



Article from Ministry of the Environment

Fossil Free Sweden: Working together is the key to success

Published 15 February 2016 Updated 15 February 2016

On 8 February 2016, the Ministry of the Environment and Energy held a workshop for the over 150 different enterprises, municipalities, regions and organisations that have joined the Fossil Free Sweden initiative. Politicians and officials from various ministries at the Government Offices also took part in the workshop. It offered opportunities to put into more concrete form how actors in Sweden can jointly take on the challenge of becoming one of the first fossil-free welfare countries in the world.

"We will now go from words to action – after Paris, we have a new climate agreement in place. Achieving the goal of a fossil-free Sweden requires long-term investments and a climate policy framework," said Minister for Climate and the Environment Åsa Romson when she initiated the workshop.

The discussions that followed raised many important challenges to and possibilities for achieving a fossil-free society, including:

- Behavioural changes and regulatory simplification needed to move forward on climate adaptation.
- Investments in innovation and research in a number of areas, such as use of materials.
- Clearer directives and governance for public procurement.
- A long-term approach as an essential prerequisite was emphasised by several parties, as technological development is often about making very large investments, which requires long-term solutions.

- Clearer goals and interim goals for the coming decades – many people believe that the goals make it easier to generate action in operations.
- Going from forecast targeting to management by objectives, in other words, allowing the image of what we want our society to look like in the future to guide us.
- The transport sector was pointed out as one of the most important challenges.

Among the actors taking part there was a great sense of commitment, high ambitions and broad consensus that Sweden can be fossil free, but that much work remains. The path to this is through collaborating, challenging and learning from each other. In this, the Fossil Free Sweden initiative can play an important role as a platform for cooperation and joint discussions.



Article

Government to strengthen Arctic environmental policy

Published 25 January 2016 Updated 25 January 2016

The Government is now strengthening the Swedish environmental policy for the Arctic. As an Arctic country with high environmental ambitions, Sweden has an important role to play internationally.

A whole world is affected when the Arctic environment is threatened. The Government is now strengthening efforts to protect the natural environment in the Arctic. We want to see stronger climate efforts, legal protection for sensitive natural environments and prevention of the risks involved in drilling for oil and overfishing. This new focus for environmental policy in the Arctic is being presented today by Minister for Strategic Development Kristina Persson at the Arctic Frontiers conference.

The Arctic acts as the planet's refrigerator. Its enormous white expanses of ice and snow reflect large parts of the sun's rays back into space, thus stabilising the Earth's climate. The area is home to millions of people, including indigenous peoples, and ecosystems of global importance. The Arctic environment and its fate concerns us all, directly or indirectly.

Today, the natural environment in the Arctic is largely unprotected. Just a few decades ago this was not considered to be a major problem. The greenhouse effect was not yet making itself clearly felt and the northernmost expanses were difficult to access. But the situation has worsened in a short period of time.

The snow and ice in the Arctic is melting increasingly rapidly due to global warming. This increases accessibility and thus opportunities to exploit oil, gas, minerals and fish in this sensitive environment. At the same time, the fact that the ice is shrinking means that the reflection of solar radiation is

decreasing, fuelling global warming. The consequences could be catastrophic.

The new global climate agreement from Paris marks the start of a substantial increase in climate efforts in all countries. The agreement states that the global rise in temperature must be kept well below two degrees Celsius and that measures must be taken to keep the temperature below one and a half degrees. In order to achieve this goal, further decisions need to be taken in international climate work, including in Arctic cooperation.

The Government is now strengthening Sweden's environmental policy for the Arctic. As an Arctic country with a high level of environmental ambition, Sweden has an important role to play internationally. While we are making demands of other Arctic countries, the Government is taking responsibility at home. This is a basic premise for our proposals:

1. Stronger climate efforts

The Arctic countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, Iceland, Russia, Canada and the United States, all members of the Arctic Council) are responsible for a large proportion of global greenhouse gas emissions and have a major responsibility to reduce emissions. Sweden has pushed for a reduction in emissions of short-lived climate forcers, such as soot and methane. This is still important, but climate efforts must be broadened. The Government therefore wants to strengthen measures in the Arctic Council concerning climate and renewable energy.

2. Legal protection for sensitive natural environments

There are serious shortcomings in the protection of the valuable Arctic environment. In particular, there is a lack of adequate protection of the marine environment, which is becoming increasingly accessible and vulnerable as the ice melts. This calls for efforts on a broad front. We are beginning this work to make progress. In the first week of February, all Arctic countries are invited to Sweden and the Government Offices to discuss the management of the marine environment in the Arctic. The Government is pushing for the Arctic countries to develop a network of protected environments, for the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to be supplemented with a new protective agreement and for other decision-making bodies to be as active as possible in putting protection in place.

3. Preventing the risks of drilling for oil

Researchers have warned that offshore oil extraction in the Arctic is a high-

stakes undertaking. A large proportion of the world's oil resources must stay in the ground if we are to keep global warming as far below two degrees as possible. Extracting oil in the Arctic is both expensive and risky. An oil disaster could cause a great deal of damage to the sensitive environment. In recent times, a low global oil price has made drilling for oil in the Arctic an unprofitable business, but a low price in the short term is no lasting guarantee that the sensitive Arctic environment will be protected.

