden must satisfy the requirements of the CRC and other international agreements. We are not there yet. While Swedish legislation is generally adequate, much still needs to be done to guarantee the rights enshrined in the Convention.

The new cooperation Government has therefore begun the detailed work to incorporate the CRC into Swedish law. The Convention will thereby act as a safety net for the decisions and activities affecting children. Work is already under way and we are very hopeful that there will be broad collaboration between many positive forces. Most of the parliamentary parties are very interested in being involved in the work and engagement among civil society actors is strong. It goes without saying that the work will also require the voice of children to be heard.

Children's rights are high on the agenda of the new cooperation Government. We intend to protect children's rights at local, national and global level. As children cannot choose their parents, we have a shared responsibility for all children. This gives children's rights issues a moral dimension that is far stronger than for many other issues.

This is why the Government's Budget Bill contains investments to improve conditions for the most vulnerable children. We are raising maintenance support for single parents with children, the standard for income support for parents with children between 7 and 18 years of age, and the basic level of parental insurance. Medicines for children will also be free of charge. No parent should need to choose between buying food or buying medicine.

To give every child a better childhood, we are investing heavily in preschools and schools. We are investing in more staff and smaller groups in preschools. In schools we are investing in smaller primary school classes, more special needs teachers and remedial teachers, and more resources for the schools with the greatest needs.

Children are also a priority on Sweden's international agenda. Our country is one of the largest core donors to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and reducing child mortality is an important priority in our development assistance. In the context of the negotiations on the new global sustainable development goals, the post-2015 development agenda, Sweden is pushing to ensure it will contain a child and young people's perspective.

Olof Palme once said: "As I see it, the only tangible link that we really have with the future is our children. Because it is through them that we see the future take shape. This is where our shared responsibility for the children in our society comes from. It's not a matter of my children and your children, but our children – all children. And that's why children have to come first."

If we look at children's rights through his eyes, we can see that it is not just about having a duty here and now to ensure that all children have a good upbringing. It is also about securing our common future.



Opinion piece from Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Convention on the Rights of the Child to become law

Published 20 October 2014 Updated 17 May 2015

Svenska Dagbladet 20 oktober 2014 Children have rights – the right to life, play and learning. This means all children: regardless of whether your name is Maria or Mariam and whether you live in Borlänge or Bamako.

This November marks 25 years since the UN adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child. So far, 193 countries have undertaken to respect, protect and promote the rights of the child. Much has improved since the Convention was adopted. But unfortunately, huge challenges still remain.

Developments in Syria, Iraq, Palestine, South Sudan and Liberia are brutal reminders of how children's rights are violated on a daily basis. Minors are cynically used as child soldiers, children are subjected to violence and exploitation, and girls are prevented from attending school, forced into marriage and subjected to life-threatening pregnancies.

A few days ago, Anna Hägg-Sjöquist and Pia Stavås Meier from the children's charity Plan Sverige urged the Government to prioritise children's rights in foreign policy and international development cooperation.

Our new cooperation government will do so, with great force and determination. Sweden must be a leading global force for the rights of the child and for gender equality. In the Statement of Government Policy, we said that Sweden's voice must always be clear and unambiguous when human dignity is violated, and that we will pursue a feminist foreign policy. Poverty reduction, sexual and reproductive health and rights and the fight against discrimination will be given high priority in the years ahead.

The UN has an important role to play in this, and the new Government will

give higher priority to UN cooperation. We will actively pursue these issues in view of the new global development agenda due to be negotiated by the UN member states ahead of the UN Summit in September 2015.

Today, we are among the very largest financiers of the UN's global development work. Via the UN, Sweden has contributed to a reduction of almost fifty per cent in the number of children dying before the age of five, down from 12.6 million in 1990 to 6.6 million in 2012. Last year alone, UNICEF provided water to 24 million people and sanitation to 7 million people, and gave 13.1 million people the possibility to wash their hands. In 2013, 3.6 million children in humanitarian crisis situations gained access to education. UNICEF has also contributed to 123 countries making all forms of sexual violence towards girls and boys punishable offences, and enabling 7 300 children with links to armed forces or groups to return to their families and communities.

At the same time, as ardent supporters of the UN we will not be afraid to criticise it if necessary. Swedish taxpayers' money must be used efficiently, and the UN needs to be reformed in order to be able to tackle the challenges of the future.

Human rights – including the rights of the child – are a cornerstone of Swedish foreign policy. But we also want to set a good example for other countries. Being a leader means leading the way. For this reason we will now take the next step, and begin the work to make the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child law in Sweden.

Standing up for children's rights and working for greater social and gender equality in the world will be the hallmarks of the new Government's work. As the ministers responsible for foreign affairs, development cooperation and children, we will shoulder our share of the responsibility for ensuring that children are able to enjoy their incontrovertible right to be just that – children.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Åsa Regnér appointed as Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women

Published 07 March 2018

UN Secretary-General António Guterres today appointed Åsa Regnér as Deputy Executive Director of UN Women with responsibility for intergovernmental relations and strategic partnerships, as well as Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Ms Regnér will leave the Government when the Prime Minister has accepted her resignation, which is expected shortly. Ms Regnér will then take up her post at UN Women's headquarters in New York.

"I would like to thank the UN Secretary-General for my appointment today. I am aware that there was tough competition from many qualified candidates and that it was a process with many steps. I will work hard for the prioritisation of women's and girl's rights in global contexts, and for increased democratisation and economic development around the world.

"I would also like to thank Prime Minister Stefan Löfven for entrusting me to be part of his feminist government, and for his support and that of Minister for Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström in this candidature. I see today's appointment as evidence that the UN values Swedish UN engagement and our feminist foreign policy."



Press release from Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Employment, Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Eight Swedish cabinet ministers to the Social Summit in Gothenburg

Published 15 November 2017

The Prime Minister, together with the EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker has invited to a social summit focusing on the promotion of Fair Jobs and growth, in Gothenburg on Friday 17 November. Heads of State and heads of Governments together with other EU-member ministers will be in place.

Apart from the Prime minister the Swedish Government participates are:

- **Minister for Employment and Integration Ylva Johansson**
- **Minister for Health and Social Affairs Annika Strandhäll**
- **Minister for Education Gustav Fridolin**
- **Minister for EU Affairs and Trade Ann Linde**
- **Minister for Enterprise and Innovation Mikael Damberg**
- **Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér**
- **Minister for Upper Secondary School and Adult Education and Training Anna Ekström**

All government ministers will be available for media during the summit, contact respective press secretaries. In addition to the Swedish government, representatives from the EU Commission and EU countries, more than 30 different organizations and actors will attend the Summit on Fair Conditions and Growth in Göteborg, November 17, 2017.

The summit will bring together EU leaders, the social partners and other key stakeholders to discuss how to promote fair jobs and growth.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Media invitation: Ministerial conference on how gender equality can contribute to fair jobs and growth

Published 03 November 2017 Updated 03 November 2017

On Wednesday 8 November, the media is welcome to attend the opening hour and subsequent press conference during #EqualityWorks17 at Gothia Towers in Gothenburg, hosted by Sweden's Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Regnér. Representatives from the upcoming EU presidencies will attend and will discuss gender equality in relation to the labour market, the situation of women brought to light by the #MeToo campaign, and overall progress in the area of gender equality in the EU based on the Gender Equality Index of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), released in October.

Tid: 8 november 2017 at 12:45 to 13:30

Plats: Room: Horizon. Gothia Towers, Möllevägen 24, Gothenburg

The gender equality perspectives discussed at #EqualityWorks17 will provide valuable input to the upcoming Social Summit on Fair Jobs and Growth, hosted by President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker and Sweden's Prime Minister Stefan Löfven in Gothenburg 17

November.

