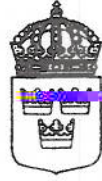


# SWEDEN



Statement  
by  
H.E. Ms. Nyamko Sabuni  
Minister of Gender Equality

The fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women

United Nations  
New York

- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY -





tomorrow's parents, business leaders, business owners and policy makers.

Educated adults are more likely to make informed choices about their future and families. Parents who have received an education are more likely to send their children to school.

Talk about the state of education across the globe. On the one hand, you will see that school attendance rates are rising rapidly worldwide and the gender gap is narrowing. On the other hand, there are still 72 million children of primary school age who are not in school, 50 million of them are girls.

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Sweden has a long history of promoting gender equality within employment and education but some challenges remain. Girls and boys are not yet equal in the way they experience the school day differently, and they also make different career choices.

A recent Swedish report has found that girls suffer more stress at school than boys do. Girls show better educational achievements, while boys tend to fall behind in social interaction. Still, boys express more confidence in the future than girls do. Perhaps this is not surprising, given that women's education does

not pay off as well as it does for men. The same pattern is seen in many European countries.

The fact that good grades do not pay off for girls and young women, combined with the lack of affordable childcare in many parts of Europe, properly explains why many educated women stay at home. In fact, Europe is home to one of the world's most well-educated housewives. We need to ensure that education pays off, also for girls and women.

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In other parts of the world, girls' and women face different problems. In many countries, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, girls do not complete their education. The main reason for this, apart from practical problems such as school fees, school transport, is discrimination resulting from traditions and customs, violence, early marriage and early pregnancy.

Every single day, 26 000 girls under the age of 16 get married, often against their will. Every single day, thousands of girls are married. Their duty is to be a wife, not a student. Every single day, 40 000 teenage girls give birth. And as a result, pregnancy and childbirth are leading causes of death for girls between the ages of 15 and 19. Let me be clear: these traditions, often rooted in religion and

cultural, and not in the best interest of our girls. They present clear and

unavoidable obstacles to their enjoyment of basic human rights and

fundamental freedoms. These harmful traditions not only prevent girls from

going to school – they deny their birth, and may lead to their death.

This brings me to an issue on which we never seem to agree: the importance of

sexual and reproductive health and rights. Women and girls die because political

leaders demand more and do not focus on women's health. Because resources are

not provided. Because women are denied the right to decide over their own

bodies, sexuality and reproduction.

The right to decide and exercise control over one's own body, sexuality and

reproduction is fundamental for everyone. Sexuality education therefore needs

to be an important part of the national curriculum. Comprehensive sexuality

education is an essential tool in the fight to reduce maternal mortality, HIV

infections and violence against women.

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Mr/Madam Chair,

Over the last few weeks we have seen massive demonstrations for democratic

governance, justice, development and respect for human rights in several

countries in North Africa and the Middle East. Long-standing autocratic regimes are being forced to step down. Free and fair elections will hopefully soon be held. Women have been an important part of these movements. We need to ensure that these events also bring about greater empowerment of women. Sustainable development cannot be achieved unless women's rights are respected, their voices heard and their skills counted. Women in these and other regions will need our unspoken support.

Sweden welcomes the establishment of UN Women. With the establishment of UN Women, the need to strengthen gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment throughout the UN system was given full and bold backing. We now need to turn our attention to the practical implications of our political commitment to gender equality, gender mainstreaming, the empowerment of women and full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in all sectors of policy and programming. Sweden stands ready to support these efforts.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

US President Barack Obama called for action in his state-of-the-union address.

The future we should be winning is a world where every child is born in a family, where every child is loved, where every child is educated, where every child is healthy, where every child is safe, where every child is respected, where every child is valued, where every child is heard, where every child is seen, where every child is known, where every child is loved, where every child is safe, where every child is healthy, where every child is educated, where every child is respected, where every child is valued, where every child is heard, where every child is seen, where every child is known, where every child is loved.

make informed decisions about their own future that are not based on

preconceived gender notions. A better future for our children should always

embrace our diversity. And the starting point is to affirm that all children deserve equality

education.

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Thank you.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

US President Barack Obama has called for a national effort to "bring girls into the future."

The future we should be winning allows girls to go through school before

marriage. It provides young women - and men - with education about sexual

and reproductive health and rights. It makes sure that girls have the skills and