



Speech from Ministry of Health and Social Affairs

Swedish national statement for High-level Political Forum 2019, delivered by Minister for Social Security, Annika Strandhäll

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Excellencies, ministers, colleagues, friends,

I believe that the overarching goal of politics in general – and the 2030 Agenda in particular – is to build a better world for each generation. To advance our children's opportunities to live free from all kinds of violence in safe, sustainable and prosperous societies.

Sweden is well placed to implement the 2030 Agenda. But the fact remains: we still have a lot of work to do in Sweden if we are to achieve the SDGs.

For example, we must work harder to address existing inequalities.

This entails dramatically reducing income disparities and providing equal opportunities for all, including people with disabilities, LGBT persons, minorities and newly arrived immigrants.

We must work harder to achieve equity in health care and provide equal opportunities for lifelong learning throughout our country. We also need to strengthen inclusive and sustainable economic growth that benefits all section of society.

There is a growing awareness of the urgent need to act – to act now.

Greta Thunberg, an impressive young Swedish climate activist, reminds me of this every Friday as I pass her school strike for climate action outside our Parliament.

The message from our youth is very clear and we need to listen, and we need to act.

To combat climate change we need an unprecedented transformation of the whole society. Sweden's ambition is clear – we want to be the first fossil-free welfare state in the world.

Climate change has devastating effects that are particularly severe in fragile contexts. Climate-related security risks are a major threat to us all, but the poorest are hit the hardest and women are particularly affected. I believe that the Climate Summit in September will be vital for raising our climate ambitions and putting us on a 1.5-degree pathway.

I would also like to take a moment to address two issues close to my heart: universal social protection and gender equality.

Sweden has a long history of a strong welfare system that has been key in building an open and inclusive society. Social protection is a human right and an indispensable tool in the fight against poverty, inequality and social exclusion. Universal social protection, including floors, is key to upholding the principle of leaving no one behind.

In far too many places around the world, we see that women and girls' rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, are being pushed back.

The advances we have made, thanks to the efforts of brave women and men, cannot be taken for granted. Gender equality requires will, courage and perseverance.

Dear friends,

It is time to move from plan to action.

In the next implementation cycle, we must do more. We need accelerated action and delivery on the SDGs, in particularly at national and local level. We need to build stronger synergies between the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

The world needs a decade of accelerated action and delivery on the SDGs.

Thank you.