Press conference

Wednesday 8 November, 12.45–13.30

Gothia Towers, Mössans gata 24, Gothenburg

Room: Horizon

Åsa Regnér, Sweden's Minister for Gender Equality, Marlène Schiappa, France's Gender Equality Minister, and Jevgeni Ossinovski, Estonia's Minister for Health and Labour will present their conclusions from the initial sessions of the conference.

The press conference will be held in English.

#EqualityWorks17

A gender perspective is essential for achieving well-functioning and fair labour markets, sustainable social security systems, and inclusive growth. The aim of #EqualityWorks17 is to discuss and arrive at conclusions on topics which will then be mainstreamed into discussions during the Social Summit on Fair Jobs and Growth later in November.

#EqualityWorks17 will bring together a number of EU gender equality ministers, representatives of the EU institutions, the social partners, civil society and researchers active in the field.



Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Sweden best in the EU on gender equality

Published 11 October 2017 Updated 11 October 2017

Sweden tops the EU Gender Equality Index in 2017, ahead of Denmark, Finland and the Netherlands. This news was presented today in Brussels at a conference organised by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE).

The EIGE Gender Equality Index measures progress in the area of gender equality over a ten-year period, between 2005 and 2015. The Index measures progress across six domains: work, health, time, money, knowledge and power.

"Sweden's top ranking in the EU Gender Equality Index shows that systematic gender equality efforts pay off, even if the results do not mean that we can remain content. The Government has set an objective that women and men should have the same power to shape society and their lives – and we are not there yet. On the other hand, the Index confirms that we are on the right track, and I look forward to continuing this work," says Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Regnér, in Brussels.

The Gender Equality Index shows that, on the whole, progress towards gender equality is slow. A country can receive a score of at most 100 on the Index, and the EU average is 66.2. Sweden received a score of 82.6, thereby topping the list. Greece, Hungary and the Slovak Republic are at the bottom of the list.



Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Next step to incorporate Convention on the Rights of the Child into Swedish law

Published 07 July 2017

The Government in Sweden decided to submit a proposal to the Council on Legislation to incorporate the Convention on the Rights of the Child into Swedish law. The Government considers that the Convention's strong position must be made clearer and that a child rights-based approach must have a major impact in the application of the law.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child has applied in Sweden since 1990, and the overall conformity of Swedish legislation with the Convention is good. However, there are reports – most recently from the Inquiry on the rights of the child – indicating that the rights of the child have had inadequate impact in the application of the law.

"Another important step is now being taken to highlight the importance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child for Swedish law and clarify its strong status. With the Convention on the Rights of the Child as Swedish law, officials and decision-makers will have to take account of the Convention in a different way than is the case today. It will be more clearly required that legal practitioners must base any decisions concerning children on the rights contained in the Convention," says Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér.

Incorporation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child will gather those human rights that concern children in one act, which will contribute to a holistic view and make it clear that the Convention's articles are to be

interpreted in relation to one another.

In decision-making processes concerning children, it will be made clearer that the principle of the best interests of the child must be the approach taken, and that the best interests of the child must be assessed on the basis of the individual child and their situation. With the Convention on the Rights of the Child as an act of law, it can be expected that children will be more involved in decisions that affect them.

It is proposed that the act enter into force on 1 January 2020 to give authorities responsible for the administration of justice ample time to make preparations ahead of the new act.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Conference to highlight gender equality ahead of Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth

Published 20 June 2017

The University of Gothenburg, the seat of the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research, has been tasked with organising a conference ahead of the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth to be co-hosted in Gothenburg by Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker on 17 November 2017.

"It is hard to discuss well-functioning and fair labour markets, and efficient and sustainable social security systems, without highlighting gender equality. This is why the gender perspective will be addressed at the Summit. The gender perspective is also key in the discussion of the EU's future in a broad sense, and for this reason, we are organising this ministerial conference with the University of Gothenburg," says Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér.

The target group for the conference includes gender equality ministers from a selection of EU Member States, representatives of the social partners, the European Commission, the European Institute for Gender Equality and civil society representatives. The University of Gothenburg has been allocated SEK 1.4 million for the conference, which aims to conduct a dialogue on current gender equality issues and highlight aspects of gender equality in fair jobs and growth.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice

Stronger protection against child marriage, forced marriage and 'honour' crimes

Published 17 March 2017

The Government has given Justice of the Supreme Court Mari Heidenborg the task of reviewing how protection against child marriage, forced marriage and 'honour' crimes can be strengthened.

Despite the legislative amendments introduced in 2014, most evidence indicates that the incidence of child marriage and forced marriage has increased in Sweden. This is why it is crucial that we evaluate legislation in these areas.

The inquiry remit includes analysing and taking a position on how the possibilities of recognising child marriages contracted abroad should be further restricted. Application of the penalty provisions on forced marriage and luring someone to travel abroad with the purpose of forcing them to enter into marriage will be evaluated and the Inquiry Chair will take a position on whether the provisions should be amended. The Inquiry Chair will also look at how relevant government agencies are working and cooperating on crime in these areas. Moreover, the Inquiry has been tasked with reviewing whether special grounds for tougher penalties should be introduced for 'honour' crimes.

"Forced marriage and child marriage must be combated. Children who have entered into marriage abroad must feel that society is on their side. People who commit 'honour' crimes must be sentenced and these crimes must be judged severely," says Minister for Justice and Migration Morgan Johansson.

"This is about the right to an education, choosing who you want to have a loving relationship with and how you want to shape your life. In combination with the remit we recently gave to the National Board of Health and Welfare, this Inquiry will produce stronger guidance for the municipalities. Our starting point is clear: children must not be married, and they must not be treated or considered as such either," says Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér.

The part of the remit concerning the recognition of child marriages contracted abroad is to be presented in an interim report by 6 December 2017. The final report is to be submitted by 1 September 2018.



Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Minister for Gender Equality highlights the Swedish Sexual Purchases Act at the UN Commission on the Status of Women

Published 13 March 2017

On 13–15 March, Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Regnér will head Sweden's delegation at the annual session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York. This year's overarching theme is women's economic empowerment in a changing labour market. Actress Sissela Kyle will also take part in New York through the Swedish delegation.

The CSW brings UN Member States together and is the world's foremost intergovernmental body working globally to strengthen the situation of women and gender equality.

"Many of us are concerned about what is going on in the world at present, which is why it feels more important than ever to take part in the CSW. Right now, as the rights particularly of young girls, women and LGBT people are being called into question, it is an extremely positive force that thousands of women are gathering to discuss this specific issue in New York. Through its presence at the CSW, Sweden can strengthen courageous women activists around the world," says Ms Regnér.

The aim of Swedish engagement is to be a strong and constructive voice for

the rights of women and girls. In New York, in connection with the theme of the meeting, Sweden will address issues on gender pay and pension gaps, gender segregation in the labour market and social reforms – such as parental insurance and child and elderly care – as preconditions of women's participation in the labour market.

Combat sex purchases and trafficking

On Tuesday, Sweden, France and CAP International are organising a side event on the purchase of sexual services and trafficking, where Sweden will address its experiences of the Swedish Sexual Purchases Act. Known in part for her role as women's rights activist Dagmar Friman in the drama series 'Miss Friman's War', which portrays the development of gender equality policy in Sweden, actress and gender equality debater Sissela Kyle will also take part in the seminar.

On Tuesday 14 March, Ms Regnér will deliver Sweden's address in an open debate in the UN Security Council. The theme of the debate is modern slavery/human trafficking.

