



Government Offices of Sweden

Speech from Ministry of Education and Research

Speech by Minister for Upper Secondary School and Adult Education Aida Hadzialic and Training at European Trade Union Confederation's 13th Congress

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Mesdames et messieurs,

Ladies and gentlemen

First of all, let me thank you for welcoming me to your congress. I am truly honored to be here because I believe that we share the same cause.

A cause where all European citizens look to the future knowing it will be better. Where economic prosperity and growth are just as important as social equality and equal opportunities.

In many ways, our home Europe, is the symbol of this. History has taught us that peaceful ways and cooperation pave the way to stability and a better standard of living. We have chosen democracy over totalitarianism, freedom over borders and solidarity over hatred.

Yet I believe that many of us feel – where is the world and Europe heading towards?

Many people are coming to Europe – pledging for help because what they had, no longer is.

We, the current citizens and governments of Europe, are pondering – what are we going to do to solve this situation? What is going to happen to all the

people coming to our countries?

In the midst of this, I am confident that with the right set of moral values where we choose to help people combined with political policies aiming at social cohesion, our continent Europe will continue its path of post war success.

Why am I so confident about this?

Well, in all its simplicity actually, it's because I have lived it myself.

Today I am standing in front of you as a representative of the Swedish government but my life started with war, death, refugee camps and loss. Of a home, relatives and almost my life.

And please, allow me let me take you down my lane of memory for a moment.

I am a Swedish minister but I am also a person that survived the ethnical cleansing, and ultimately genocide, that Bosnia and Herzegovina was subject to.

But I survived, when so many others didn't – which probably was just a strike of chance. That very feeling – of knowing that I survived when so many others didn't - is experienced by 60 million people today.

I was born in the city of Foca. A mid-sized Bosnian – Yugoslavian – city by the river Drina, south-east of Sarajevo. Drina, with its emerald colored water, would later come to be called the river of blood.

In my memories I am five years old.

I am walking down a bridge with my uncle. It is spring and I am eating an ice-cream, like so many kids do. My uncle is holding my hand and all of a sudden we meet a man who asks my uncle: “Have you heard about what's happening in Croatia, a war seems to be coming?”

Whereupon my uncle replies: “I know, but I still can't imagine there will be a war here”.

And I remember standing there, thinking as the five-year-old me, what is a war? And what is Croatia? And what is 'here'? But then I thought, if the adults say everything is fine, then everything is fine.

But everything wasn't fine.

All of a sudden there were soldiers on the streets. My parents were talking about escaping. But we couldn't, because we were locked up in our apartment and couldn't go anywhere because moving restrictions were on.

The blinders were always shadowing the windows and we slept on the floor, in order to avoid gun shots. My parents were reading to me, book after book, and in the midst of everything I remember being afraid and happy at the same time because finally I had my parents to myself. The lawyer and the economist who'd previously been so busy working.

I don't know how long we stayed like that. But the dead-lock was broken one day when it knocked on the door and a soldier, with a long beard and weapons all over him, came in.

He shouted, pointing his gun at us, "Give me everything you have of value, pack your bags and be grateful that I won't kill you here and now".

Then he started throwing things around, searching through our drawers while my parents were packing in panic. And then we were off – for the last time passing the threshold of our home to where we would never again return.

Through a chain of circumstances Sweden literally became our safe haven when we arrived to a port in the south of Sweden a late and rainy night. I remember the rain beating against the tent walls we were placed in for shelter. But I also remember that for the first time, in a long time, I could sleep without being afraid.

As I look back at my recollections – and the history of thousands and thousands of people who have experienced related or even worse fates – I come to think about the title of the novel written by the Nigerian Nobel laureate Chinua Achebe, "As things fall apart".

Yugoslavia, the country that in 1984 hosted the Olympic Games in Sarajevo, seven years later faced war and the worst crimes against humanity in Europe since the Second World War.

That's what happens when the wrong powers get the grip of a society. It falls apart.

And when journalists now-a-days ask me, "Why did you get politically involved?", my answer is simple.

I have come eye to eye with evil – nationalism – that forced me and my family to abandon everything, which led to war and destruction, and ultimately, genocide.

I have however also seen the best of humankind ever since the day Sweden opened up its doors to me and so many others. First and foremost, by giving us a shelter. And then continuing that line of humanity by giving us a chance to a brand new life which I – and so many others - are so deeply grateful for.

But by believing in me – and my value as a human being – Sweden not only gave me essentials such as a free and universal right to education – which has been my key to a better life -but also taught me that strong and prosperous societies are created by all of us together, irrespective of our backgrounds.

