

Speech

Statement by Ms Märta Stenevi, Minister for Gender Equality, at the UN CSW

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Madame Chair,

Excellencies, Distinguished delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

- Sweden aligns itself with the statement made by Portugal on behalf of the EU, and its Member States.
- I am a proud member of the Swedish feminist government. A feminist government ensures that a gender equality perspective is central to all government ministries and to all our priorities – in decision-making and resource allocation processes.
- The overall goal of Sweden's gender equality policy is for women and men, girls and boys, to have the same power to shape society and their own lives. It is important that the same applies to non-binary people.
- Human rights are universal and apply to all. Everyone must be able to fully enjoy their human rights irrespective of sex, gender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation, or age. A feminist government also ensures the equal rights of LGBTI-persons.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

- The focus on this year's CSW is important for achieving gender equality: women' full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence.

- As Sweden this year is commemorating the 100th anniversary of suffrage, we know that it takes time to achieve equal representation of women and men in decision-making.
- We also know that although gender balance might be reached, women's conditions to perform their representative duties might be hampered, not least by gender-based violence, online and offline, including threats, harassment, and cyber bullying.
- We also know that increased gender equality is no linear process: gender equality does not develop by itself, and it requires actors that counteract resistance and secure its proper implementation.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

- Last year, marking the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, was intended to be ground-breaking for gender equality, with a reaffirmed global commitment to the full realization and achievement of gender equality and human rights and the empowerment of all women and girls by 2030.
- Instead, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a global crisis affecting human life and health.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has shown to affect everyone, everywhere.
- But it has also shown to affect different groups of people differently, deepening pre-existing inequalities. Those with the least resources and in the most disadvantaged circumstances are generally those who suffer the greatest strain. Often women and girls are part of those groups.
- Vulnerable and marginalized boys and girls are particularly exposed – when schools close, they are deprived opportunities for growth and development.
- Most critical, the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the risk of women being subjected to men's violence.
- It has also exacerbated the vulnerability of children and young people at risk at home. The same applies to victims of gender based and 'honour'-based violence and oppression, including women, children, young women, older people, LGBTI persons and persons with disabilities. Greater isolation can increase the incidence of violence and control.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

- Even before COVID-19 existed, men's violence against women was already one of the most serious human rights violations.
- We can never accept that anyone is denied their rights to decide over their own lives and their own bodies.

- In 2016, my Government adopted a ten-year cross-sectoral national strategy for preventing and combating men's violence against women and protecting and supporting women and children subjected to violence. The strategy also covers honour-related violence as well as prostitution and trafficking, and states that men's violence against women must stop.
- In 2018, the Swedish sexual offence legislation was reformed. It is now an offence to perform a sexual act with someone who is not participating voluntarily.
- Women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, must have the same right to, and opportunity for, bodily integrity.
- The blame must be put where it belongs: on the perpetrators.

Ladies and Gentlemen!

- Although the COVID-19 pandemic is a profound shock to our societies, affecting lives and livelihoods around the world, I would like to end on a positive note.
- We now have a chance to build back better.
- In responding to the pandemic, work conditions in female dominated sectors must be addressed.
- Long-standing structural inequalities in society in general must be rectified.
- Sweden is therefore happy to be one of the co-leaders in the Generation Equality Action Coalition on Economic Justice and Rights.
- We must also continue standing up for the rights of women and girls, including all women's sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- We must continue promoting access to safe and legal abortions, contraceptives, and comprehensive sexuality education.
- We must continue standing up for issues relating to women, peace, and security and to pursue our feminist foreign policy.
- Women and girls must be put at the centre of our efforts to recover from COVID-19.
- Responding to the pandemic is about building a more equal and resilient world, in the interest of everyone. It is about building a better world and a better future for everyone.
- That work starts with women as leaders, with equal representation and decision-making power. It starts with you and me as global leaders!

Thank you for your attention!