This is why it is crucial that we make demands of the oil companies, in terms of both economics and safety. Sweden wants to see robust regulations that ensure the highest level of protection. We want only companies that can assume the entire cost of a disaster to be granted permits to extract oil in the Arctic. The costs must not be shifted onto the environment or the world population through environmental damage, or onto the tax payers in the Arctic countries. In practice, these are requirements that together can protect the Arctic from the risks of drilling for oil.

4. Preventing overfishing

The parts of the Arctic Ocean and seabeds that have historically been covered by a permanent layer of ice must now be protected. The Government considers that commercial fishing in the central northern Arctic Ocean should not be permitted until a regional organisation for fisheries management is established to ensure that fishing is carried out in a sustainable way. Sweden believes that a precautionary approach should be taken and that consideration should be given to the ecosystems when designing this fisheries management. Good management is informed by decisions made on scientific grounds with a long-term perspective.

This is how the Government is taking the next step in the international arena to strengthen efforts to protect the Arctic environment. With legal protection of sensitive environments and clearer requirements in the area of oil prospecting and fishing, we can protect the natural environment in the Arctic – and by doing so improve the chances of today's children living a good life in the future. The world needs countries that move the environment further up the agenda. Sweden is one such country.

Åsa Romson, Minister for Climate and the Environment

Margot Wallström, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Kristina Persson, Minister for Strategic Development



Article from Ministry of the Environment

Minister for Climate and the Environment Åsa Romson's letter to the European Commission: The EU must act against endocrine disruptors

Published 12 January 2016 Updated 12 January 2016

In December 2015, the General Court of the European Union ruled in Sweden's favour in the case of Sweden v. European Commission regarding a failure to adopt scientific criteria for determining endocrine-disrupting properties.

Minister for Climate and the Environment and Deputy Prime Minister Romson has now written a letter to the European Commission to emphasise that she expects the Commission to promptly take measures consistent with citizens' justified expectations that the EU takes responsibility for protecting them and the environment from risks associated with endocrine disruptors. In her letter, Ms Romson writes that the General Court establishes that scientific criteria for determining endocrine-disrupting properties can only be decided based on scientific data on the endocrine system and independently of economic considerations.



Article from Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Finance

Seminar on Fossil-free Sweden at COP21 in Paris: "The time to act is now"

Published 08 December 2015 Updated 08 December 2015

Minister for Climate and the Environment Åsa Romson and Minister for Financial Markets Per Bolund held a seminar on the Fossil-free Sweden initiative at the COP21 climate conference in Paris on 5 December. Participants included representatives from Stockholm, Gothenburg, Östersund, IKEA, Volvo Group and Ericsson, which are some of the actors that in a short period of time have chosen to support the initiative.

"We want to show the rest of the world how quickly a country can become fossil free, how quickly implementation can take place and how quickly the idea can be exported to other countries," said Ms Romson at the seminar.

Through the launch of the Fossil-free Sweden initiative, the Government has set a clear goal: Sweden is to be one of the world's first fossil-free welfare nations. By demonstrating that Sweden is taking responsibility at home, the Government is also issuing a call to other countries to become fossil free by intensifying their climate efforts.

Professor Johan Rockström from the Stockholm Resilience Centre took part in the seminar, emphasising that the countries that shift to fossil-free energy will send important signals to the rest of the world:

"Being a country that combines freedom from fossil fuels and prosperity will send strong signals to the rest of the world. Sweden has great potential to

become one of the world's first fossil-free nations."

IKEA was one of the first actors to take part at the seminar, and IKEA's Head of European Affairs Katarina Maaskant made it clear that the path to freedom from fossil fuels is simple:

"Having a goal of 100 per cent is a simple approach; it is clear what everyone must do."

Anders Wijkman, Chair of the Cross-Party Committee on Environmental Objectives, stressed the importance of finding more effective policy instruments for material usage and recycling. He also said that there has long been a false perception of environmental taxes and other environmental policy instruments.

"Environmentally-friendly policy instruments have often been seen as a threat to jobs. This is not true. The fact is, the very opposite is true.

Sweden has demonstrated that it is possible to pursue ambitious climate policies and achieve favourable economic growth at the same time. However, pursuing an ambitious climate policy requires good cooperation between government, the business community and other actors in society. All three cities that took part in the seminar – Östersund – Gothenburg and Stockholm, addressed the central role municipalities and cities play in the transition:

"Municipalities are key to creating a fossil-free future," said Karin Thomasson, Commissioner of Östersund Municipality and Chair of the Climate Municipalities.

"Cities account for 70 per cent of global carbon dioxide emissions – we have an important role to play," said Stockholm City's Vice Mayor for the Environment Katarina Luhr.

For global climate objectives to be successful, international cooperation between both governments and businesses is essential. Through the Fossil-free Sweden initiative, the Government wants to create a cooperation platform for Swedish actors, thereby setting a clear example for the rest of the world.

Niklas Gustafsson, Chief Sustainability Officer, Volvo Group, made it clear that we must venture to be the first:

"Volvo wants to be a leader in sustainable transport solutions. To succeed in this, we can't just do what others are doing – we must be courageous and make choices that challenge the market."

