

GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION 2003/04:129

SUMMARY

# A Swedish Strategy for Sustainable Development

– Economic, Social and Environmental



REGERINGSKANSLIET



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## Vision and premises

The government's vision of sustainable development is based on the following principles:

- \* All policy decisions must take account of the longer-term economic, social and environmental implications.
- \* Sustainable development involves safeguarding and utilising existing resources in a sustainable way. It is also about efficient resource utilisation and its enhancement, and the long-term management of and investment in human, social and material resources. Protecting natural resources and safeguarding health are essential to the development and prosperity of every society. Sustainable development is itself sustained within a given society by the labour, know-how and creativity of its citizens.

The policy goals implicit in any vision of a sustainable society must be solidarity and justice in every country, between countries and from generation to generation. A sustainable society is one in which economic development, social welfare and social cohesion go hand in hand with a sound environment. Such a society meets its current needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs.

- \* A sustainable society must be imbued with democratic values. Its citizens must share a sense of participation in the decision-making process. They must feel they have a say their society's development and the will and ability to assume responsibility for that development.

- \* A sustainable society is prepared to invest over the long term in its two key resources: people and the environment. Such a society must take account of what the environment and the health of its citizens can tolerate, and be designed accordingly.

- \* A sustainable society must create conditions conducive to good health on equal terms for the entire population. Citizens must enjoy the same opportunities irrespective of gender, socio-economic class or ethnic/cultural background.

- \* A sustainable society is distinguished by sound management and efficient use of its natural resources. Its business sector is competitive and economic growth is healthy. Its welfare systems can readily be adapted to demographic changes.

- \* In a sustainable society, major environmental problems are solved by reducing the impact on the environment to levels which are sustainable in the long term.

To achieve this vision, the government has drawn up a strategy based on three key premises:

- \* Sustainable development in Sweden can only be achieved within the context of global and regional co-operation.
- \* Sustainable development policies, measures and concerns must be mainstreamed, i.e. integrated into all existing policy areas.
- \* Further action at national level will be needed to ensure long-term protection of

the critical resources that constitute the basis for sustainable development. These include natural resources, people's health, skills and expertise, infrastructure and the built environment.

During its term of office (2002–2006) the

government will focus on four key areas: environmentally driven growth and welfare, good health – the most vital resource for the future – coherent policies for sustainable community planning and a viable child and youth policy for an ageing society.

The task of implementing Sweden's strategy for sustainable development is the responsibility of the Government Offices as a whole. The government has set up a special body in the Prime

Minister's Office, Co-ordination Unit for Sustainable Development, to co-ordinate international and national efforts in this field and strengthen strategic initiatives.

## Introduction

The Swedish Strategy for Sustainable Economic, Social and Environmental Development (2003/04:129) is a revised version of the national strategy for sustainable development presented in 2002. Drawn up in co-operation with the Left Party, the strategy builds on

the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, the EU strategy for sustainable development and the so-called Lisbon process, and addresses the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

## International initiatives

The national strategy is based inter alia on the proceedings and conclusions of the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002 and the Millennium Development Goals adopted in 2000.

The Johannesburg summit adopted a political declaration and an implementation plan. The term sustainable development was recognised as a key principle, to be embodied in all

UN programmes. There are three overarching objectives: poverty reduction, promotion of sustainable consumption and production patterns and preservation of the natural resource base for economic and social development. All countries will be expected to commence implementation of national sustainable development strategies in 2005.

## Development targets:

- ▶ A 50% reduction by 2015 in the number of people living in extreme poverty and suffering from hunger.
- ▶ Access to basic education for all children and young people.
- ▶ Promote gender equality.
- ▶ Better conditions for women.
- ▶ Reduced infant and child mortality.
- ▶ Reversal of development trends for HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.
- ▶ Environmental sustainability with particular regard to water and sanitation systems, energy, and housing and buildings.
- ▶ Global development co-operation.

Follow-up of the Millennium Development Goals in a UN report to be published in 2005.

