

Submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

Executive Summary

As the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has recognized, climate change disproportionately impacts women. Consequently, Sweden has ICEDAW obligations to avoid foreseeable harms to women's rights, including by taking adequate measures to address climate change.

There is little evidence that Sweden has adequately considered the gendered impacts of climate change at the national level or the correlative importance of ensuring women's voices and perspectives are taken into account in decision-making on climate action at the local and national levels.

Further, while Sweden has put in place a solid policy framework for addressing emissions reductions, Sweden's current climate targets are not sufficiently ambitious to address its full carbon footprint and to contribute its fair share of emissions reduction necessary to keep global warming to within the Paris Agreement goals. In particular Swedish public and private actors continue to invest significantly in fossil fuels thereby directly financing high-emitting industries in disregard of the commitments of the Paris Agreement.

We urge the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women to include the following questions in its List of Issues for Sweden:

- 1. Given that Sweden has a feminist government and is a Party to the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, has Sweden taken sufficient measures to increase capacity on integrating a gender perspective in climate policy, planning and action at the national, regional and local level of administration, including in line with the recommended activities in the Gender Action Plan adopted under the UNFCCC in 2017?**
- 2. Given the foreseeable and serious adverse impacts on women's rights of global warming beyond 1.5°C, are Sweden's current financial and fiscal policies and bank regulations sufficiently ambitious to reduce its carbon footprint, including regulations for government-backed institutions, and to ensure Sweden mitigates climate change adequately to meet its obligations under ICEDAW and in line with the Paris Agreement?**

1. Submitting organisations

Diakonia

Diakonia is a faith-based Swedish development organization. Diakonia supports and works with around 350 local partner organisations in 25 countries. Diakonia's vision is a just and sustainable world free from poverty, where all people, irrespective of religion, gender, ethnicity, colour, sexual orientation, language, ideological or political beliefs, national or social origin, property, age, birth or any other status, live in dignified circumstances.

The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation

The Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (the SSNC) is a member-based environmental organisation that is more than a hundred years old and that has more than 226 000 members. The SSNC works to save the life of nature, as well as promote human health and global solidarity. SSNC spread knowledge, chart environmental threats, propose solutions and influence politicians and authorities, both nationally and internationally.

Center for International Environmental Law

The Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) uses the power of law to protect the environment, promote human rights, and ensure a just and sustainable society.

2. Climate change and women's human rights

It is clear that the consequences of climate change will have significant adverse impacts on human rights, including the rights protected by the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). The effects of climate change are felt most acutely by those segments of the population that are already in vulnerable situations. The IPCC Fifth Assessment report noted: 'People who are socially, economically, culturally, politically, institutionally or otherwise marginalized are especially vulnerable to climate change and also to some adaptation and mitigation responses. Women are frequently more vulnerable due to pre-existing, intersecting discrimination and gendered roles and stereotypes. At a global level, women will suffer the impacts disproportionately - more frequently and more severely than men - in part because they make up the vast majority of the world's poor, they are more dependent for their livelihood on natural resources that are threatened by climate change, they have unequal access to resources and decision-making processes and they often have limited mobility and networks.

The CEDAW Committee has also highlighted the disproportionate impacts on women in its new General Recommendation on 'the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change'. In it, they state that 'women, girls, men and boys are affected differently by climate change and disasters, with many women and girls experiencing greater risks, burdens and impacts. Situations of crisis exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities and compound the intersecting forms of discrimination against, among others, women living in poverty, indigenous women, women belonging to ethnic, racial, religious and sexual minority groups, women with disabilities, refugee and asylum-seeking women, internally displaced, stateless and migrant women, rural women, unmarried women,

adolescents and older women, who are often disproportionately affected compared with men or other women'; and 'gender inequalities limit the control that women and girls have over decisions governing their lives, as well as their access to resources such as food, water, agricultural input, land, credit, energy, technology, education, health services, adequate housing, social protection and employment. As a result of those inequalities, women and girls are more likely to be exposed to disaster-induced risks and losses relating to their livelihoods, and they are less able to adapt to changes in climatic conditions.'

Climate change and women's rights in Sweden

Climate change is a global concern and emissions will have an impact on vulnerable groups regardless of their origin. There is therefore a clear link between Sweden's ambition in terms of emissions reductions and women's rights both in Sweden and globally.

Without adequate attention to gender inequality and the structural causes behind it, climate change action also risks perpetuating and worsening existing inequalities in any context. Without proper attention to gender inequality, communities may fail at identifying the most effective and efficient ways of transitioning to a low carbon, fair and sustainable future as the knowledge and perspectives of marginalised groups may not come to the fore. If climate policy development fails to identify the underlying causes of unequal power structures, climate change impacts will continue to have the greatest impact on those groups of people who find themselves in the most vulnerable conditions.