Richard Byron, senior adviser at the OECD, praised Sweden for wanting to take the lead:

"The world needs leaders who demonstrate that the transition to a fossil-free society is possible."

During the first week of the Climate Change Conference in Paris, several Swedish ministers have made it clear that Sweden is ready to take the next step in climate adaptation. Minister for Financial Markets Per Bolund explained why in his concluding presentation at the seminar:

"The knowledge and the technologies exist. Municipalities and businesses are prepared. Citizens and the economy are ready, and we know that the jobs are there. No more excuses. The time to act is now."



Article from Ministry of the Environment

Focus on water at Paris Climate Conference

Published 04 December 2015 Updated 04 December 2015

Water issues were in particular focus on 2 December at the COP21 Paris Climate Conference. The Paris Pact on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change, highlighting the importance of sustainable management of water resources, was presented. The Pact, which brings together 300 actors, will help advance knowledge on the link between water and the climate and mobilise funding.

"Climate change is our generation's greatest challenge. The effects of climate change become clearest for many people because of their impact on access to water. Consequently, it is crucial that we also step up our efforts to manage water resources within the climate agenda," says Minister for Climate and the Environment Åsa Romson.

Sustainable management of water resources is an essential part of climate adaptation. Measures to enhance water management are necessary to safeguard people's health and security, but also to ensure long-term sustainable economic development. Almost 300 organisations and states have signed the Paris Pact, including Sweden.

International cooperation encouraged

The links between water, climate and resilience were addressed on 2 December under the Lima-Paris Action Agenda (see link below). Resilience refers to the capacity of a system to cope with and adapt to climate change. For an ecosystem, such as a forest or sea, this may mean withstanding

storms, fire or pollution. Karin Lexén from the Stockholm International Water Institute was the moderator of a session on the roles of various actors in the area of water and climate.

The particular focus on water, climate and resilience during the Paris Climate Conference aims to encourage cooperation and initiatives in the area, both between countries and between different civil society actors. Sweden supports several of the partnerships presented during the day, including the Global Resilience Partnership and the African Risk Capacity, a pan-African insurance pool to improve capacity to deal with extreme weather events.

In his opening address on the first day of the Paris Climate Conference, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven announced that Sweden would provide an additional SEK 250 million to support climate adaptation in the poorest and most vulnerable developing countries. This contribution encompasses SEK 150 million to the Adaptation Fund and SEK 100 million to the Least Developed Countries Fund. Financing climate adaptation is one of the issues developing countries consider most important in the negotiations, since it is crucial for reducing poverty and creating societies that are resilient to climate change.

Key issues for sustainable development

Sweden's Government has emphasised on several occasions that climate and water are key to sustainable development. This was addressed at both World Water Week in Stockholm in August and the UN General Assembly in September. Climate change threatens to undermine the ability of countries to achieve sustainable development. Similarly, water is a cross-cutting issue that affects all aspects of development, including health, food security, economic development, ecosystem services and biodiversity.



Article from Ministry of the Environment

Strong response to Fossil-free Sweden

Published 27 November 2015 Updated 27 November 2015

The Government's Fossil-free Sweden initiative has met with a strong response from Swedish actors. Many of them want to help ensure that Sweden will become one of the world's first fossil-free welfare countries. To achieve this, Sweden need concrete emission reductions in the immediate future. A recent meeting in Stockholm gave some of the actors affiliated with the initiative a chance to explain what they need to be able to contribute more to a fossil-free society.

The Fossil-free Sweden initiative is growing rapidly. So far, some 80 companies, municipalities and organisations have joined. They are all contributing with solutions that are both green and profitable. On 25 November, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven and Minister for Climate and the Environment Åsa Romson met some of them.

“In the years to come, the world will be demanding investment in new transport systems, innovations and environmental technologies. If we maintain a high pace in our efforts to combat climate change, we will be one step ahead. Then we will be in a position to both bring about a shift in our own society and export smart solutions to other countries,” said Stefan Löfven.

Climate change is upon us. It is serious and it affects everyone – those of us living now and future generations. But it can be curbed if we want to do so.

“The level of expertise and knowledge with respect to climate change has

never been higher. We are aware of the scale of the challenge, but we also know how to solve it. Politics alone cannot do it. It is only when we consider how society can demonstrate solutions that we start to make progress,” said Åsa Romson.

Several of the participating municipalities highlighted sustainable consumption as being one of the most difficult issues. As Lennart Bondeson, Commissioner of Örebro Municipality, said:

“Procurement incorporating environmental and social requirements is the most important tool for us at municipal level to promote sustainable growth. Achieving sustainable consumption is the most difficult challenge we face.”

For a number of actors, the challenge of going fossil-free varies depending on whether you consider activities in Sweden or in other countries.

“We recently undertook a climate impact analysis and saw that our biggest climate impacts are in our production countries. We believe strongly in the collaborative projects that we participate in to reduce the use of water, chemicals and energy, and we’re seeing major results,” said Fredrika Klarén, Sustainability Manager at KappAhl.

“Our aim is to produce as much renewable energy as we consume by 2020. We are delighted that we have already achieved this aim in Sweden and the Nordic region. There remains work to be done before we achieve it throughout the world, but we will get there,” said Sara Paulsson, head of community relations at IKEA.