### Key issues in connection with future global efforts to promote sustainable development

Sustainable development in Sweden is closely linked to sustainable development in the rest of the world. Globalisation poses a continuing challenge. Central issues include:

- \* *Equitable, sustainable global development* sustained by contributions from all policy areas, the need to ensure that all measures and initiatives are based on people's rights, and the importance of ensuring that priority is given to the needs of the poor.
- \* The tasks of the *Swedish Armed Forces* include participation in international peace support operations. Account must be taken of the environment in all international operations.
- \* *Trade for sustainable development*: simplified trade regulations, eco-labelling and harmonised trade and development assistance policies should be adopted in the interests of a better environment and greater respect for human rights. International corruption must be combated more effectively.
- \* *Combating poverty* is about creating opportunities for people to improve their living conditions. All efforts must be based on developing countries' own priorities and strategies.
- \* *The fight against HIV/AIDS*: measures to check the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases are being implemented by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and at national level. Swedish government efforts include preventive measures, health care, medical treatment and research.
- \* *Sustainable consumption and production patterns*: a 10-year framework of programmes will be drawn up. Sweden is an active participant in the Marrakech process, which is aimed inter alia at identifying needs at local, regional and international level.
- \* *Water and sanitation*: one of the goals of sustainable development is to increase access to drinkable water and basic sanitation, primarily in poor countries. Sweden will continue to pursue these issues in national and international bodies.
- \* *Housing and sustainable building*: Sweden is an active contributor to UN-led international initiatives in support of housing finance policies for poor people. Measures also include support for better community planning and protection of tenancy rights.

✦ *Energy*: several countries in and outside Europe, including Sweden, form part of a coalition for renewable energy. Priority is given to sustainable solutions involving the private sector.

### **Increased support and accountability at regional and other levels**

Efforts must be made to coordinate sustainable development approaches and strategy choices by organisations active in international, Nordic and other networks. Principal bodies here include the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Nordic Council of Ministers, the WHO and Baltic 21 (Agenda 21 in the Baltic Sea region).

Sustainable development is the overall goal of the OECD. The organisation has developed indicators and identified obstacles to policy work on sustainable development. Sweden is actively concerned to promote and strengthen these efforts.

The essential concern of the WHO is the promotion of health and sustainable development. Its European Region initiatives in connection with the health strategy Health 21 and the interlinking of environmental and health issues are of crucial significance.

The revised Nordic Strategy for Sustainable Development attaches greater importance than formerly to social and economic concerns. Sweden has placed particular emphasis on issues relating to chemicals, food safety, education, public health, pension systems and sustainable production and consumption patterns.

### **Internal and global efforts by the EU to achieve sustainable development**

The EU Strategy for Sustainable Development, which completes and builds on the Lisbon strategy – aimed at making the EU the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion – was adopted in June 2001. Four key areas were highlighted:

- ✦ Combating climate change.
- ✦ The need for sustainable transport.
- ✦ Threats to public health, including communicable diseases and the use of chemicals.
- ✦ More responsible management of natural resources.

The EU also prioritises issues concerning environmental management at global level and links between trade and environmental policies. Sweden pursued the issue of renewable energy and energy efficiency ahead of the EU Summit in 2004.

Higher employment rates, greater social cohesion, prioritisation of innovation and entrepreneurship, a strong single market and environmental protection for growth and jobs are crucial to the achievement of sustainable development.

## National, regional and local initiatives and institutional issues

Sustainable development combined with a good living environment and adequate welfare calls for active efforts at national, regional and local level. Enterprises, Non-governmental organisations (NGOs), institutions, public authorities, municipal and county councils, and private individuals can all contribute.

At national level, relevant authorities are required to take the principles of sustainable development into account in the course of their work, e.g. in connection with issues relating to the environment and resource management.

Public health measures must be coordinated and focused on the attainment of a national public health goal. At regional level, regional development programmes, which furnish the basis for traffic planning work, waste management, labour supply and the coordination of education efforts, must reflect the government's vision of sustainable development.

County administrative boards, regional government authorities and local government associations play a vital role in implementing national sustainable development strategies at regional and local level. Local efforts to promote sustainability through programmes like Agenda 21 have already had a major impact in Sweden. Examples include work on local environmental goals, local investment pro-

grammes, climate investment programmes, model communities programmes (MCP), welfare balance sheets and public health objectives.

Voluntary associations such as advocacy groups, religious societies, sports clubs and other organisations play a vital role in the development of society. The government considers that full use should be made of all available knowledge and experience.

The business community contributes to sustainable development by being competitive and generating employment, developing new technologies, introducing long-term measures aimed at supporting employees and assuming global responsibility for its operations.

The choices and activities of individual citizens affect production and consumption patterns. They also have an effect on public participation and democratic development and a measurable impact on public health. Opinions and solutions must be widely debated. Experience based on gender and social or ethnic background is invaluable. Greater gender equality and integration are therefore essential to the promotion of sustainable development.