With a higher degree of gender equality in Sweden than in many other parts of the world, the differentiated impact between women and men may be smaller than in poorer and less gender equal countries. Nevertheless, gender inequality and discrimination of women still exist and the knowledge about how this relates to influence on climate policy making and in terms of effects of climate change is very limited. What is known is that although representation among climate policy makers and administrative staff in relevant government agencies in Sweden is more or less gender balanced, climate policies are still largely gender blind.

Knowledge about and attitudes to climate change differ between women and men in Scandinavia. Affluent men are overrepresented among those who question climate science and express least concern about climate change.

Inequality is mirrored also in men's and women's consumption patterns. In Sweden, women are 25% more prone to consider environmental aspects in their consumer choices than men, and they also find it easier to do so, based on their knowledge on available alternatives. Differences in consumption patterns are partly linked to income. In Sweden, women's income is on average 83 percent that of men in 2017. In terms of assets, men owned 57 percent and women owned 43 percent of the total in 2007, which is the last year for which statistics are available. Women also take on a greater share of unpaid household level work, which affects their income as well as their consumption patterns and may have an impact on their perspectives on needed policy changes. All these aspects are also likely to influence to what degree women engage in policy and decision making.

3. Climate change and State obligations

Under the ICEDAW

The Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment has underlined that: ‘The foreseeable adverse effects of climate change on the enjoyment of human rights give rise to duties of States to take actions to protect against those effects. Human rights obligations apply not only to decisions about how much climate protection to pursue, but also to the mitigation and adaptation measures through which the protection is achieved.’¹

The CEDAW Committee has clarified State obligations:

‘States parties and other stakeholders have obligations to take specific steps to address discrimination against women in the fields of disaster risk reduction and climate change, through the adoption of targeted laws, policies, mitigation and adaptation strategies, budgets and other measures.’²

In its General Recommendation on Gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, the CEDAW committee reiterated that “limiting fossil fuel use and greenhouse gas emissions and the harmful environmental effects of extractive industries (...) are regarded as crucial steps in mitigating the negative human rights impact of climate change and disasters.”³

Under the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement

Women’s rights

At the 23rd Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2017, all Parties to the UNFCCC agreed on a Gender Action Plan (GAP) (decision 3/CP.23) to strengthen the work on gender issues under the Convention and the Paris Agreement. It aims to increase women’s participation, strengthen capacity on gender issues, to increase coherence between different UN bodies and to integrate gender aspects in finance, technology transfer, reporting and monitoring. The CEDAW Committee referred to the role of this Gender Action Plan in its General Recommendation on Women Rights and Disaster Risk Reduction in the context of climate change.⁴

In the Paris Agreement (ratified by Sweden on 22 April 2016), gender equality and the empowerment of women are recognised as overarching principles (in the preamble) and the importance of gender responsive policies is stressed, for instance in relation to efforts on adaptation and capacity building. The GAP relates to activities concerning adaptation, mitigation, finance, technology development and transfer and capacity building, which thus expands the scope of integration.

¹ UN Human Rights Council, ‘Report of the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment’ (1 February 2016) A/HRC/31/52, para 33.

² CEDAW, ‘General Recommendation No. 37 on Gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change’ (7 February 2018), para 8.

³ *Ibid*, para 14.

⁴ *Ibid*, para. 20.

The GAP states that gender-responsive climate policy requires further strengthening in all activities concerning adaptation, mitigation and related means of implementation, including finance, technology development and transfer and capacity building, as well as decision-making on the implementation of climate policies. It recognizes participation of women as a means of increasing effectiveness of climate action. These statements are in line with the findings of contemporary research on the gender aspects of climate policy and action, which has shown that women's and men's vulnerabilities, strategies, knowledge, contribution and attitudes differ when it relates to climate change and its causes and effects. There is also a marked difference in men's and women's access to information and decision making on climate change policy and action.⁵

Financial flows

The Paris Agreement broke new ground by including, as one of its three long-term goals, a commitment to "making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development."⁶ This provision is particularly important as it recognizes the importance of looking at all finance – not only finance labeled as "international climate finance" such as contribution from developed countries to developing countries. The scope of this provision consequently applies both to public and private, domestic and international financial flows. It particular it reflects the fact that the objectives of the Paris Agreement will only be met if financial resources are directed towards carbon neutral technologies such as renewable energy and if any financial incentives and support for industries related to the fossil fuels are rapidly terminated.