In New York, Ms Regnér will also take part in a panel of Nordic ministers to discuss gender equality in the Nordic labour market. In addition, she will meet representatives of a range of NGOs active in the area of gender equality, with a particular focus on honour-related violence and oppression.

A record 1 082 NGOs, with a total of 8 623 representatives, have registered ahead of this year's CSW session.

To Washington to discuss security issues

After the CSW, Ms Regnér will take part in the opening of this year's public diplomacy programme in Washington DC on the theme 'safe and sound'.

Safe and sound is being organised by the Swedish Embassy and serves as a platform for deepening bilateral relations with the United States in the area of security. Common interests and challenges related to national contingency planning are highlighted within the scope of the theme.

Ms Regnér will be available for interviews both on site and by telephone. Please contact Press Secretary Joanna Abrahamsson



Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Nils Öberg to examine preventive measures for men who subject close relatives to violence

Published 07 March 2017

The Government has appointed Nils Öberg to chair an inquiry into measures to prevent men who subject close relatives to violence from reoffending. The remit of the inquiry is to analyse the effects of the measures and propose how work with perpetrators of violence can be developed and strengthened.

The inquiry is part of the implementation of the national strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women adopted by the Government in November last year.

"The risk of a person who has been subjected to violence in a close relationship being subjected to violence again is very large. We must focus on the perpetrator and on the preventive work to stop the violence from arising and being repeated. This inquiry is an important step in moving from a project to a national programme with regard to the prevention of violence," says Minister for Children the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér.

"Effective work to prevent reoffending builds on a combination of intervention and supportive actions. With regard to men who exercise violence in close relationships, more measures are required that are adapted to the varying needs of that particular target group," says Nils Öberg, the Government's Inquiry Chair.

The remit of the inquiry is to:

- Conduct a survey of knowledge on effective methods and analyse activities aimed at preventing violence from arising and being repeated.
- Review the need for support and guidance to develop prevention of reoffending activities and submit proposals on how the support can be designed to enable streamlining the work.
- Review the Social Welfare Committee's responsibility for measures targeting perpetrators of violence and analyse the ability of the health and medical care system to identify individuals who may repeat violence against a close relative and how these individuals can receive treatment to change their behaviour.
- Promote and strengthen cooperation between and within social services, the health and medical care system and judicial authorities.
- Provide a current description of how municipalities and responsible authorities take account of and involve the perpetrator's social network in the work to prevent and combat violence in close relations.
- Conduct a survey of how safety considerations for women, children and other close relatives subjected to violence in the perpetrator's family are handled in the work with the perpetrator, and consider and propose measures to support the work on strengthening the safety of close relatives.

The report is to be presented by 1 June 2018.

Nils Öberg, Director-General of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service

Since 2012, Nils Öberg has been Director-General of the Swedish Prison and Probation Service. Over several years, he has developed a knowledge-based approach to working on prevention of reoffending methods. Mr Öberg was previously Director-General for Administrative Affairs at the Ministry of Justice.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Employment,
Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and President Jean-Claude Juncker to host Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth

Published 23 January 2017 Updated 23 January 2017

Together with President of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker, Sweden's Prime Minister Stefan Löfven will host a Social Summit in Gothenburg on 17 November 2017, focusing on promoting fair jobs and growth.

The Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth will gather heads of state and government, the social partners and other key players to work together to promote fair jobs and growth. Well-functioning and fair European labour markets, effective and sustainable social protection systems and the promotion of social dialogue at all levels will be at the heart of these discussions.

In spite of recent improvements in economic conditions, the legacy of the worst economic and social crisis in recent times has been far-reaching. The world of work and our societies are changing fast, with new opportunities and new challenges arising from globalisation, the digital revolution, changing work patterns and demographic developments. We share a responsibility and an interest in working for a more prosperous and 'future-proof' Europe, where economic and social developments go hand-in-hand.

The Summit will be an opportunity for key stakeholders to discuss the policy priorities and initiatives set at European level and to see how the European

Union, the Member States and social partners at all levels can deliver on their shared economic and social priorities.

President Jean-Claude Juncker said: “Since the start of my mandate, I have made clear that I wanted a more social Europe. We have taken important first steps to achieve that. This year will be crucial. Following the broad public consultation, it is time to establish the European Pillar of Social Rights. The Social Summit in Sweden will help us to deliver the momentum and put social priorities where they belong: at the top of Europe's agenda.”

Prime Minister Stefan Löfven said: “In these challenging times, we need to show that we can deliver results in peoples’ everyday lives. A more social Europe, with fair working conditions, effective labour markets and a strong social dialogue, should be a priority for all of us. I trust we can take important steps towards this goal at the Social Summit in November.”



Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

International meeting on the role of business in efforts to end violence against children

Published 18 January 2017 Updated 18 January 2017

Wednesday 18 January a new step is being taken in the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children with an international meeting in Davos, Switzerland, focusing on the role of business in this work. The meeting was arranged in connection with the annual World Economic Forum. The Global Partnership is to help achieve the Global Goals of the 2030 Agenda on preventing and ending violence against and exploitation of children. Sweden has a prominent role to play as a pathfinder and was co-organisier of the meeting.

"To achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda on all girls and boys in the world being able to grow up free from violence and exploitation, it is crucial that all actors in society contribute and take action. The business sector has an important role to play in this regard. The Swedish Government is working together with the private sector, civil society, the education sector and children on this issue," says Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér.

The other co-organisiers of the meeting were Carlsson Wagonlit Travel, Ericsson, Telia, Zain Group and the UN Foundation. The Swedish Government will continue the dialogue with the companies that have operations in Sweden.

Executive Director of UNICEF Anthony Lake was also taking part in the

meeting.

The Global Partnership was launched in 2016

The Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children was launched in July last year and is a joint initiative of UNICEF and the WHO for international collaboration between governments, civil society, the private sector and other actors to achieve change.

In December 2016, Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér took part in the partnership's fourth board meeting at the UNICEF headquarters in New York. The meeting dealt with how the partnership should work on global opinion formation and knowledge exchange between the participating countries, and how resources should be mobilised for efforts to end violence against children.

A number of nations, known as pathfinders, play a more prominent role in the partnership. Apart from Sweden, the other pathfinders are currently Indonesia, Mexico and Tanzania.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Ministry of Justice

Swedish Government presents feminist policy for a gender-equal future

Published 18 November 2016 Updated 18 November 2016

The Swedish Government has presented a gender quality policy communication entitled Power, goals and authority – a feminist policy for a gender-equal future, including a ten-year National strategy to prevent and combat men's violence against women. As one of the measures in the strategy, the Government intends to amend the degree descriptions in the Higher Education Ordinance for educational programmes where it is most necessary and where students will encounter perpetrators and victims of violence in their future careers.

"People who encounter perpetrators of violence and their victims in their work must have knowledge of how violence can be uncovered and prevented, and of the most effective measures. This should therefore be included in the teaching of particularly relevant higher education programmes. This measure is part of the first long-term national strategy to combat men's violence against women, which prioritises preventive efforts. This communication shows the Government moving up a gear in its efforts to make a difference in people's lives," says Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Regnér.

"So-called honour-related crimes are unacceptable. More offences must be

uncovered and more must be done to prosecute the perpetrators. It must be clear that society takes a very serious view of these offences. We are therefore appointing an inquiry to investigate the possibilities of introducing honour-related motives as special grounds for tougher penalties," says Minister for Justice Morgan Johansson.