As the sustainable development vision is essentially a question of values and outlook on life, more information and education in this sphere will be needed.



# Future strategic issues

Our civilisation rests on our ability to manage, utilise and create the resources on which our economies are based. The resources we are most dependent on include all natural resources, infrastructure and buildings, and human resources. All of these can either be renewed or have a long lifetime. In most cases, it also takes considerable time to build up and affect such resources. Meanwhile, we are all becoming increasingly interdependent. Sustainable development in Sweden is inextricably linked to sustainable development in the world at large. The government has identified four issues of strategic importance to the future of sustainable development:

## 1. Environmentally driven growth and welfare

Efforts must be made to promote and boost prosperity throughout the world without impairing the global climate, damaging ecosystems or undermining people's health. Concerted support for environmentally driven growth will create new opportunities for international and European co-operation, serving in turn to strengthen policy-making at all levels. Other positive effects include the creation of networks between the business community, public institutions and NGOs.

Energy is a key area. Energy-saving and efficient energy utilisation are vital concerns, as are access to water and sanitation. Major development assistance initiatives and the transfer of technological know-how and expertise are essential. Sweden and the EU

are currently seeking to abolish tariffs and other trade barriers applying to environmentally sound goods and services.

Thanks to its environmental awareness, holistic approach and high environmental protection standards, Sweden's is a prominent player and an important driving force in the context of international environmental initiatives. Swedish industry, for example, has introduced more environmentally sound production processes. Consumers are also important; changing demand patterns can help stimulate more sustainable production of goods and services. An action plan for sustainable household consumption is being drawn up.

## 2. Good health – our most important future resource

Economic growth, a healthy environment and high public health standards are interdependent. High illness rates and persistent social and gender-related health disparities pose a serious threat to sustainable development. The same applies to environmental problems such as uncontrolled use of toxic substances and ambient noise. Investment in health is essential if society is to cope with the stresses and strains caused by ill health.

The fight against illness and disease must be a central element of all policies aimed at promoting social justice and combating poverty.

Public health issues feature prominently in international efforts to promote sustainable development. Examples include implementa-

tion of Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Public health is also a priority issue at the WHO and the key concern of the EU Public Health Programme. Sweden's new public health policy is targeted at factors affecting public health. Pressing objectives include greater public participation and empowerment, economic and social security, secure, favourable conditions for children to grow up in, reduced tobacco and alcohol consumption, healthier eating habits and lifestyles, and effective protection against communicable diseases.

### 3. Coherent policies for sustainable community planning

Regional imbalance is a growing problem in many countries including Sweden. Mass migration from the countryside has been accompanied by the deterioration of urban living environments. Today, these problems are high on the international and European agenda.

Measures to tackle social segregation, lack of housing and inadequate transport capacity are vital. Infrastructure and living environments must be capable of supporting sustainable economic, social and environmental development over the long term. Effective community planning not only serves to promote enterprise development but can also help expand local labour markets.

In 2004–2005, UN efforts to promote sustainable development will focus primarily on water and sanitation, housing and sustainable building. Sustainable development of urban areas is high on the agenda. In Sweden, the National Committee for Agenda 21 and Habitat have both proposed that activities in this area be intensified. Continued efforts at

regional level will be based on existing regional growth and development programmes. Attention will also be focused on rural development issues, including the EU's new agricultural policy. Swedish know-how and expertise, based on its traditional strengths – urban planning, building construction and environmental technology – will furnish an important basis for continued work at international level. Swedish municipal and county councils already cooperate with regions and parties in other countries on the Baltic rim, in Asia, Africa and Central America.

### 4. Child and youth policies for an ageing society

Fewer economically active people are having to support increasing numbers of pensioners and children. Thus a key question, and a priority issue in the context of international sustainability efforts, is how to support the present and future younger generations.

Recent years have seen a relative decline in the economic and social circumstances of young people in Sweden. Vigorous efforts should be made to strengthen this group. Poor integration, unemployment, long-term dependence on social security benefits and mental illness are all major problems which have even affected the birth rate. As most of Sweden's foreign-born citizens are children and young people, improving conditions for the young will also entail a stronger focus on integration issues. While there is a need for people in this category to improve their Swedish language skills, Sweden should turn the substantial resources of this group to good account.