4. Greenhouse gas emissions and Climate change impacts within Sweden

In Sweden, climate change is expected to lead to increased precipitation during all seasons except summer. The risk of flooding will increase which could lead to impacts on buildings, infrastructure and drinking water reserves. The northern part of the country, which already has high precipitation, is expected to have the highest increase in precipitation, while the southern part of the country is likely to experience more droughts during summer, but also torrential rains. The growing season will be prolonged in all parts of the country, but the risk of pests will also increase with higher temperatures.⁷

Sweden's territorial emissions of greenhouse gases were 52.7 million tons of CO₂ equivalents in 2017, or around 5 tons per capita. Emissions have reduced by only 0.5 percent per year since 2014. Territorial emissions have decreased by 26 percent since 1990. Consumption based emissions are however relatively stable over the same period, around 10 tons per capita. Thus, reductions in emissions are not primarily led by a modification of consumption patterns in Sweden, but are due to the fact that goods and services to a greater extent are

⁵ Pearse, R. Gender and climate change. WIREs Clim Change 2017, 8:e451. Doi 10.1002/wcc.451
http://www.academia.edu/30671931/Gender_and_climate_change

⁶ Article 2.1c of the Paris Agreement.

⁷ <https://www.naturvardsverket.se/Sa-mar-miljon/Klimat-och-luft/Klimat/Klimatet-i-framtiden/Effekter-i-Sverige/>

being sourced from other countries, as much of the production now takes place in lower-income countries.^{8,9}

5. Sweden's climate change policies, commitments and targets

A new Climate Policy Framework, consisting of a Climate Law, a target on emissions reductions and the establishment of a Climate Policy Council was adopted by the Swedish Parliament in June 2017. It entered into force in January 2018. In terms of acknowledging women's rights and gender equality, the framework recognises that reaching the emission reduction targets in the framework is assumed to contribute to gender equality because women are generally more vulnerable to the consequences of climate change, but no further reference to women's rights is made in the framework. Under the Climate Law, a four year Climate Action Plan must be presented by each new Government. Climate action is to be reported annually. The first Climate Action plan will be presented in 2019.

The Framework also entails new climate targets. By 2045, Sweden is to have net zero emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. However, 15 percent of the emission reductions can be achieved through supplementary measures, such as increased uptake of carbon dioxide by forests or investments in various climate projects abroad. Emissions in Sweden in the sectors that will be covered by the EU Effort Sharing Regulation should by 2030 be at least 63 percent lower than in 1990, and by 2040 they should have decreased by at least 75 percent.

Sweden's feminist agenda

Sweden has a self-proclaimed feminist government since 2014 (it served its first term from 2014-2018, then as a transition government for 4 months following the election in 2018, and was reinstated in January 2019). It has set out to strengthen women's and LGBT persons' rights through a variety of interventions. For example, all government agencies are tasked with the responsibility to mainstream gender considerations in its operations.

In 2014 Sweden also launched its aim to pursue a feminist foreign policy¹⁰ as a response to the discrimination and systematic subordination that still mark the daily lives of countless women and girls around the world. The policy entails applying a systematic gender equality perspective throughout foreign policy. The feminist foreign policy encompasses areas such as international development cooperation, peace and security, disarmament and non-proliferation, trade, human rights and democracy, but does not specifically mention international climate policy. Climate change is however recognised as a factor which has an impact on the fulfilment of human rights. In line with the feminist foreign policy, Sweden has championed gender equality strategies in multilateral development banks and climate funds.

Gender in Swedish Climate Policy

While Sweden is doing fairly well at integrating and championing a gender perspective in its international relations and policies, there is only scattered experience of addressing gender

8 <http://www.naturvardsverket.se/Sa-mar-miljon/Statistik-A-O/Vaxthusgaser-konsumtionsbaserade-utslapp-per-person/>

9 <http://www.naturvardsverket.se/klimatutslapp>

10 https://www.government.se/4a4752/contentassets/fc115607a4ad4bca913cd8d11c2339dc/handbook_swedens-feminist-foreign-policy.pdf

equality and women's rights in climate policy at the national level. No one has been assigned a central responsibility for furthering this agenda and there is no comprehensive overview or coordinated effort on the state of affairs on women's rights in relation to climate change in Sweden.

The government agency that most clearly has addressed gender dimensions is the Swedish Consumer Agency. In 2015, the Swedish Energy Agency found that representation of women had increased in the Boards of energy companies, but equal representation had not been reached. They also found that women are more in favour of renewable energy sources than men. They concluded that there were no objectives related to gender for their own research finding, something which has since been addressed, as objectives were established in 2016. There are limited to objectives on representation.^{11, 12}

6. The GAP in Swedish climate policy

The Gender Action Plan calls upon State Parties to, inter alia, take steps to increase capacity among relevant stakeholders to develop gender-responsive policies; and to collect information on how the impacts of climate change affect women and men, respectively, and on how a gender perspective has been integrated in climate adaptation, mitigation, capacity-building, technology and finance policies, plans and actions. Sweden has contributed to the submission done by the EU to the UNFCCC Secretariat in response to these activities in the GAP, but no initiatives have been taken at the national level to further push the political agenda in line with GAP objectives or intentions. Implementation of activities in the GAP is not compulsory, but as a proclaimed feminist Government, with a feminist foreign policy, and as a country with a high degree of gender equality and a comparatively progressive climate policy, Sweden should have an interest in taking the lead on furthering knowledge and capacity on how to effectively integrate a gender perspective in climate policy and action.

