

# SWEDEN



## STATEMENT

by

**H.E. Ms. Signe Burgstaller**  
**Chargé d'Affairs a.i.**

at the

**66<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly**  
**under agenda item 28**  
**Advancement of Women**  
**of the Third Committee**

**United Nations**  
**New York**

**12 October, 2011**

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**



Chair,

The topic before us, advancement of women - what does it entail? We have all listened to statements by distinguished colleagues, and it is clear that the concept encompasses a wide range of issues. But at the core of them all lies one matter; that all women are entitled to full and equal enjoyment of all human rights. This is something many women are still being denied.

This year marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. And indeed, looking back on what has been achieved during these three decades, we can all agree that progress has been extraordinary.

However, it is also easy to identify areas where we, the international community, are lagging behind, and embarrassingly so; women's right to equality before the law, including access to justice and legal remedies; women's participation in political and public life, including participation in decision-making at all levels; women's economic and social rights, including the right to own property and have a decent job; women's right to health, including access to maternal services; and the right of women to control their own bodies and sexuality, including their effective access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

In his address to the General Assembly three weeks ago, Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt joined several other political leaders in stressing that the unmet human, political, economic and social rights for 3.5 billion women and girls were probably the most important human rights failure of all.

Gender equality is not only politically and morally, but also economically right. No society that ignores the rights of half of its population can be called democratic. No society that oppresses and discriminates against women can be called just. And no society that squanders half of its talent can be called smart, or interested in development.

Chair,

Achieving gender equality will require a concerted effort by all. Women's emancipation and empowerment is key. And so is the concomitant battle of liberation from gender stereotypes – which exist in all societies and corners of the world.

Gender stereotypes are representations and identities that entrap persons in roles they have not designed themselves, sometimes evoking harmful behaviour. Therefore, perceptions of womanhood *and* masculinity need to be challenged, called into question. We must change mindsets, put an end to tracing paths for persons “because she is a girl”, “because she is a woman” – or “because he is a boy”, “because he is a man”.

Chair,

Stereotypes regarding sexual and reproductive life are of great concern. One of the decisive markers of autonomy and full citizenship is the control over one's body and sexuality. This comprises a right to be free from violence, threat and abuse. But it also rests on the recognition of choice.

Still in the year 2011, it is urgent that we continue to make a determined call – and underscore our unbreakable commitment – for the equal enjoyment of human rights and opportunities for everyone: irrespective of ethnic origin, disability, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or any other status.

Denying someone their human rights is discriminatory – full stop. My delegation therefore welcomes that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination of Women has adopted an exhaustive and state-of-the art general recommendation on anti-discrimination, as understood in the core paragraph 2 of the CEDAW.

Chair,

Advancement of women is the advancement of all. It's a duty and possibility for all, and of benefit to all.

Therefore, the international community cannot relent in its efforts to achieve gender equality. We look to UN Women to serve as a catalytic force, making the UN system as a whole work towards that goal.

And, in turn, this Assembly should make even greater efforts to be responsive and supportive of all those very encouraging initiatives we have witnessed across the globe – be they local, national or regional – aiming at making societies more equal, just and smart.

Thank you.