Due to unemployment, high costs for housing and insecure conditions of work, women are starting having children at

increasingly higher ages. From the standpoint of family and gender equality policy, sustainable development is about creating conditions which allow women as well as men to recon-

cile work and family life. Attention should also be focused on disparities – in terms of needs and opportunities – between girls and boys in society.

## Core areas – measures adopted and continued action

### The future environment

Ecological sustainability – Swedish environmental goals

The overall aim of Swedish environmental policy is to hand on to the next generation a society in which the major environmental problems have been solved. To this end, the government has drawn up 15 environmental quality objectives. These identify future environmental goals and define the direction of Sweden's environmental work at national, EU and international level.

Three basic environmental strategies have been adopted. These are based on the need for greater energy efficiency and more efficient transport systems, non-toxic, resource-saving ecocycles, environmentally sound products, efficient management of land and water resources and a sound built environment.

### Nature conservation and biological diversity

Nature conservation and the preservation of biological diversity are the cornerstones of a sustainable society. As of 2004, the government will allocate SEK 300 million over a three-year period in an effort to encourage locally based nature conservation projects. Other initiatives include increased support for nature reserves, action to reduce acidification of Sweden's lakes and measures aimed at preserving biological diversity on agricultural land.

### The sea

Shipping, fishing, toxic effluents, over-fertilisation and climate change all have a detrimental impact on the marine environment. In 2005, the government will propose measures designed to break this negative trend. The goal in this sector is a balanced marine environment and a living coastline and archipelago.

Sweden actively promotes international initiatives to preserve the marine environment. It has been proactive in efforts to classify the Baltic Sea as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA). It has also played an active part in implementing the strategy drawn up by the EU to protect and preserve the marine environment. The environmental impact of shipping and fishing will be addressed at a ministerial meeting in 2006.

### Towards a non-toxic environment

A crucial task over the next few years will be to pursue efforts in connection with new EU chemical legislation and a global chemical strategy. In the last two years, a number of strategies and proposed measures have been advanced by Sweden and the EU. Examples of the former include demands for better information about chemicals in goods and a reduction in the use of hazardous substances.

### Limitation of climate change

Levels of greenhouse gas emissions could now precipitate sweeping climate change. The goal is to reduce emissions to at least 4 per cent below the 1999 level during 2008–2012.

If this target is not met, the government may propose further measures or recommend that the target be revised. Thanks to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted in 1992 and the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, there is a broad measure of political agreement on the need to reduce the greenhouse effect. An EU directive on greenhouse gas emissions will enter into force in 2005.

Sweden, which has long supported efforts to promote alternative energy sources, applies a range of economic controls aimed at reducing emission levels. A number of inquiry committees are currently looking into ways of reducing emissions. Options include a revised energy tax, a new road traffic tax and more efficient energy use in buildings. Work on a national data collection and emission reporting system is also under way.

### **Population and public health**

#### Population trends and sustainable social protection systems

Sweden's population is ageing, mainly as a result of higher living standards, healthier lifestyles and medical progress. There will be 2 million people aged 65 and over living in Sweden by 2020. Too few children are being born to compensate for the declining size of the working-age population. At the same time, increasing numbers of people experience working life as stressful and costs in connection with sickness absence and early retirement are mounting.

Coping with the pressures of demographic change will mean harnessing the capacity of every member of the community. The government's policy aim is to ensure that a larger proportion of the working-age population continues in or returns to working life. The government has accordingly introduced a raft

of public health measures. A key goal is to halve sickness absence in 2002–2008. Other measures include more support for families with children and a pension scheme appropriate to a sustainable social protection system and a fair deal for present and coming generations.

A special EU committee responsible for coordinating social matters and pension co-operation at European level has been in place since 2002.

### **Public health**

Implementation of Sweden's new public health policy is in progress. Action is targeted at factors that affect public health. Pressing objectives include greater public participation and empowerment, economic and social protection, secure, favourable conditions for children to grow up in, improved health in working life, effective protection against communicable diseases, healthier eating habits and lifestyles, including increased physical activity and reduced tobacco and alcohol consumption.

Work at national, regional and local level is coordinated by a national steering committee on public health. A special report on public health development and implementation of the government bill Public Health Goals will be submitted to the Riksdag (parliament).

Sweden is also seeking to promote a coherent public health policy within the EU, inter alia in connection with the implementation of the EU Public Health Programme, which runs from 2003 to 2008. At the initiative of the EU, a European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control will be set up in Sweden. Public health issues of pressing concern are also being addressed through the WHO, where Sweden plays an active role.