The COP21 climate conference begins on 30 November in Paris, with the countries of the world set to negotiate a new climate agreement. Fossil-free Sweden will be an important Swedish contribution at the conference, along with examples of the concrete measures that are being taken by an increasing number of actors in society. Several of the participants in Fossil-free Sweden will also be in attendance in Paris.

“We want Fossil-free Sweden to serve as a guiding light for other countries, showing that companies, governments, local authorities and organisations can cooperate to switch to fossil-free growth and welfare,” said Pierre Börjesson, Global Sustainability Business Expert at H&M.



Article from Ministry of the Environment

Sweden's initiative challenges world to go fossil-free

Published 26 November 2015 Updated 26 November 2015

The world can tackle climate change, but time is short. Sweden aims to be one of the world's first fossil-free welfare nations. With our initiative Fossil-free Sweden, we now challenge other countries to do likewise.

Global warming threatens the very foundation of human wellbeing. Drought, flooding and a less predictable climate hit both agriculture and fisheries hard, thereby threatening access to food for the world's growing population. Global economic growth is under threat, along with years of work to eradicate poverty.

We believe there is still time to act. If the world phases out the use of fossil energy quickly in favour of renewables considerable ground will be gained, not only in terms of the climate. A phase-out would lead to greater energy security, better health and improved quality of life. These are co-benefits that have convinced mayors around the world to collaborate and redirect their strategies.

Climate action makes good business sense. In areas such as energy, urban development, agriculture and land use, the world needs to invest \$90tn over the next 15 years regardless of climate change. At the same time, these sectors are crucial for the global low carbon transition. Greening investments in these sectors would cost less than 5% extra – an increase that can be offset via the co-benefit of reduced fuel consumption alone, according to the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate.

Then there are all of the other co-benefits to consider and, not least, the enormous estimated global costs of inaction in the face of climate change.

Sweden has positive experience of combining emissions reductions with an improved economy and welfare. For many years we have used effective policy levers that put a price on carbon, using a carbon dioxide tax accompanied by political leadership that supports the emergence of climate-smart innovations. This has resulted in reduced emissions and market-based solutions while our economy has grown. But we are not done yet.

Sweden recently announced that we will become one of the world's first fossil-free welfare nations. With the initiative Fossil-free Sweden we are now encouraging others to accept the challenge to see who can go fossil-free first. There are three simple reasons why we should race towards this goal:

1. It is our responsibility

Rich countries have a duty to take the lead in combating climate change, as established in the UN Convention on Climate Change. Quite simply, some countries are in a more favourable position, and should therefore take a greater share of the responsibility for reducing emissions. In this way, we will do our part to ensure a good future for ourselves, our children and future generations on this planet.

2. It makes good economic sense

We want Swedish companies to develop the climate-smart solutions that the world is demanding. We must therefore be proactive early-adopters, and not be restrained by yesterday's technology. The fact that financial market actors have now started to move their investments away from fossil energy is an expression of the same logic.

Going green also creates new jobs. According to a recent report from the Club of Rome, a transition to a renewable and resource-efficient society could potentially generate 100 000 new jobs in Sweden alone.

3. To show that it is possible

No one country is responsible for such a large proportion of emissions that it alone determines the world's success or failure on the climate issue. But by leading by example and proving that reduced emissions can be achieved in a way that promotes economic development, individual actors can have an impact on a global scale.

Is this what business wants? The idea of a fossil-free society is embraced by many. There are more and more initiatives around the world in which cities, businesses and organisations are replacing fossil energy with renewables. In Sweden, the business sector, local authorities and other stakeholders are

coming together through the Fossil-free Sweden initiative and jointly issuing a challenge to their counterparts around the world.

Swedish companies including ABB, IKEA, H&M and Ericsson and Sweden's major cities are supporting the initiative – and themselves contributing to reduced emissions. Fuel company Preem, which operates petrol stations throughout Sweden, has decided to only offer renewable fuels at its pumps by 2030. The Fourth Swedish National Pension Fund will invest its entire SEK 200 billion portfolio in low-carbon strategies within five years. Several Swedish towns and cities have decided to go completely fossil-free, and some of them aim to achieve this goal as early as 2030.

The world is about to gather for the UN Climate Conference. Sweden will be there to enter into an ambitious, fair and durable agreement that binds all countries to further action. We carry with us broad engagement from business and civil society, showing that a fossil-free world is not only necessary, but also sought-after. We hope that many will take us up on our challenge.

Åsa Romson, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Climate and the Environment, Sweden.



Article from Prime Minister's Office

Government proposes measures to create respite for Swedish refugee reception

Published 24 November 2015 Updated 24 November 2015

In the worst refugee situation since the Second World War, Sweden has taken greater responsibility than any other country in the west. We are a small country that is making an enormous contribution and the Swedish people are showing great solidarity in a difficult time. We stand up for the international right of asylum.

Since the summer, the number of refugees arriving in Sweden has increased dramatically and in the last two months alone, 80 000 people have sought asylum in Sweden. Of these, there are so many children and young people that it is equivalent to more than 100 new school classes each week. Public authorities and municipalities are now finding it difficult to cope with the pressure. Municipalities report themselves for irregularities (Lex Sarah reports) since they can no longer manage reception in a secure manner. The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency has raised the alarm that important public services cannot cope with the strain. Sweden can no longer guarantee a roof over the head of those who make their way to our country and in the last week people have had to sleep outdoors.