"Many people, often young women, are now confined by a pressure to achieve that is creating growing mental ill health. Many people, often young men, lack motivation to study and faith in the future. The gender structures and norms that constrain both girls and boys must be broken; we must strengthen young people's self-esteem and self-confidence if we are to improve school performance. This is the basis of the Government's major investments in school health and welfare services, special needs education support, and study and vocational guidance," says Minister for Education Gustav Fridolin.

Highlights of the gender equality communication

The communication Power, targets and agencies – a feminist policy for a gender-equal future encompasses political objectives, an organisational structure for implementation and a follow-up system. It also includes a national strategy with a programme of measures to prevent and combat men's violence against women. The programme of measures will apply from 2017 to 2020. Parts of the strategy are based on an agreement between the Government and the Left Party.

Gender equality agency and national assignments

The Government intends to establish a new agency in 2018 to help ensure strategic, cohesive and sustainable governance and effective implementation of gender equality policy. The Left Party supports the proposal and has been keen to establish a gender equality agency.

The three national assignments concerning honour-related violence and oppression, prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes, and the assignment on support to authorities (including higher education institutions) for gender mainstreaming of their activities, will be made permanent.

Two new interim targets for gender equality policy

The Government is introducing two new interim targets – gender-equal

education and gender-equal health – to give these areas greater space in gender equality policy.

Focus on men's participation and responsibility

Men's participation is a prerequisite if a gender-equal society is to be realised. The Government intends to implement measures to strengthen the gender equality work focus on men and boys with respect to violence prevention, health and use of parental benefits.

Strategic, cohesive and long-term agency governance

During this electoral period, the Government intends to analyse which agencies' instructions require strengthened requirements and governance with respect to gender mainstreaming.

National strategy to combat men's violence against women

The communication includes a ten-year national strategy on men's violence against women, including honour-related violence and oppression, as well as prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes. To strengthen the prospects of achieving the interim gender equality policy target of ending men's violence against women, the Government will focus particularly on preventive measures.



Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Sweden to host international high-level conference on men and equal opportunities in 2018

Published 18 October 2016 Updated 18 October 2016

On 17–18 October, the 3rd International Conference on Men and Equal Opportunities is being held in Luxembourg. Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér announced on Monday that Sweden will host the conference in 2018.

- Achieving real change and a gender equal society requires men to become engaged, show solidarity for vulnerable women and participate in the process of change. I am delighted that Sweden will host the fourth conference in two years and help keep the international focus on the issue of men and gender equality, says Sweden's Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér.

The International Conference on Men and Equal Opportunities was held for the first time in Berlin in 2012, followed by Vienna in 2014. The overall theme is the role and responsibility of men in gender equality efforts and the focus at this year's conference in Luxembourg is care work.

At a reception on Monday evening, it was announced that Sweden would host the conference in 2018. Lydia Mutsch, Minister for Equal Opportunities in Luxembourg, was present to hand over the baton to Ms Regnér and Sweden.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of the Environment, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Inspirational figures from around the world to inspire young Swedes in Stockholm

Published 05 October 2016 Updated 05 October 2016

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) have invited some twenty inspirational figures from around the world to Stockholm. At the #FirstGeneration Global Goals Forum on 5 October they will receive an award for their engagement in issues concerning fair and sustainable development, peace and climate change. Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér and Minister for the Environment Karolina Skog will attend the forum.

Through the United Nations, world leaders have taken on the challenge of creating a sustainable and fair future through 17 common goals. The Global Goals are to be achieved by 2030. The Government has a clear ambition to achieve the goals both in Sweden and internationally. This is the background to the #FirstGeneration Global Goals Forum, which will take place on 5 October.

The Forum, co-organised by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Sida, will give the leaders of tomorrow an opportunity to build global networks to exchange knowledge and experience, and recognition for their engagement for a sustainable world. The awards will be presented by State Secretary at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs Ulrika Modéer. The inspirational figures come from countries including the Marshall Islands, France, Angola, Brazil,

Rwanda and Sweden. Some 300 young Swedes are also invited to be enthused by and learn more about the Global Goals and the inspirers' work.

The Forum will be opened by Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér, and Minister for the Environment Karolina Skog will take part in a 'sustainability grill'. The event will be moderated by presenter and YouTube star Clara Henry. She is Sweden's first youth ambassador for the Global Goals.



Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Budget reforms for increased welfare and security

Published 26 September 2016 Updated 26 September 2016

The Budget Bill for 2017 was presented on the 20th of September. Improvements in sickness and activity compensation, the establishment of a gender equality agency and better dental health for older people are some of the reforms in the areas for which the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs is responsible. The Budget Bill for 2017 is based on an agreement between the government parties and the Left Party.

Sweden must have quality welfare services we can rely on. This is why the Government has made major investments in health, education and social services. As Sweden's population grows, strengthening welfare becomes particularly important. The Government continues to prioritise welfare services in this budget and proposes that SEK 10 billion a year be made available to municipalities and county councils in general government grants.

"We are continuing the important work to close the health gaps and develop the Swedish model. This is being achieved not least through the welfare billions, investments in better dental health for older people and additional resources to the Health and Social Care Inspectorate for supervisory activities. We are also increasing access to care for traumatised asylum seekers and new arrivals," says Minister for Health Care, Public Health and Sport Gabriel Wikström.

Several of these budget investments also affect the more vulnerable groups in society and target in particular single women, families with children on low incomes and people receiving sickness and activity compensation.

"People feeling safe is an important part of building our society. Our common insurance schemes were very badly looked after during eight years of a government led by the Moderate Party. This is why I am very pleased to support investments that strengthen the Swedish model and build up our social insurance system again," says Minister for Social Security Annika Strandhäll.

The Government also intends to establish a gender equality agency that will become active at the beginning of 2018 to ensure that political priorities gain traction in government agencies and activities.

"Our feminist policy must have a clear impact and make a difference to people's lives. To ensure the effective implementation of gender equality policy, a special gender equality agency is needed. The Government will also prioritise preventive action to combat men's violence against women in a new national strategy with an action plan for the period 2017–2020," says Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér.

Below is some brief information about all reforms at the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs under each Minister's areas:

Reforms in Gabriel Wikström's areas

Doubling of the general dental care subsidy for people aged 65–74

The general dental care subsidy will be raised for people aged 65–74 from currently SEK 150 to SEK 300 per year. The increase will take effect on 1 July 2017.

Additional funding to the National Board of Health and Welfare for validation

The National Board of Health and Welfare will be allocated additional funding amounting to SEK 5 million for 2017. This is in addition to an earlier investment of SEK 42 million per year for validation of foreign health and medical care training.

Reinforcing the Health and Social Care Inspectorate

The Health and Social Care Inspectorate will be allocated temporary additional resources for the processing and supervision of homes for care or residence due to the large number of unaccompanied refugee children. The

Health and Social Care Inspectorate will receive SEK 40 million in 2017 for this initiative. The Inspectorate will also receive permanent additional resources of SEK 70 million per year for staffing costs and to strengthen its supervision and licensing for personal assistance providers.

Investment to combat mental ill health among traumatised asylum seekers and new arrivals

SEK 40 million per year will be allocated to the care and treatment of asylum seekers and new arrivals who have had traumatic experiences, such as war, famine and torture, so as to combat mental ill health among this group.

Teams for long-term unemployed people to strengthen sports, outdoor activities and public health

The Swedish Sports Confederation will receive funds to create work teams of long-term unemployed people in five district sports associations. These work teams are to strengthen sports, outdoor activities and public health by organising activities, preparing walks, renovating facilities, etc.

Sports associations to receive stimulation for sports and youth leaders in socially vulnerable areas

SEK 14 million per year will be provided up to 2019 to enable more sports activities, leadership development, etc. in socially vulnerable areas. SEK 18 million per year will be provided during the period 2020–2025. These investments are expected to contribute to democratic values and physical activity.