## Working life

The aims of the government's policy on working life are to promote good working conditions and opportunities for development at work for women and men. An 11-point programme aimed at promoting health in working life and emphasising inter alia employer responsibility, was launched in the autumn of 2001. The government has also proposed additional resources for work environment control programmes and the activities of regional workplace safety representatives.

Areas addressed by ongoing public sector projects include rehabilitation, physical and mental stress, the working environment, the elderly in working life and health audits. In 2003, priorities for the European Employment Strategy were approved by the EU. A new work environment strategy for 2002–2005 was adopted in the same year.

## Food

Food must be safe. Consumers must be adequately informed about food and the significance of eating habits for ecologically, socially and economically sustainable development. Trading enterprises and producers must also assume their share of responsibility. The EU Council of Ministers has put forward a proposal on common food hygiene regulations. Sweden has proposed simplifying the rules governing entry to the European market of ecological products from developing countries. Other initiatives include proposals on better food control, funding to help farmers develop small-scale food cultivation, more information for consumers and support for the development of voluntary industry agreements.

## Social cohesion, welfare and security

### Social participation

Social cohesion and participation, gender equality, the development of children and young people, a vibrant culture and security from crime are essential preconditions for sustainable development. The government's goal is a significant reduction in the number of socially and economically vulnerable people by 2010. Criteria are income, education, employment, days lost through sickness, drug abuse and homelessness. Reports on the outcomes of action plans against drug abuse, poverty and social exclusion respectively are due out in 2005.

### Integration and diversity

Efforts to counter ethnic discrimination have high priority. A new integration policy was adopted by the Riksdag in 2002. The following year saw the passage of the Ethnic Discrimination Act (2003:307). Several inquiries – focusing inter alia on education – are currently in progress. The integration policy goals are:

- \* Equal rights, responsibility and opportunity for all, irrespective of ethnic or cultural background.
- \* Community based on diversity.
- \* A society characterised by mutual respect for differences between people within the framework of that society's democratic values, and in which everyone, regardless of background, can play an active and responsible part.

## Gender equality

The overall goal of gender equality policy is to ensure that women and men enjoy the same opportunities, rights and responsibilities in all walks of life. A gender equality perspective must be present in all areas and at every level and stage of the decision-making process. Priority will be given to the following five areas:

- ✳ Representation: equitable distribution of power and influence.
- ✳ Equal pay for equal work or work of equal value.
- ✳ Violence committed by men against women, prostitution and trafficking in women for sexual purposes.
- ✳ Men and gender equality.
- ✳ Sexualisation of the public domain.

## Development and participation of children and young people

The government's aim is to ensure that children and young people are respected, can develop in safe and secure conditions, participate in the political process and have a say in the decisions affecting them and their society. The principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child must permeate all aspects of government policy and all public services affecting children and young people. The Child Ombudsman is a proactive entity in this context.

A committee of inquiry appointed in 2003 was tasked with proposing measures aimed at young people aged 16–24 who neither work nor study. The National Board for Youth Affairs will be given SEK 30 million over a three-year period for projects to tackle the

exclusion of young people from the labour market. A working party composed of ministry representatives has been commissioned to investigate conditions for children in economically vulnerable families. The government also plans to further develop the national strategy in order to fully implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. A government bill containing proposals for a new, proactive youth policy will be put before the Riksdag in 2004.

## Security from crime

The aim in this policy area is to reduce crime and enhance security. Activities must be based on the interests and wishes of citizens. Crime prevention work should be undertaken with the help of local crime prevention councils, central business organisations, and, at international level, in co-operation with networks within the EU. Sexual crime laws, the legal sanctions system for young people and drink-driving legislation will be reviewed. Additional resources will be allocated to the police and efforts will be made to enhance the efficiency of the prosecution service and the courts. In drafting a new penal care act, special attention will be focused on ways of preventing recidivism without compromising standards of security and community protection.

## Culture

The aims of cultural policy must be to safeguard freedom of expression and create conditions in which people can truly exercise that freedom. Everyone must be able to take part in cultural life, experience culture and engage in creative activities of their own. Implicit in these aims are goals such as cul-

tural diversity, artistic renewal and quality, and the enjoyment and preservation a society's cultural heritage. Policy measures must be based on a holistic view of human beings and their environment and integrated into all sectors of society. Free admission to state museums will gradually be introduced from 2004 in an effort to encourage greater access to and participation in cultural life. The link between culture and health and issues relating to culture at work should be emphasised. Creating opportunities for people to experience culture is a vital aspect of public health work. To enhance knowledge in these fields, a new body, the Architecture, Form and Design Council has been set up by the government.