Therefore, the Government now proposes measures to create a respite for Swedish refugee reception. This requires a dramatic reduction in the number of people who seek asylum and are granted a residence permit in Sweden. The Government therefore wants to temporarily adjust the asylum regulations to the minimum level in the EU so that more people choose to seek asylum in other EU countries.

At the same time, capacity in reception must be improved. Many municipal services are under severe strain or face major challenges. These include social services, schools and trauma care. Another major challenge is to meet the rapidly growing population's need for housing. There is still much to do in this regard.

The measures that the Government now proposes are necessary in the current acute situation, but are not in themselves a long-term way forward. The refugee situation must be handled in a concerted manner within the EU. The Government will therefore continue to advocate a system where all countries, without compromising on individual asylum examination, take a shared responsibility for refugee reception. The Government wants the Dublin Regulation to be revised and replaced by a new, permanent relocation scheme in the EU.

Measures proposed by the Government

The Swedish legislation will be temporarily brought into line with the minimum requirements in international conventions and EU law.

With the exceptions indicated below, the legislation will apply to asylum decisions taken in the period during which the legislation is in force. It is temporary legislation, which will be in force for three years and will entail the following temporary exceptions to the provisions of the Aliens Act.

Temporary residence permits for all persons in need of protection except quota refugees.

Refugees and persons eligible for subsidiary protection who are granted protection in Sweden will be granted temporary residence permits. Refugees will be granted a residence permit for three years when their case is first examined, and persons eligible for subsidiary protection for one year. These permits will be renewable. In the case of extension, the general rule will also be that a temporary permit will be granted.

Exceptions will apply for children and their families who registered their applications before the agreement was presented and who are still in Sweden. The current rules will apply in their case, provided that the child is still under the age of 18 when the decision is taken. In addition, a permanent residence permit may be granted when the first temporary residence permit expires if the applicant can show that they have an assessed income that is sufficient to support themselves.

Quota refugees will continue to receive permanent residence permits.

Limited right to family member immigration for persons in need of protection with temporary residence permits.

Refugees with temporary residence permits will only have the right to be reunited with immediate family members. In the case of married couples, both parties will have to be at least 21 years of age to be granted the right to family reunification. Persons eligible for subsidiary protection who have temporary residence permits will not have a right to family reunification.

Tougher maintenance requirements.

A maintenance requirement will apply to all family member immigration except when refugees apply for family reunification during the first three months after having been granted refugee status.

The maintenance requirement will be broadened to include a requirement that the sponsor must be able to support family members who come to Sweden.

Persons otherwise in need of protection will not be entitled to a residence permit.

Persons in the category 'otherwise in need of protection' will not be entitled to a residence permit.

The provision on residence permits on grounds of exceptionally/particularly distressing circumstances will be replaced by a provision allowing a residence permit to be granted on humanitarian grounds in certain very limited exceptional cases.

There will not be any special provision on residence permits for children, but the fundamental provision on the best interests of the child will continue to apply.

The Government wants to introduce medical age determination of asylum seekers

The question of whether an asylum seeker is under the age of 18 is important for housing and care as well as for the issue of a residence permit. It is important to find a system that allows medical age determination of asylum seekers to be used in cases where there is a lack of reliable documents that

can verify a person's exact age and when doubts remain about the age that has been given.

Sweden will soon introduce ID checks on all modes of public transport to Sweden

This will mean the ID checks already in place will be supplemented by ID checks on the ferry between Helsingör and Helsingborg as well as on trains and bus traffic across the Öresund Bridge.



Article from Ministry of the Environment, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Important outcomes of meeting between South Africa and Sweden

Published 21 October 2015 Updated 21 October 2015

The meeting of the Binational Commission (BNC) between Sweden and South Africa took place in Stockholm on 19–20 October 2015. The BNC meets every other year and is a platform for regular dialogue between the countries, intended to develop our relations in a broad sense. This year's meeting was the ninth and was hosted by Deputy Prime Minister Åsa Romson.

Vice President Cyril Ramaphosa and Deputy Prime Minister Åsa Romson opened the Binational Commission on 19 October by emphasising the importance of international cooperation and joint solutions to meet the many challenges facing the world, including the climate issue. The South African delegation was led by Mr Ramaphosa, who also met several other Swedish government representatives and business leaders in the course of his visit.

Research and environment focus

A decision was taken at this year's meeting to establish a new committee on environmental, water and energy issues. This will create a space for cooperation between Swedish agencies such as the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, the Swedish Chemicals Agency and the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management and their South African counterparts. The intended purpose of the committee is to have constructive discussions on shared social challenges, where exchanges of knowledge and closer cooperation in the area can contribute to finding new solutions.

“I am especially pleased to be part of establishing this new committee,

because the environment, climate and energy are key issues to which the Swedish Government attaches great importance,” said Ms Romson.

While the dialogue on cooperation in the areas of environment, climate and water has been ongoing over a longer period of time, the question of cooperation in the energy area has come to the fore. Sweden’s government regards it as positive that energy is part of the newly formed committee on environmental, water and energy issues. There is an express desire on the part of Sweden and South Africa to continue the dialogue in order to come to an agreement on energy cooperation going forward.