Additional resources for sports activities for asylum seekers and new arrivals

The autumn amending budget contains an additional SEK 20 million for 2016 for asylum seekers' sports activities.

Reforms in Annika Strandhäll's areas:

Increased appropriation to Försäkringskassan

The appropriation to Försäkringskassan (the Swedish social insurance agency) will increase by SEK 130 million in 2017. These resources are to be used for the increased volumes in several social insurance benefits resulting

from the increased number of new arrivals. Moreover, the resources are to be used for reforms to sickness and activity compensation and financial support to families. The resources are also for improving the quality of investigations and strengthening efforts to combat benefit fraud in the area of assistance allowance.

A trial period for studies while maintaining activity compensation

The Government proposes that a person who has received activity compensation due to reduced working capacity for at least twelve months should be able to try studying while still receiving activity compensation payments for a period of at most six months. It is proposed that this amendment enter into force on 1 February 2017.

Greater security to people entitled to hold sickness compensation dormant while working

A monthly amount equivalent to 25 per cent of the sickness compensation that has been declared dormant can be paid each month for a period of 24 months when sickness compensation is held dormant while a person is in gainful employment. It is proposed that this amendment enter into force on 1 February 2017.

Full sickness compensation from 19 years

The age limit for when full sickness compensation can be granted will be brought down to 19. This only applies to full compensation and to people who will probably never be able to work at all. People with serious disabilities will receive secure compensation whereas young people receiving activity compensation can expect measures to help them develop their work capacity. It is proposed that this amendment enter into force on 1 February 2017.

Increased guarantee compensation in sickness and activity compensation

The guarantee level for full sickness compensation and activity compensation will be raised by 0.05 price base amounts, which for people receiving full guarantee compensation means an increase of SEK 187 per month before tax per year, using the 2017 price base amount. It is proposed that this amendment enter into force on 1 July 2017.

Increased housing supplement for people receiving sickness and activity

compensation

The compensation rate in the housing supplement will be increased from 93 to 95 per cent. This increase will provide at most an additional SEK 100 in housing supplement per month.

In total, the increase in guarantee compensation and the increase in the housing supplement mean that approximately 200 000 people will receive on average just over SEK 2 000 per year from 2018.

It is proposed that this amendment enter into force on 1 January 2017.

Raised income thresholds in housing allowance

It is proposed that the income thresholds in housing allowance provided to families with children be raised from SEK 117 000 to SEK 127 000 for single people and from SEK 58 500 to SEK 63 500 for couples. It is proposed that this increase enter into force on 1 January 2017.

Increased maintenance support for older children

The Government intends to submit legislative proposals for differentiation in the amount of maintenance support received by increasing it for children who are 15 and older.

Combined with the increase in maintenance support for older children, the Government will also look into increasing the basic income tax allowance for parents required to pay maintenance.

These increases are expected to enter into force on 1 January 2018.

Increased large-family supplement

The Government proposes an increase in the large-family supplement for the third child of SEK 126 per month. It is proposed that this increase enter into force on 1 January 2017.

Increased level for adoption allowance

The Government intends to raise the adoption allowance to SEK 75 000. This will mean that the allowance will cover 33 per cent of parents' average costs. It is proposed that the amendment enter into force on 1 January 2017.

Modernised support for parents living apart

The Government intends to introduce a new special allowance in the housing allowance for children who live alternately with both parents. This means that a certain form of housing is not favoured and that the child's registered residence does not determine his or her right to support.

Reforms in Åsa Regnér's areas

Plans to establish a gender equality agency in 2018

The Government intends to establish a gender equality agency, to be operational from the beginning of 2018. For the Government to ensure that gender equality policy priorities are reflected in the management of government agencies and activities, a permanent structure at national level is needed.

National strategy to combat men's violence against women

Before the end of the year, the Government will present a new national strategy to combat men's violence against women in the Government Communication on gender equality policy. The range of measures to prevent and combat men's violence against women comprise over SEK 900 million for the period 2017–2020.

Reinforced appropriation to the National Board of Institutional Care

The National Board of Institutional Care needs to expand the number of places available in its activities due to increased demand. The Government proposes increasing the appropriation by SEK 40 million in 2017 and estimates that the appropriation should increase by an additional SEK 10 million from 2018, which means a total of SEK 50 million per year.

National knowledge centre for unaccompanied minors

The Government intends to set up a national knowledge centre at the National Board of Health and Welfare for issues concerning unaccompanied minors. The aim is to disseminate knowledge, successful methods and effective processes to the municipalities, county councils and responsible agencies that implement measures for unaccompanied minors. The National Board of Health and Welfare will receive SEK 10 million per year in 2017 and 2018 for this initiative. It will then receive SEK 5 million per year in

2019 and 2020.



Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Swedish Government to establish gender equality agency

Published 16 September 2016 Updated 16 September 2016

In its Budget Bill, the Swedish Government states its intention to establish a gender equality agency. The agency will help ensure effective implementation of gender equality policy. Before the end of the year, the Government will also present a new national strategy, including an action plan for 2017–2020, to prevent and combat men's violence against women. Some of the initiatives in the strategy are the result of negotiations with the Left Party.

"The Government's feminist policy must have a clear impact and make a difference to people's lives. Several inquiries have concluded that the organisation of gender equality policy is fragmented and inadequate. A gender equality agency is needed to guarantee that political priorities gain traction, so that work towards a gender-equal society can be more strategic and effective. It is crucial to develop gender equality efforts as we modernise the Swedish model," says Sweden's Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality, Åsa Regnér.

In the Budget Bill, the Government states its intention to establish a gender equality agency, to be operational from the beginning of 2018. The need for such an agency was one important conclusion of the Gender Equality Inquiry, which presented its final report to Ms Regnér in October 2015. The Swedish National Audit Office report also deems that there is a need for an institutional structure that strengthens gender equality work and helps ensure a long-term approach and sustainability.

For the Government to ensure that gender equality policy priorities are reflected in governance of agencies and activities, a permanent structure at national level is needed. The precise details of its organisation, responsibilities, and interfaces and cooperation with existing structures will be prepared by an organising committee.

The gender equality agency's work will be based on the overarching gender equality policy objective that women and men must have the same power to shape society and their own lives, and the Government's associated sub-objectives.

The Left Party supports the proposal and has been keen to establish a gender equality agency.

National strategy to combat men's violence against women

Before the end of the year, the Government will present a new national strategy to combat men's violence against women in the Government Communication on gender equality policy.

Continued measures to combat men's violence against women are a gender equality policy priority for the Government. It is now particularly important to develop violence prevention measures. Efforts need to reach all groups in society and be developed in a variety of arenas. Overall, measures in this area will amount to more than SEK 900 million for the period 2017–2020.

The Budget Bill for 2017 is based on an agreement between the Government and the Left Party.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Sweden to participate in the launch of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children

Published 08 July 2016 Updated 08 July 2016

On Tuesday 12 July, Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér will represent Sweden at the launch of the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children at the UN Headquarters in New York. This partnership for global collaboration is part of the 2030 Agenda, and Sweden has a prominent role to play as one of the pathfinders in this work.

The Global Goals of the 2030 Agenda include preventing and stopping violence against and the exploitation of children. The Global Partnership is an initiative for international collaboration between governments, civil society, the private sector and other actors to achieve change.

"We are pleased that Sweden has been appointed a pathfinder in the partnership. This gives us the opportunity to share our national experience of efforts to end violence against children, but also to learn from the work of others. For Sweden, which has the first feminist government in the world, it is important to raise the gender equality perspective. Girls' and boys' vulnerabilities and needs are different and require different approaches," says Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér.