### **Employment and learning in a knowledge society**

#### **Employment**

Continued investment in education and research is crucial to the realisation of Sweden's overall policy goal – to be a leading knowledge society. The principle of lifelong learning is essential to efforts to maintain high rates of employment and international competitiveness.

Priority is given to measures to encourage permanent employment. An interim policy goal is for 80 per cent of people between the ages of 20 and 64 to be in regular employment by the end of 2004. Principal policy aims are to confirm the role of unemployment insurance as readjustment insurance, to counter manpower shortages and to help those who experience particular difficulty finding work, such as young people, immigrants and the disabled.

#### **Lifelong learning**

The UN has declared 2004–2014 the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. Sweden believes it is well equipped to meet the challenge. The principle of sustainable development has been incorporated into education curricula at all levels and teacher education programmes. A special committee has been set up to survey and assess efforts by education systems at all levels to promote economically, socially and environmentally sustainable development, and to encourage further initiatives.

#### **Research and Development**

The government's overall policy aim is to help Sweden become and remain a leading research nation. To this end, authorities responsible for funding research were reorganised in 2001. Initiatives by authorities and institutions of higher education in areas of special importance for sustainable development also play a vital role. New technologies must be developed to promote more efficient use of energy and resources. Special support has been made available for research into biological diversity and ecologically sustainable development.

### **Sustainable economic growth and competitiveness**

#### **A sustainable economy**

Sustainable development cannot be achieved without reference to social and environmental concerns. The negative impact of the production and consumption of goods and services on people and the environment must be kept to a minimum. Economic policy instruments should be applied to encourage more sustainable consumption and production patterns.

The government has implemented a raft of



reforms designed to create a more stable and efficient economy. Examples include tax and pension reforms, a stiffer competition act and changes in the housing, transport, communications and energy sectors. Other measures, aimed at boosting employment and enhancing social development, have been targeted primarily at young people, immigrants, unemployed people and the sick.

Efforts to support sustainable development have also involved changes in the tax system. Areas affected include road traffic, waste management and disposal, and carbon dioxide emissions. An expert group on environmental studies appointed in 2003 has been tasked with enhancing decision support data to be used as a basis for future environmental and economic policy decision-making in the environmental sphere.

### Sustainable enterprise

The enterprise sector contributes to sustainable development by generating growth without compromising the environment or human resources. Corporate management must ensure that business operations are conducted in a responsible and ethical manner. Sweden's policy in this regard is based on internationally agreed conventions and guidelines concerning human rights, core labour standards, sustainable development and corruption.

Implemented and planned measures include:

- ✳ Provision of information, advice, continuing professional development and financing assistance to small enterprises and other companies.
- ✳ Dialogues with the business community aimed at strengthening the integration of sustainable development concerns into company operations.

- ✳ Provision of guidelines for enterprise on social and environmental responsibility. The Swedish Partnership for Global Responsibility programme is one example.
- ✳ Simplification of regulations governing the operations of small enterprises.
- ✳ Promotion of women's and immigrants' entrepreneurship.
- ✳ Capital provision for small enterprises.
- ✳ Funding for the development of environmental technology and the commercialisation of research findings.
- ✳ Promotion of effective competition.
- ✳ Promotion of environment-oriented product policies.

### Innovation systems and technology transfer

Innovation is essential to sustainable development. Seldom the product of individual endeavour, occurring in isolation, innovation is typically the result of teamwork and interaction. The government is currently drawing up an innovation strategy aimed at strengthening Sweden's ability to generate know-how and expertise and translate it into sustainable development and new jobs. This will involve sufficient numbers of educated, knowledgeable people, closer collaboration between institutions of higher education, laws and regulations that support and encourage innovation and sufficient venture capital.

### Sustainable consumption patterns

It is vital that the negative impact of consumption patterns on people and the environment is kept to a minimum. A complex of

many factors of which the consumer is more or less aware and over which she/he has varying degrees of influence, consumption patterns are difficult to change. A government committee of inquiry set up in the spring of 2004 will seek to establish a closer definition of sustainable consumption and propose a plan of action.