In 1992 when Sweden welcomed over 82 000 refugees, many from Bosnia and other parts of Yugoslavia, it was during a time of a hardship. The unemployment rates were massive and an economic crisis was devastating the country. Despite that the Swedish people said welcome. And it's that solidarity – defying all cynic statements – that make me love my new home country. So much. It also makes me want to give back tenfold of what was once given to me.

And how is Sweden doing today? Twenty years since welcoming so many refugees during a time of crisis? Well, our country has grown into one of the richest and most competitive economies in the world. We turned a crisis into financial stability and growth while saving the lives of ten thousands of people. The two weren't mutually exclusive – since it was a matter of building a model where each and every citizen mattered. That has increased our productivity and made our economy and standard grow.

Lastly, my message to you is this. If Sweden was able to do this during some of its darkest times in the beginning of the 90s, then I'm convinced that we can do it again especially if we do it together.



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Speech from Ministry of Education and Research

UNESCO World conference on Education for Sustainable development

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Madame Director-General, your excellences, distinguished ministers, ladies and gentlemen,

I would first like to thank the government of Japan for hosting this, so far successful, conference. It is an honor to be given this opportunity to introduce and share some thoughts on what actions are required to enhance the policy response to Education for Sustainable Development.

As we all know, knowledge is the key in a society where development satisfies our present needs without compromising future generations.

Moving towards sustainable development cannot be achieved by political agreements, financial incentives or technological solutions alone. To safeguard the natural environment and promote greater global equity, we need a fundamental change in the ways we think and act. This can only be achieved if all individuals and societies are equipped and empowered by knowledge, skills and values as well as heightened awareness to drive such change.

I would like to highlight some of the experiences we have gained in Sweden during the decade on Education for Sustainable Development; experiences that we think have a universal relevance when speaking about how what actions are needed at national and international levels in order to enhance the policy response to ESD.

It is often stated that many actors have a responsibility regarding education

for sustainable development; business, NGOs, academia etc., but never the less I would like to emphasize the importance of governments to take their responsibility using all available means and tools. The political engagement is vital in moving forwards in the implementation of ESD. A national action plan for ESD with reference to the Global Action Programme, based on research and proven experiences, containing clear targets and means for monitoring, is an essential tool in this respect.

Another perspective is bridging education, innovation, green technology, and entrepreneurship to promote work opportunities and solutions for the future.

During the decade, Sweden has included “sustainability” in formal institutional and curriculum guidelines for preschool as well as primary and secondary education. We have also made an amendment to the Higher Education Act, stating that all universities have to promote sustainable development. Knowledge in sustainable development is one of the objectives the students in teacher training education and engineering education should have reached by the end of their education.

At the same time, we have limited information on what is actually occurring in the schools and universities regarding the implementation of ESD.

To move ahead in the right direction, you have to know where you have been. Monitoring and evaluation are crucial components to strengthen the policy response to ESD. Observing the achievements and results of previous decisions, enables politicians and policy makers to draw conclusions in order to take further steps in the implementation of ESD at full scale.

We should remember that only a well-informed and educated public opinion can create the necessary demand for sustainable development and elect political leaders who are willing to take responsible and long-term decisions. ESD is even more important in countries with average to high income among their citizens. It is in these countries that the population leaves the biggest ecological footprints and thereby contributes most to the greatest threat to the future of humanity. If the entire world would live like Swedes, we should need the resources three times the earth!

But ESD is also about providing useful and relevant knowledge to the poorest of the poor. That’s the reason the international development aid vis-à-vis education aid, must be based on the principle of ESD.

What about the international level?

UNESCO is of course the key player with a clear mandate to lead the Global

Action Programme. Even though the primary responsibility of ensuring the rights to quality education to all rests primarily with the national governments, UNESCO has a decisive role in supporting and catalyzing national efforts; coordinating regional and sub-regional networks to enhance the implementation of ESD, especially with respect to policy improvement and enabling institutional structures in its member states. But UNESCO is not alone on the international arena. To further strengthen the implementation of ESD, it's important that the future work of the Global Action Program is done in close collaboration with existing UN-programs like for example UNEP's 10-Year Framework of Programs on Sustainable Consumption and Production, which was adopted at the Rio+20 conference.

Finally, let me conclude by stressing that activity now is needed in order to solve our most pressing problems. That's the reason sustainability has to be a key element in the post 2015 agenda. Education is central when it comes to finding ways to a sustainable development for sustainable societies. Sustainability can only come through awareness and action from us all.

Thank you for your attention!

Domo Arigato!