State Secretary Pernilla Baralt is also part of the Swedish delegation.

Sweden one of ten pathfinders

During the launch of the partnership, Ms Regnér will also take part in a panel debate with ministers from Indonesia, Mexico and Tanzania.

A number of nations, known as pathfinders, have a more prominent role to play in the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children. Alongside Sweden, these are currently: El Salvador, Indonesia, Jamaica, Mexico, Paraguay, the Philippines, Romania, Sri Lanka and Tanzania.

Ms Regnér will be available to the media in New York and via telephone. Please contact Press Secretary Joanna Abrahamsson if you wish to request an interview.



Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

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

Published 09 June 2016 Updated 09 June 2016

On 9–10 June, Sweden is hosting the annual meeting of OECD Senior Budget Officials, with a focus on current budgeting and policy issues. Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Regnér gave a speech about Sweden's work on gender budgeting as a tool in the pursuit of feminist policy. Ahead of the meeting, the OECD produced a report on gender budgeting in the member countries which will serve as background material for the discussions at the meeting.

"The design of economic policy and how resources are allocated are crucial factors in a gender-equal society. For Sweden's feminist Government, gender budgeting is an important tool in achieving real change in people's lives," says Sweden's Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér.

The meeting, which is taking place at the National Museum of Science and Technology in Stockholm, began with an opening address by Minister for Finance Magdalena Andersson. This is the annual meeting of the Working Party of Senior Budget Officials (SBO).

Ms Regnér spoke about Sweden's work on gender budgeting in connection with the presentation of the OECD report on the subject.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

New Swedish ambassador to combat trafficking in human beings

Published 04 May 2016 Updated 04 May 2016

The Government has decided to create a new position for an ambassador to combat trafficking in human beings. This decision will strengthen Sweden's international role as a leading human rights defender. Per-Anders Sunesson, currently head of department at the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, will assume this new position on 16 May.

Through contact with other governments, the Swedish ambassador will be a driving force in efforts to combat trafficking in human beings, strengthen the EU's work and identify future partners.

"Sweden is a strong voice on the international stage for gender equality and human rights. Women and men must have the same power to shape society and their own lives. Creating a new position for an ambassador to combat human trafficking is a step in this direction," says Minister for Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström.

The ambassador will contribute to the achievement of Global Goal 16, target 2: "End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children".

"Through the ambassador's work, Sweden will help to ensure that the vulnerable situation of girls and women will be given particular attention in international efforts to combat human trafficking. The ambassador will also

have the important task of ensuring that our knowledge about human trafficking is continually updated so that the vulnerable receive the protection and support they need from the Swedish authorities," says Åsa Regnér, Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality.

Sunesson has coordinated action against human trafficking

The new Ambassador, Per-Anders Sunesson, has a legal background and in recent years has held various positions at the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, including head of social services, disability issues and child rights. Sunesson has also previously worked at the Ministry of Justice, where his area was the standing of victims in criminal proceedings, and at the National Board of Health and Welfare, where he was responsible for supervision of health and medical care, and social services.

Per-Anders Sunesson has also been the Government Offices coordinator for issues related to vulnerable EU citizens and human trafficking. Until today he has led the work on developing the Government's new action plan to combat human trafficking. Sunesson has extensive experience of collaboration with a wide range of parties and organisations.

Human trafficking affects millions of people every year

Trafficking in human beings is one of the most serious forms of organised crime and a modern form of slavery. It is estimated that more than two million people are trafficked into slavery each year. Almost four fifths of the victims – mostly women and underage girls – are sold into the sex industry. Between 2012 and 2015, several hundred unaccompanied children who came to Sweden may have been victims of trafficking, according to data from the Stockholm County Administrative Board, which is responsible for coordinating national efforts.



Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Sweden's Minister for Gender Equality comments on the agreed conclusions following the meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women

Published 31 March 2016 Updated 31 March 2016

The 60th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), held in New York on 14–24 March, agreed on a set of conclusions urging gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Global Goals for Sustainable Development. The issues highlighted include the importance of combating all forms of violence against women and girls, involving men and boys in gender equality efforts, and the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls.

"Following intensive negotiations, the countries of the world have united on agreed conclusions urging gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Sweden and the EU have expressed their disappointment over the lack of formulations in the agreement on violence and discrimination against women and girls on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity. Formulations are also lacking that take into account the fact that there are various types of family formations," says Sweden's Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér.

Ms Regnér, who led Sweden's delegation in New York, gave a speech at the

UN General Assembly on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of girls and women from the perspective of Sweden's gender equality work.

Well-attended seminar on displaced women

Sweden organised a well-attended seminar focusing on the vulnerability of displaced women and girls. Ms Regnér also held a seminar – together with Unizon and Alternative to Violence, a Norwegian NGO – on the importance of efforts preventing men's violence against women.

During the three days that Ms Regnér was on site, private meetings were held at which gender equality issues were discussed with representatives from Argentina, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Germany, Guatemala, Honduras, Kenya, Mexico, the Netherlands, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, the UK, Uruguay and Plan International. Together with representatives from Germany and Austria, Ms Regnér also met European Commissioner Věra Jourová, responsible for gender equality issues in the EU.

Women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which was organised for the 60th time this year, took place in New York on 14–24 March. The meeting brings together the UN Member States and is the world's foremost intergovernmental body working globally to strengthen the situation of women and gender equality.

This year's overarching theme was women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development. Sweden organised a standing-room-only seminar on displaced women and girls and their vulnerable situation.

Hundreds of countries were represented at the CSW, which this year was attended by around 8 100 people from 1 035 NGOs.



Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Swedish Minister for Gender Equality highlights the vulnerability of women and girls in war at CSW session in New York

Published 11 March 2016 Updated 11 March 2016

On 14–16 March, Minister for Gender Equality Åsa Regnér will head Sweden's delegation at the annual session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York. This year's overarching theme is women's empowerment and its link to sustainable development. Sweden will organise a seminar on displaced women and girls.

This year's Commission on the Status of Women, which marks the 60th time the forum has been organised, brings together the UN Member States and is the world's foremost intergovernmental body working globally to strengthen the situation of women and gender equality. Last year, 4 400 participants from 640 civil society organisations took part.

"It is important that the world's countries gather at the UN to promote women's rights in these times of violence and conflict. In addition, there is now a new framework based on the Global Goals and the 2030 Agenda," says Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér, who has attended the CSW forum a dozen or so times, of which this year will be her second as a government minister.

Ms Regnér will deliver a speech at the General Assembly and host Sweden's seminar on displaced women and girls. During the three days of the session, she will also have bilateral meetings on gender equality issues with the

Netherlands, Japan, Canada, Germany, Argentina and others. Ms Regnér will also meet with Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women.

In addition to politicians and government officials, Sweden's delegation will include two members of the Riksdag and four civil society representatives (the Swedish Women's Lobby, the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, the Girl Child Platform and the Swedish National Committee for UN Women).

Ms Regnér will be available for interviews. Please contact her press secretary, Joanna Abrahamsson, who will be on-site in New York.



Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women gives Sweden recommendations on gender equality work

Published 08 March 2016 Updated 08 March 2016

On 7 March, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) presented its overall observations on Sweden's gender equality work. The Committee's opinion was generally positive. However, it voiced criticism concerning the gender-segregated labour market, men's violence against women and shortcomings in the governance of gender equality work.