Another important step is the government's ongoing work on a new consumer policy strategy clearly showing the connection to sustainable development. A new EC directive on public procurement will facilitate the adoption of more rigorous environmental and social standards.

### **Regional development and regional conditions**

The aim of the government's regional development is to stimulate economic growth and vitality throughout Sweden. The regional development and growth programmes, which are followed up annually, are important instruments in this connection.

#### **Regional development**

The long-term goal here is the establishment throughout the country of efficient, sustainable local labour market regions with adequate standards of service. Objectives include economic growth, gender equality and welfare, reduced environmental impact, good health and a good living environment. All counties have submitted proposals for growth programmes for the period 2004–2007. EU Structural Funds, aimed at stimulating growth and competitiveness, are an important instrument in this connection.

### **Forests as a resource**

Forestry policy goals are both production- and environment-related. The former kind are concerned with the efficient, responsible use of forest resources and high, sustained yields. The latter are concerned with preserving the production capacity of forest lands. Achieving these objectives will require a great deal more work. There will be an independent evaluation and review of forestry policy. At European level, five resolutions on Europe's forests were adopted in 2003. These are concerned with economic sustainability, biological diversity, the social value of forests and sustainable forestry. The possibility of a global forest convention is under discussion at the UN.

### **Agriculture, fishing and reindeer husbandry**

Sweden was an active participant in the 2003 reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. The reform will give farmers greater freedom to meet market demands. More funding will be made available for environmental and rural development. A Swedish animal protection authority was established in 2004. The EU has imposed a total ban on antibiotics in animal feed. Sweden is also pressing for reduced animal transport times in the EU. Measures aimed at ensuring that animal feed is not harmful to humans, animals or the environment have been given priority.

In the fishing sector, regional advisory councils for different sea areas will be established throughout the EU. Similar consultation groups involving players in the industry will also be strengthened at local and regional level in Sweden.

A new Norwegian-Swedish convention on domestic reindeer grazing has been convened. A number of inquiries and information proj-

ects on Sami rights and culture are also in progress.

## Development of sustainable community planning

Sustainable community planning should be based on a holistic approach in which ecological, economic, social and cultural aspects and concerns are interwoven. Different interests must be balanced against one another when dealing with buildings, infrastructure and installations.

### The built environment

The fact that growing numbers of people around the world are living and working in cities and towns is both beneficial and detrimental to the environment. The depopulation of parts of the country's more sparsely populated areas poses major challenges. In the government's view, town and country planning and building must be further developed and brought into line with sustainable development policy goals, and a review of planning and building legislation has therefore been undertaken. Environmental quality goals, including the Good Built Environment goal, will be further developed. Efforts to improve the indoor environment and promote higher quality building design, construction and maintenance standards are to continue. Fewer problems caused by radon, damp or mould are a sub-goal for the indoor environment. Inter-disciplinary research and study projects are therefore vital.

The EU and Sweden are currently working to improve and develop new methods of calculating costs and environmental impacts in the building sector. A number of joint projects in Sweden, involving the central government,

the building sector, municipal and county councils and other bodies have resulted in agreements on a range of issues including healthy indoor environments, efficient energy and resource utilisation and continuing professional development. Several inquiries have addressed problems such as serious cases of faulty construction, inflated prices, illegal labour and maintenance requirements in the housing market. New regulations aimed inter alia at improving access to buildings, etc. are designed to make life easier for the disabled, the elderly and families with children.

In 2004–2005 urban development issues will be discussed at a number of international meetings and conferences, including within the UN system.

### Energy

Sweden's short- and long-term energy policy goal is to ensure access to electricity and other forms of energy on competitive terms. Adverse effects on health, the environment and the climate must be kept to a minimum.

Alternative policy solutions to nuclear power include more efficient energy use, a transition to renewable types of energy and environmentally acceptable electricity production methods. The use of fossil fuels should be kept to a minimum.

The use of renewable energy sources and programmes aimed at enhancing energy efficiency will be encouraged with the help of various financial support schemes. The government plans to submit proposals for a long-term energy policy programme in 2004. A scheme for trading in GHG emission allowances within the Community will be introduced in 2005.

## Transport systems and infrastructure

Continued efforts will be made to develop economic policy levers to promote the use of environmentally sound road vehicles, vessels, airplanes and motor fuels. Major investment aimed at strengthening prospects for sustainable development is now being made in the road and rail network. Six sub-goals – availability, transport quality, safe transport, a sound, healthy environment, favourable regional development and a gender equal transport system that meets the needs of women and men – indicate the level of the government's long-term aspirations.