Climate change is very topical ahead of the impending COP 21 climate conference in Paris and continued efforts to limit global warming are a key cooperation area for the Binational Commission.

Two agreements between South Africa and Sweden

During the BNC’s final plenary session on 20 October, two cooperation agreements were also signed:

- A letter of intent on cooperation in the areas of environment and climate. The parties have listed climate, air quality management, chemicals management, waste management, marine management and ecosystem-based marine planning as areas where they intend to cooperate.
- A memorandum of understanding in the area of water. Sweden and South Africa want to cooperate on integrated water resources, climate and water, water quality, transboundary water issues and research, innovation and technological exchange on water and sanitation.

For Sweden, these two agreements lead to opportunities to develop cooperation with South Africa – a growing economy whose impact on environment and climate is expected to increase in coming years.

Sustainable growth and economic development

This year’s meeting focused on exchanges, joint learning and sharing of experience.

A business delegation from South Africa was also on the trip to Stockholm. Its programme was organised by Business Sweden and offered opportunities for discussions with Swedish business representatives. Swedish companies

have knowledge and smart, efficient solutions that are of interest to South Africa in a range of areas, particularly mining, the energy sector, ICT and transport/railways.

In addition, Ms Romson and Mr Ramaphosa took part in a special business forum with hundreds of participating representatives of Swedish and South African companies.

“We welcome greater involvement by the Swedish business sector, and welcome further visits in various formats to give practical form to cooperation ideas and business proposals,” said Mr Ramaphosa. “We still remember with deep gratitude Sweden’s involvement against apartheid. Now we need your help with the ongoing transformation of our society, so more people can benefit from work and development.”

Swedish businesses are well represented in South Africa. Around 90 Swedish companies have operations in the country and some 400 more have local agents there. Altogether, Swedish companies employ around 15 000 people in South Africa and their activities in the country contribute indirectly to creating a further 75 000 jobs.



Article from Ministry of the Environment

Investments in climate change adaptation and energy

Published 28 September 2015 Updated 28 September 2015

The Government wants to take a climate leap that accelerates the transition to a more sustainable society. By taking responsibility for our climate impact in Sweden, we will show the countries of the world the way forward. Sweden must take the lead and become one of the world's first fossil-free welfare countries.

The Budget Bill for 2016 contains the Government's investments for the climate in four areas:

More renewable energy

In the long term, Sweden is to have one hundred per cent renewable energy. The Government proposes a considerable increase in solar investment support to speed up the expansion of solar cell plants. Significant interest in solar cells means that previous solar cell support is not sufficient and there is currently a waiting list. The Government therefore wants to increase support to SEK 390 million per year during 2017–2019. It is allocating SEK 225 million to this in 2016, and a total of SEK 1.4 billion by 2019.

The Government also proposes investing in electricity storage and the possibility of storing self-produced electricity. This investment would total SEK 25 million in 2016 and SEK 50 million per year during 2017–2019. The Government also wants to establish a national forum for smart electricity grids for SEK 10 million per year during 2016–2019.

The Government has previously announced investments totalling SEK 1 billion per year to renovate and improve energy-efficiency in multi-dwelling

blocks in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas.

International operations

The climate change challenge is global and requires a joint solution. The Government proposes an additional SEK 500 million in 2016 for climate financing in developing countries. Strengthening international climate work is particularly important now as it sends clear signals to the world ahead of the COP21 climate summit in Paris. The Government also proposes that the clean development mechanism projects the previous Government entered into agreements on should receive SEK 50 million per year over the next four years. Within the framework of the regular aid budget, Swedfund will be given a capital injection of SEK 400 million to enable more climate and environment investments in developing countries.

Fossil-free travel

A fossil-free vehicle fleet is a priority for the Government. The conditions for environmentally sound cars are being developed through the extension of the fringe benefit tax subsidy. New support is being introduced for electric buses and the super green car rebate is being reinforced. The effect of environmental taxes will increase. New public transport will be created and the Government is investing in the upgrade of the existing railways. Within the framework of a cycling strategy, SEK 100 million is being set aside for measures to promote cycling during 2016–2017.

Involving all of Sweden

Taking responsibility at home is a way of showing global leadership. Investments in environmental technology will increase by SEK 62 million to enable environment and climate technology companies to grow. The previously announced support for local and regional climate investments – the ‘Climate leap’ investment support – will make it possible for municipalities and regions to reduce their climate emissions. The Government is also investing in climate change adaptation. The money will enhance municipalities’ work on climate change adaptation and raise awareness among government agencies, municipalities, the business sector and individuals. A strategy for sustainable consumption is being developed, in which the Government is investing SEK 3 million per year over the next four years.

In total, the Government is investing SEK 4.5 billion in climate measure in the Budget Bill for 2016, including the investments announced in the Spring Fiscal Policy Bill for 2015. Of this, SEK 2.3 billion was also included in the jobs package presented previously. The new initiatives included investments in solar cells, international climate work, environmental technology and a cycling strategy.