"I share the criticism of the Committee, not least regarding efforts to combat men's violence against women. Education initiatives in particular are needed. Sweden's gender equality work was previously fragmented and project-driven, whereas the current Government has taken a new direction and raised the level of ambition. This is why I am also very pleased about the positive feedback about our systematic efforts on issues such as gender-responsive budgeting and preventing men's violence against women. The recommendations provide valuable support for our continuing work," says Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér.

On 18 February, Pernilla Baralt, State Secretary for Ms Regnér, represented Sweden in Geneva when the Committee had a constructive dialogue about

Sweden's gender equality work. Prior to the dialogue, Sweden had submitted a report on gender equality work during the period 2008–2014.

A selection of the Committee's recommendations to Sweden

The Committee considers that work on gender-responsive budgeting and integration is positive and important, but notes that there are major regional differences. The Committee recommends that Sweden adopt as soon as possible a strategy to combat violence against women and that it carefully investigate the causes of the low reporting rates among women subjected to violence, as well as the lack of convictions for perpetrators of violence. The Committee stresses that more governance is needed for effective coordination and greater gender equality. The Committee recommends that Sweden heed the proposal of the Gender Equality Inquiry to establish a special gender equality agency.

UN Member States report every four years

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is an independent expert body within the United Nations tasked with monitoring that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women is followed. Under the Convention, States are obliged to submit a written report every four years on the implementation of the provisions in the Convention. The States are then called to a dialogue with CEDAW, after which the Committee submits recommendations to the States concerning the measures they should take to better live up to their commitments under the Convention.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Cooperation agreement on social welfare issues signed between Sweden and Bulgaria

Published 05 February 2016 Updated 05 February 2016

Åsa Regnér, Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality, and Ivailo Kalfin, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Labour and Social Policy, today signed a cooperation agreement between Sweden and Bulgaria. The agreement, which covers issues dealing with gender equality, children, the elderly and people with disabilities, aims to improve the situation of vulnerable EU citizens.

"This agreement places greater emphasis on issues dealing with the elderly and people with disabilities than the agreement we signed with Romania. This was requested by Bulgaria and is an area in which we have long experience, both in Sweden and internationally. Through the exchange of knowledge, experience and good practice, and by promoting cooperation between non-profit organisations, we can improve the lives of vulnerable people," says Ms Regnér.

Letter of Intent between Sweden and Bulgaria



Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

National coordinator proposes giving coordination responsibility for vulnerable EU citizens to county administrative boards

Published 01 February 2016 Updated 01 February 2016

On Monday 1 February, the national coordinator for vulnerable EU citizens presented his final report, *Framtid sökes* (Wanted: a future), to Åsa Regnér, the minister responsible for the issue, at a press conference. Martin Valfridsson, whose remit now ends, proposes that county administrative boards be instructed to coordinate this work, with the overall responsibility resting with the Stockholm County Administrative Board.

"The coordinator's assignment has provided us with even greater insight into the situation of vulnerable EU citizens. This work will continue in Sweden, Romania, Bulgaria and at EU level," says Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér.

"It's been an intensive year, we have had close and regular contact with municipalities, government agencies and civil society. We now have a clearer picture of the issue and proposals as to how the work can continue," says Martin Valfridsson, the national coordinator.

The national coordinator's conclusions

Mr Valfridsson considers that future handling of this issue should be

incorporated into existing social structures. Regional cooperation will continue to be very important. County administrative boards should therefore be tasked with coordinating efforts for vulnerable EU citizens. In its respective region, each county administrative board should build and maintain a general picture of the situation, encourage effective cooperation between relevant stakeholders and be responsible for sharing knowledge and best practice.

Mr Valfridsson also proposes that the Stockholm County Administrative Board should be given a more general task of putting the regional pictures together into a national picture of the situation.

According to the coordinator, the following should be included in the Stockholm County Administrative Board's mandate:

Regularly share information with other county administrative boards for further sharing in each region/county. Establish an advisory function to support municipalities in their efforts for vulnerable EU citizens, especially as regards children. Promote and facilitate collaboration between various actors, including the police, the enforcement authority and the country's municipalities.

Follow the legal situation regarding the right of residence, case processing and assessment of children of vulnerable EU citizens, emergency assistance, and rules and procedures for matters such as evictions, and share this knowledge with other county administrative boards, etc.

The final report, *Framtid sökes* (Wanted: a future), also calls attention to the legal situation of EU citizens staying temporarily in Sweden.

Cooperation agreement with Bulgaria to be signed on Friday

On Friday 5 February, Ms Regnér will be in Sofia to sign a cooperation agreement between Sweden and Bulgaria. As with the agreement with Romania, the agreement with Bulgaria will focus on exchanges of experts in the areas of social security and care, gender equality and children's rights.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Sweden's Minister for Gender Equality to visit US for high level talks

Published 15 January 2016 Updated 15 January 2016

Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér will be visiting New York and Washington on 17–20 January for meetings at the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank. The focus will be on gender equality – in particular men's violence against women – and children's rights.

"The world recently took a decision on goals for sustainable development. The purpose of my visit is to deepen the dialogue with the UN on important issues to do with gender equality and children's rights in this context. I will also be meeting UN ambassadors from Latin America to further deepen relations with that continent concerning the issues I am responsible for," says Ms Regnér.

The Swedish delegation will also include State Secretary Pernilla Baralt and Niclas Jacobson, Head of the Division for EU and International Affairs.

Meetings with UN bodies on sexual violence

In New York, Ms Regnér will meet Ms Zainab Hawa Bangura, the UN Special Representative for Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Osotimehin Babatunde from the UNFPA for talks on gender equality and men's violence against women.

Ms Regnér will also visit UNICEF in New York for a dialogue on the

situation of unaccompanied refugee children and children's rights.

In Washington, Ms Regnér will meet Kyle Peters, Senior Vice President for Operations, and Caren Grown, Senior Director for Gender, at the World Bank for discussions on the new development agenda and to present Sweden's priorities in the area of gender equality. Ms Regnér will also stress the importance of the World Bank prioritising gender equality issues in its operational activities and talk about Sweden's work on gender-responsive budgeting.

In addition, Ms Regnér will meet Tina Tchen, Chief of Staff to First Lady Michelle Obama and Executive Director of the White House Council on Women and Girls, for talks about gender equality with a focus on women and economic development.

For questions about the programme and for interviews with Ms Regnér, please contact Press Secretary Darina Agha.



Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Åsa Regnér to speak about importance of new gender equality strategy in the EU at Council meeting

Published 07 December 2015 Updated 07 December 2015

Today, 7 December, Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér will take part in the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (EPSCO) Council meeting in Brussels. Ms Regnér will speak about the need for a new gender equality strategy in the EU.

The current EU gender equality strategy expires this year, and the Council has asked the Commission to present a new strategy for the coming years. The Commission has stated that it plans to make new commitments in the area of gender equality, but not of the same status as previous strategies.

"I will state that a new gender equality strategy with the same formal status as previously is vital if the Commission and the Member States are to be able to work on gender equality in a more strategic and long-term manner," says Ms Regnér.

Minister for Employment Ylva Johansson and Minister for Health Care, Public Health and Sport Gabriel Wikström will also attend the meeting.



Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Gender equality and children's rights issues in focus during Åsa Regnér's visit to Japan

Published 13 October 2015 Updated 13 October 2015

Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér will visit Japan on 13–16 October to discuss issues concerning gender equality and children's rights. Ms Regnér will meet Japanese government representatives and members of parliament, visit the Tokyo office of UN Women and be the main speaker at Sweden Kids Week in Japan.

“I look forward to the visit as we have so much in common with Japan and can learn from each other. An ageing population, a need for increased labour force participation and gender equality. It is also important that we highlighted children's rights and I am pleased that we had an opportunity to talk about Swedish children's culture and literature,” says Ms Regnér.