The government has allocated SEK 373.3 billion over a 12-year period on work to extend Sweden's infrastructure. The EU has issued a number of directives aimed at renewing and harmonising the European rail transport sector. In March 2004 the EU classified the Baltic Sea as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA). The issue was actively pursued by Sweden.

## New information technology

Information technology (IT) is vital to the development prospects of individuals, enterprises and regions. Above all, it can be an effective tool for achieving environmental quality goals and facilitating the transition to an ecologically sustainable society.

Although though the projected expansion of the broadband network is to be market driven, the Riksdag has set aside funds to support expansion in areas where there is no commercial incentive.

A newly appointed IT policy strategy group has been commissioned to consider IT policy from a broad, societal perspective. A number of inquiries and working groups have been discussing ways in which IT can help reduce the need for transport and promote sustainable consumption and production patterns.

## Tools for sustainable development

Sustainable development requires a holistic approach; measures, efforts and developments in different policy areas, including legislation, economic policy levers, technological development, information and voluntary commitments, should be mutually reinforcing.

Important tools in this connection include:

- ▶ *Sectoral integration.* Overall goals in respective policy areas must be integrated, as they have been in the case of environmental accountability. Examples of other areas are public health and gender equality goals.
- ▶ *Environmental impact and sustainability assessments.* Research in Sweden is focusing on the use of sustainability assessments as strategic tools. Such assessments will increasingly be made for important action programmes, plans and projects. The European Commission has developed an impact assessment method to be used in connection with decisions and measures at EU level.
- ▶ *Dialogue and voluntary agreements.* Seventeen agreements between the government and the enterprise sector were reached in the 1990s. Covering areas such as paper recycling, the phase-out of leaded petrol and voluntary assumption of producer responsibility in the construction industry, the agreements involved entire sectors as well as individual companies. Other examples are the dialogue projects “Bygga Bo” and “Framtida Handel”.

▶ *Partnership.* This is a more structured form of co-operation involving a specific project with clearly defined objectives and follow-up procedures, jointly undertaken by the participants. An important aim of partnerships is to integrate the enterprise sector and sustainable development work.

▶ *Sustainability reports.* These seek to identify the furthest detectable consequences of a given decision and determine whether it furthers the aims of sustainable development. Sustainability assessments are being developed within the EU and at national level.

▶ *Local investment programmes and climate investment programmes.* These are important tools for promoting investment and supporting sustainable development.

## Continued implementation and follow-up

### Follow-up

Successful efforts towards socially, economically and ecologically sustainable development are predicated on measurable indicators. These must not only be coordinated at international, national and local level; if they are to generate public interest and involvement, they must be followed up and evaluated, preferably at local – i.e. municipal or regional – level.

The five ‘green indicators’ – energy use, emissions of acidifying substances, carbon dioxide emissions, benzene levels in urban air and nitrogen and phosphorus discharges into the sea – have been included in the Budget Statement every year since 1998. Indicators are also being developed for a number of other areas, including public health, gender equality, children and young people, the business sector and global development.

### Review

In December 2003, Sweden’s municipal and county councils, government authorities and individual citizens were invited to contribute their views ahead of the review of the national strategy for sustainable development.

Those who responded chose to draw attention to problems such as climate change and people’s lack of involvement in the issues.

Many called for clear aims and objectives that could be followed up and greater emphasis on public health and working life. The national strategy will be reviewed again in 2006 and the government will invite interested parties to submit their views early on in the process.



In its communication “A Swedish Strategy for Sustainable Development” (Government communication 2003/04:129), the Swedish Government states that the strategy covers economic, social and environmental aspects. Government efforts in this sphere are based on eight core areas:

- \* The future environment
- \* Limitation of climate change
- \* Population and public health
- \* Social cohesion, welfare and security
- \* Employment and learning in a knowledge society
- \* Sustainable economic growth and competitiveness
- \* Regional development and regional conditions
- \* Development of sustainable community planning

This brochure is a summary of the Government communication. It is reproduced electronically on the Ministry of the Environment's website at [www.sweden.gov.se/environment](http://www.sweden.gov.se/environment). Printed copies may be ordered by telephone from the Ministry on +46 8 405 10 00. Article no. M 2004.06.



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