Article from Ministry of the Environment

Climate and water important development challenges

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Sweden, France and Peru have taken a joint initiative to highlight water issues ahead of the climate change conference COP21 in Paris. Today, Minister for Climate and the Environment Åsa Romson is presenting the countries' joint proposal, which concerns the central nature of climate and water issues to sustainable development, at a high-level seminar in New York. The presentation is being held in connection with the adoption of the new global sustainability goals.

“It became clear at World Water Week in Stockholm that there is a close link between climate and water issues. Following initial discussions in Stockholm between our countries, my ministerial colleagues Ségolène Royal and Manuel Pulgar-Vidal and I want to jointly give visibility to these issues here in New York,” says Ms Romson.

The ministers' joint initiative will provide important input for political discussions on initiatives and cooperation that will be presented at the Lima-Paris Action Agenda at the climate change conference COP21 in Paris.

The Lima-Paris Action Agenda aims to encourage and give visibility to concrete measures that can supplement the commitments the countries will make in a new climate agreement. Within the framework of the Action Agenda, a half-day will be devoted to discussions on water resilience, which deals with the capacity of water to resist change, for example climate impacts such as drought or flooding. The proposal is intended to contribute to increased involvement in the area of water among various stakeholders in

society.

“Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time, threatening to undermine the chances of the world’s countries achieving sustainable development. Similarly, water is a cross-cutting issue that affects all development aspects, including health, food, economic development, gender equality and biodiversity. These global challenges must be tackled collectively,” says Ms Romson.



Article from Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Sweden taking responsibility to implement the UN global goals for sustainability

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Prime Minister Stefan Löfven, Minister for Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström, Minister for Climate and the Environment Åsa Romson and Minister for International Development Cooperation Isabella Lövin are attending the UN Sustainable Development Summit in New York. On 25–27 September, the new global Sustainable Development Goals will be adopted by all UN Member States.

“Sweden will take a leading role also in implementing the new UN Sustainable Development Goals. Poverty reduction, environmental and climate action, and peacebuilding go hand-in-hand. Sweden will lead the way with a coherent policy that takes into account the perspective of poor people, human rights and planetary boundaries. Efforts to achieve the global Sustainable Development Goals in Sweden are starting now,” says Prime Minister Stefan Löfven.

During the summit, the Prime Minister will deliver a speech, attend meetings, seminars and roundtable discussions, and have bilateral talks with the heads of government of other countries.

“These global goals are needed for the countries of the world to work together to stop and prevent conflicts and refugee crises. Sustainable development cannot be achieved without peace, security and respect for

human rights. The global goals give us fifteen years of opportunities for a better world,” says Minister for Foreign Affairs Margot Wallström.

“It is extremely positive that the world is now agreed on the importance of sustainable development. An ambitious climate agreement in Paris this December is our first opportunity to show what this means in practice. All countries have a responsibility to contribute to climate change adaptation. By taking responsibility at home, Sweden is taking the lead and showing that adaptation is both possible and profitable,” says Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Climate and the Environment Åsa Romson.

From a Swedish perspective, it is important to underline three dimensions of sustainability – economic, social and environmental. The rights perspective, including freedom from discrimination, and gender equality in particular, is a top priority, as are employment and the goal of decent work for all.

“In unsettled times in which the challenges faced by the world can sometimes seem insurmountable, the fact that the countries of the world have now come together and shown that change in a positive direction is possible inspires hope and confidence, as does the fact that we stand united in the battle against poverty, repression and climate change,” says Minister for International Development Cooperation Isabella Lövin.

In connection with the summit, a large number of charity events and a music gala – the Global Citizen Festival – will take place in Central Park in New York. The festival will focus on inequalities in the world and access to clean water and sanitation.



Article from Ministry of the Environment

Further financial support to developing countries ahead of the climate change conference in Paris

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The Government is investing SEK 12 million in three special projects tailored to support poor countries' climate actions ahead of the climate change conference (COP21) in Paris. This initiative is linked to the strategy adopted by the Government earlier this year ahead of Paris. The strategy states that Sweden is to particularly support the least-developed countries and those who are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Therefore, the projects the Government is now choosing to support focus particularly on African and Caribbean countries.

African countries' contribution to the new climate agreement

Ahead of the COP21 climate change conference in Paris in December this year, where a new global climate change agreement is due to be adopted, the parties are to indicate what actions they are prepared to commit to under the new agreement. These commitments are called Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) and will be part of the new agreement. Sweden wants all countries to submit an INDC well in advance of the Paris

conference. However, for many developing countries, this is the first time they will be submitting such a commitment.

To support African countries in preparing their INDCs, the Government has decided to contribute SEK 2.5 million to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). In 2015, IRENA will arrange two workshops in Africa on renewable energy sources and opportunities for low-carbon development. The workshops aim to provide African countries with a basis for developing their INDCs.

[IRENA website](#)

Analysis of Caribbean countries' resilience to climate change

Caribbean countries are facing major future challenges in managing material and economic consequences of climate change, incorporating broad resilience against climate change in their societies and ensuring access to energy. The situation demands improved infrastructure, secured energy supply and sustainable energy planning.

