



PERMANENT MISSION OF SWEDEN

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT
BY
SWEDEN

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4th Periodic Report of the Government of Sweden to be considered by the
Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

President Lee,
Distinguished members of the committee,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour for the Government of Sweden to be present at this dialogue with the Committee on the Rights of the Child based on our fourth periodic state report on the implementation of the CRC. I am very happy to be leading the Swedish governmental delegation at this meeting.

I would like to begin by referring briefly to the fundamental elements of the implementation of the Convention in Sweden.

We have a national strategy for the implementation of the CRC adopted by the Swedish parliament. The aim of the strategy is for children's rights and interests to permeate all decision-making relating to children.

This national strategy is periodically updated through Government communications to the parliament. The last communication was produced in March 2008.

Our Government has a specific policy for the rights of the child. The goal is that policy makers should take into account the human rights of every girl and boy. Our policy aims to create the conditions for this in all areas that have an impact on children's living conditions.

We have a monitoring division, Coordination on the Policy for the Rights of the Child, within the Government Offices. This division monitors all Government decisions or measures regarding children, and ensures that they reflect the provisions of the CRC.

Children's Ombudsman is a fundamental component of the national mechanism for the implementation of the CRC at the local, regional and national level.

It is important that the Ombudsman is independent within its legislative framework. The Ombudsman is now working on its proposals on how to monitor the national strategic work based on the Government communication on its child rights policy. The Ombudsman will also work on development of the methods of using its legal powers.

We appreciate the Ombudsman's initiatives to direct dialogue with the local authorities, using his existing legal powers, which have had a concrete impact in the work of decisions makers at local and regional level.

The Ombudsman's annual report is disseminated in the Government office and the recommendations are being dealt with by the responsible ministries. The Ombudsman has also been invited to present the recommendations for the Government office.

At parliamentary level we have an all-party working group. Representatives of all political parties are cooperating with and consulting each other when it comes to legislation or other measures on the parliamentary agenda.

Dialogue and cooperation with civil society is an important component of our Government policy. This year, the year of the 20th anniversary of the CRC, the Government is cooperating with an ad hoc network of Swedish NGOs. The major focus of this cooperation is on spreading knowledge about the Convention.

The work of local and regional authorities with impact on children's every-day life is crucial for the implementation of the CRC.

The local and regional authorities have a considerable degree of autonomy and have independent powers of taxation. Their rights are stipulated in the Instrument of Government, one of the four pillars of the Swedish Constitution.

The government has in this context a regulatory role. It is responsible for the general legislation applying to different types of local authorities. One typical example of the way the state is exercising its role is the Local Government Act. Other examples are laws and ordinances covering specific areas such

as the Social Services Act, the Planning and Building Act, the Education Act and the Health and Medical Services Act.

The state is also creating a framework to follow up the implementation of the legislation by the local and regional authorities. It is the job of the county administrative board to see that decisions taken by the Government and the parliament have the best possible effects in the county.

The county administrative board has responsibilities with regard to many of the services provided by the local authorities, checking up on and monitoring compliance with laws and guidelines. Inspections of housing for children and youth homes are one such example.

Madam President, honourable experts, children today are, in the forefront of using modern information technologies. Your committee recommended that Sweden strengthen its protective measures for children using the Internet, television and computer games against violence and child pornography. I have good news on this front.

The government has initiated a dialogue with Internet providers and other actors aiming to improve the protection of children in the media environment. The dialogue resulted in a joint initiative from the private sector, national authorities and NGOs to establish an Internet portal that will give access to all existing measures and knowledge concerning the

protection of children in this environment. We hope that this joint portal will soon be operational.

Sweden is also an active participant in the European dialogue on this topic cooperation with both the previous French Presidency and the current Czech Presidency of the European Union.

On the international arena, the Swedish Government launched last year an initiative aimed at strengthening children's rights in the Council of Europe and its Member States.

Based on our initiative and on the outcome of a large European conference on this topic held in Stockholm, the Ministers' Deputies within the Council of Europe adopted in November 2008 the Stockholm Strategy for the period 2009 to 2011.

On 1 July, Sweden will take over the Presidency of the European Union. In this role Sweden intends to take more responsibility in promoting support for the European Commission in its work towards a future EU strategy for the rights of the child. We want the future strategy to be inspired by your work and your recommendations on relevant issues.

During its Presidency of European Union the Swedish Government will also focus on work to combat violence against children in all contexts. In July our Government will

be organising in Stockholm an NGO Forum on combating violence against children. It will be even a opportunity to celebrate the Swedish experience of 30 years with the first law in the world banning corporal punishment of children.

A priority will be to highlight children's rights within the United Nations General Assembly. During our Presidency Sweden will draft and introduce the Omnibusresolution on the rights of the child on behalf of the EU, together with Uruguay, in the General Assembly. This year's theme is "the rights of the child to express his or her views freely in all matters affecting him or her".

In the framework of the Swedish Presidency of the EU, the Swedish Minister for Health and Social Affairs Göran Hägglund will host a high-level conference on 20 November in Stockholm. It will be an opportunity to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the CRC and discuss issues that remain very relevant for our countries' implementation of the CRC.

Madam President, on behalf of my Government I would like to invite you and your committee to this conference.

Madam President, distinguished members of the committee, our fourth periodical report is basically a direct response to your previous concluding observations. We have considered your concerns as well as your recommendations seriously.

Our Government has not always implemented the measures you have suggested. But we have tried in good faith to find the most effective and suitable solutions for our society to the remaining shortcomings in the work of implementing the CRC.

I must also say that some of the measures we have undertaken have not yet produced results. However, we are convinced that, in due time, these measures will improve the lives of our children and the level of respect for their rights.

President Lee, honourable members of the Committee, let me finish by saying that we, the members of the Swedish delegation, are now prepared to listen to you and to answer your questions. We hope to have a fruitful dialogue during the day. Thank you.