During her visit, Ms Regnér had talks with Japanese government representatives and members of parliament and will also participate in a round-table discussion on gender equality. Further, Ms Regnér will meet Swedish and Japanese business representatives to discuss issues concerning equality between women and men in working life and at home.

A visit to the recently opened Tokyo office of UN Women is also scheduled.

Talks on the rights of the child

In her capacity as Minister for Children, Ms Regnér will speak about

Sweden's work on children's rights and our law against corporal punishment of children in a meeting with the Japanese Minister of Health, Labour and Welfare and during a visit to Save the Children.

Ms Regnér will also open a seminar that highlights Swedish children's literature in Japan arranged by Swedish embassy in collaboration with The Swedish Institute. She will also be the main speaker at Sweden Kids Week in Japan, arranged by Business Sweden to promote Swedish enterprises in the children's products sector.

Ms Regnér will also visit a children and youth centre, a women's centre and a home for elderly people.

Media representatives are welcome to follow parts of the programme. For more information, please contact Sweden's Embassy in Tokyo. The contact person is Sven Östberg: +81 3 5562 5050 , sven.ostberg@gov.se.



Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Pressrelease Key figures met to discuss how Sweden can support people

Published 11 September 2015 Updated 11 September 2015

Today's conference at Nalen on vulnerable EU citizens brought together Swedish values-based organisations, representatives of the business sector and the municipalities, and politicians from Sweden, Romania and Bulgaria. Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér was host.

“This is another important step in the Government's work to provide long-term support to vulnerable people in Romania and Bulgaria,” said Ms Regnér.

“I am pleased to see the willingness to cooperate and the commitment shown by the values-based organisations and we have had many rewarding discussions today,” said Martin Valfridsson, the Government's national coordinator for vulnerable EU citizens.

One representative from Romania was Ciprian Necula, State Secretary at the Ministry of European Funds, with a background in Roma rights issues. Representatives of the Swedish business sector and municipalities also took part in the conference.

Issues discussed at the conference included:

How can vulnerable people be supported in order to achieve long-term change?
How can values-based organisations work together?
How can the business sector be involved?



Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Pressrelease bilateral meeting between Minister Åsa Regnér and Minister Ivailo

Published 09 September 2015 Updated 09 September 2015

On 9 September Åsa Regnér, Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality met with Bulgarian Minister Ivailo Kalfin, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Labour and Social Policy to discuss the possibilities to strengthen the bilateral cooperation on social issues related to vulnerable citizens.

The ministers expressed readiness to step up the common action in the field of Social Policy, through exchange of knowledge, experience and good practices to enhance the lives of citizens in both countries. The proposed collaboration should have a special focus on gender equality and target the population groups most at risk, children from poor families in difficult circumstances, people with disabilities as well as women and girls at risk of being abused.

Officials from respective Ministries will start working on a common agreement with the aim to focus on specific areas of cooperation and target groups. The purpose is to establish a long term cooperation mechanism while at the same time achieving short term results in improving the lives of the most vulnerable ones.

Finally, Minister Kalfin invited Minister Regnér to visit Bulgaria. State Secretary Pernilla Baralt will also visit Bulgaria before the end of this year.



Press release from Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs,
Ministry of Justice

Combating vulnerability and begging – no one should have to beg

Published 17 August 2015 Updated 17 August 2015

On June 24, the Government presented a package of measures for vulnerable EU citizens staying temporarily in Sweden. The initiative aims to combat vulnerability and begging. The long-term goal is that no one should have to beg in Sweden.

The package of measures contains actions to promote cooperation within the EU and especially with Romania and Bulgaria, clearer rules in Sweden and close cooperation with civil society organisations.

“Today, the Government will present a first package of measures for vulnerable EU citizens in Sweden. It is a step on the road to reducing vulnerability and begging. The goal is that no one should have to beg,” says Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér.

The three reform areas:

- increased cooperation within the EU, especially with Romania and Bulgaria
- clearer rules in Sweden
- close cooperation with civil society organisations.

Important measures in the package include:

- Within the framework of the cooperation agreement with Romania,

continue work on development of welfare, children's rights and gender equality.

- Play an active role towards the European Commission in tackling the issue and promote EU efforts on Roma inclusion.
- Support Romania via the Cohesion Fund, the Social Fund and the Regional Development Fund.
- A government assignment to the Police to propose measures to stop violence against vulnerable EU citizens staying temporarily in Sweden. The assignment report is to be presented by 30 November.
- Supplementary terms of reference to the inquiry into trafficking in human beings about protection provided by criminal law against exploitation of vulnerable people who have come to Sweden.
- Better management of unlawful settlements on public and private land. An inquiry will analyse how landowners' possibilities to obtain help with measures in the event of prohibited settlements can be improved.
- Better cooperation and regular meetings with civil society organisations working with vulnerable EU citizens.

Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér, Minister for Justice and Migration Morgan Johansson and Minister for Culture and Democracy Alice Bah Kuhnke took part in the press conference.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Press briefing with the Romanian Minister of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly

Published 22 January 2015 Updated 17 May 2015

A meeting will take place on Friday between the Swedish minister for Social Security, Ms. Annika Strandhäll, minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality, Ms. Åsa Regnér and the Romanian Minister of Labour, Family, Social Protection and Elderly, Ms. Rovana Plumb. Thereafter a press conference will be held.

Friday 23 January 11:30 am
Rosenbad 4

The press conference will be held in English.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Committee on the Rights of the Child and Government in forward-looking dialogue

Published 16 January 2015 Updated 17 May 2015

The dialogue between the Government of Sweden and the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva has now concluded. The Government will continue to advance the rights of the child in cooperation with civil society and other actors.

- The dialogue has been extremely constructive and informative. The Government has high ambitions in the area of child rights and the Committee on the Rights of the Child has high expectations of Sweden. We will take these expectations on board and continue to work with civil society and other actors to ensure that Sweden is one of the very best countries to grow up in, says Pernilla Baralt, State Secretary to Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér, representing the Government in Geneva.

Directly following the dialogue, Ms Baralt is meeting child rights organisations to make an immediate start on further improving the situation of children in Sweden.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Prime Minister's Office

Stefan Löfven to meet Nobel Peace Prize winner Kailash Satyarthi

Published 09 December 2014 Updated 17 May 2015

On Friday 12 December, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven will meet Nobel Peace Prize winner Kailash Satyarthi for lunch at Rosenbad. Ministers Margot Wallström, Ylva Johansson and Åsa Regnér will also be present.

Kailash Satyarthi was awarded the prize jointly with Malala Yousafzai for his struggle against the suppression of children and young people, against child labour and for the right of all children to education.

Date and time: Friday 12 December at 12.00.

Venue: Bella Venezia, Rosenbad.

Photo opportunity. Assembly for photographers at Bella Venezia at 11.30.
Prior notification of attendance is obligatory.



Government Offices of Sweden

Press release from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Prime Minister Stefan Löfven to visit New York

Published 14 November 2014 Updated 17 May 2015

Prime Minister Stefan Löfven will visit New York on 19–21 November to attend the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Minister for Children, the Elderly and Gender Equality Åsa Regnér will also attend.

In connection with his visit to the UN, the Prime Minister will also hold a number of meetings aimed at strengthening Sweden's relations with the UN.

During his time in New York Mr Löfven will also visit the Swedish-American Chamber of Commerce and Spotify, and speak about the Nordic Model at New York University.

Media representatives are welcome to participate in large parts of the programme.

Please note that prior notification and, in some cases, accreditation are required.



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



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.

* * *

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!



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.



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



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

Check against delivery.

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.