The Swedish Energy Agency is collaborating with a newly established centre in the Caribbean and in Small Island Development States (SIDS) on a project to increase resilience to climate change and contribute to sustainable development in the region in connection with the energy transition that will be needed. The project goal is to develop and apply an analysis method - a tool - to analyse the resilience of SIDS' energy systems. The results can be used as background data for preparing policies and investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy. The Government is contributing SEK 5.75 million to the project.

Climate scenarios in Africa

Increased knowledge about how climate change affects different countries is essential, especially for particularly vulnerable African countries. As of 1 January 2015, the Swedish Meteorological and Hydrological Institute (SMHI) is hosting the international project office for cooperation on regional climate downscaling, CORDEX. Cooperation focuses on developing regional climate projections, including for African countries.

Knowledge about future climate change is largely based on results from

global climate models. However, work on adaptation to climate change at local and regional level calls for more detailed information. For this reason, regional processing of global information is important and needs to be disseminated and gain recognition among national authorities and stakeholders in Africa. The Government is now providing SMHI with SEK 3 million as special support to conduct an initiative for climate services in Africa through a pre-study to develop climate services and seminars on climate effects and models.

CORDEX website



Article from Ministry of the Environment

Sweden's view of the new climate agreement

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From 30 November to 11 December, the world's leaders will gather in Paris for the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The session is particularly important since the countries are to agree on a new global climate agreement that will apply from 2020.

The Government wants to see a global, fair and legally binding climate agreement that will help keep global warming as far below two degrees Celsius as possible. The agreement must allow countries to take ever more ambitious emission reduction measures over time.

Sweden wants to see legally binding emissions limitation commitments for all countries. All countries should contribute according to their responsibilities and respective capabilities. Sweden also wants the agreement to cover support to low-income countries' implementation of measures for both emission reductions and adaptation. Support should cover financing, technology diffusion and capacity-building. In particular, support is needed to strengthen efforts in the poorest and most vulnerable countries.

Being able to measure, report and verify countries' emissions is a prerequisite for stronger commitments over time. The agreement must therefore contain fundamental principles for a common regulatory framework for transparency and monitoring of countries' commitments and implementation.

All countries should present their contributions to the new agreement in good

time before the Paris session. The EU's decision to reduce emissions by at least 40 per cent by 2030 is an important step, but a higher level of ambition is needed from both the EU and other parties that have submitted their bids.

The Government considers that a higher level of ambition prior to 2020 is important, both to close the gap between what countries are doing and necessary emission reductions, and to build confidence in the negotiations.

Much work remains before a new agreement can be put into place

Many difficult issues remain to be solved before and during the session in Paris, including what parts of the new agreement should be legally binding, how adaptation and emission reductions can be given equal political importance in the agreement, how climate financing can increase and which countries should contribute.

Reaching a global climate agreement in Paris is expected to be a major challenge, and even if an agreement is reached it will not provide a complete solution to the problem of climate change. The new agreement is needed to create a platform for more ambitious climate commitments and enhanced global action in the years ahead. However, a number of political and technical issues will remain after Paris, for example the detailed reporting regulations and market mechanisms under the new agreement.



Article from Ministry of the Environment

The Government's strategy ahead of COP21

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The Government has drawn up a strategy that is to guide Sweden's work ahead of the climate change conference, COP21, in Paris later this year. The strategy identifies priorities and positions in the Government's climate policy at national, EU and international level.

The objectives and parts of the strategy

The overarching objective of the strategy is for the UN climate change conference in Paris in 2015 to result in a global, fair and legally binding climate agreement that helps to keep global warming as far below two degrees as possible over time. The strategy rests on three pillars:

- Sweden is to be a leading country and tighten its national climate policy. Sweden is also pushing for the EU to raise its ambitions in terms of emissions reductions.
- The new climate agreement needs to be dynamic so that countries' binding emissions targets can be subsequently raised.
- A good agreement will only be achieved if willing countries cooperate. Sweden is to prioritise cooperation with the countries that are also pushing for an ambitious agreement and that are most vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

Climate change hits the already vulnerable the hardest

The effects of climate change affect all countries, but poor and vulnerable countries that do not have the resources to adapt to the changes are particularly hard hit. All countries must make the transition to a sustainable society with low emissions and high resilience to the effects of climate change. If done properly, a transition of this kind also has positive effects on economic development and poverty reduction, energy security and improved health, as well as important environmental targets such as clean air.

It is also important to take account of the challenges that come with such a transition. Sweden is encouraging a broader discussion on how the global investment flows can be aligned so that they support socially, economically and environmentally sustainable development with a considerably smaller prevalence of fossil fuels. Important global components include putting a price on carbon dioxide and not subsidising fossil energy.

Raised climate ambitions needed

A new climate agreement under the UN is crucial for international climate efforts. The agreement should be guided by science and include emissions commitments that, over time, can limit global warming to a level as far below two degrees as possible. This will require a higher level of climate ambition as well as new, enhanced initiatives in every country of the world and among central actors, including Sweden and the EU.

COP 21 can provide the political momentum to push forward a higher level of ambition concerning emission reductions also in the EU. Progress is needed regarding both emissions reductions and climate adaptation. Climate financing is important to strengthen climate action. Other tools and instruments for implementation, such as technology development, technology diffusion and capacity development, are also key to achieving the higher climate ambitions. Climate financing will be a crucial issue for whether the world can agree on a new climate agreement in Paris.