In order to further address women's rights in climate policy and action, Sweden could - in line with activity A1 in the GAP - conduct an investigation to establish a baseline of gender integration in climate policies, plans and programs, and existing capacity; develop a plan for addressing capacity building needs to increase gender integration; and assess the competence and resource needs of government agencies, local and regional administration bodies to more effectively integrate a gender perspective in climate action planning and implementation.

Secondly, Sweden could - in line with one of the core activities of the GAP - conduct a mapping, based on sex-disaggregated data as and when available, of a) gender-differentiated impacts of climate change in Sweden, b) how gender considerations have been integrated in climate policy, planning and implementation for mitigation and adaptation, and c) key success factors behind progress made in achieving a gender balance in the national climate delegation.¹³ This should require cooperation between a number of Ministries and government agencies and involvement of regional and local administration. The findings should allow Sweden to identify needs for capacity building, institutional support, resource allocation and policy development.

¹¹ <https://energimyndigheten.a-w2m.se/Home.mvc?ResourceId=3068>

¹² <http://www.energimyndigheten.se/om-oss/mal-for-jamstalldhet-for-verksamheten-inom-forskning-och-innovation/>

¹³ See Gender Action Plan, Activity E1.

Implementing effectively and thoroughly the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan at the national level in Sweden and communicating the result of this implementation to international partners would not only result in greater knowledge and a more gender responsive policy in the country but would also demonstrate to other governments the added value of the Gender Action Plan thereby contributing to building momentum towards a greater attention paid to gender equality in international climate governance.

7. Misdirected financial flows

Since the Paris Agreement came into force, both private and public financial actors have taken steps in the direction to phase out investment in fossil energy and supporting infrastructure and increase investment in renewable energy and other low carbon development initiatives. However governments have been slow to implement adequate policies aimed at eliminating or reducing fossil fuels subsidies, a recent report by the European Commission noting for instance that such subsidies do not decrease in the European Union and that EU government spend over USD 60 billion annually to support fossil fuels spending in the energy, households and transportation sectors, thereby hampering their efforts to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.¹⁴

The Swedish government has taken action to phase out the support to fossil fuels through its international development cooperation, but has not taken the corresponding action at home. The domestic task of directing the bulk of financial flows away from fossil fuels still remains.

At the end of 2017, the major Swedish private banks together held shares or bonds in, and provided loans and guarantees for, fossil energy companies at a total value of approximately SEK 60 billion (USD 6.6 billion).¹⁵

Swedish public funds and government bodies are contributing to continued, and expanding, use of fossil fuels abroad. In 2017 the Swedish National Pension Funds had SEK 13 billion (USD 1.4 billion) holdings in almost half of the hundred companies whose operations account for the largest carbon footprints in the world. Furthermore the government-backed export credit agencies provide financial support for the fossil fuel sector. Inadequate transparency and insufficient information make it difficult to conduct an assessment of the extent and consequences of the fossil investments realized through Swedish export credits. But there are examples of single transactions amounting to SEK 3.3 billion (USD 362 million) that realize a fossil project that emit 5.3 million tons of CO₂eq annually.¹⁶

Sweden is one of the initiators to the "Friends of Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform", which is an informal group of countries aiming to build political consensus on the importance of fossil fuel subsidy reform. Within this initiative the focus is on phasing out support for fossil fuels in low- and middle-income countries, and the fossil subsidies in Sweden are not addressed.

Despite this initiative, every year at least SEK 30 billion (USD 3.3 billion) of Sweden's tax money goes to subsidizing climate-harmful activities in Sweden. One of the biggest subsidies

¹⁴ See Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic And Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: "Energy prices and costs in Europe" {SWD(2019) 1 final}.

¹⁵ <https://fairfinanceguide.se/media/494515/lagg-om-vaxeln.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.ekn.se/vad-vi-gor/hallbarhet/affarer/arkiv/yamal/>

is the income tax deduction for car travel to and from work. In 2017 this deduction cost the Swedish government SEK 5.6 billion (USD 614 million). Nine out of ten deductions goes to car transport of which 93 percent are driven by fossil fuels. Males use this deduction more than women.

The bulk of the money that needs to be shifted is in the private sector, but public finance plays an important role in influencing behavior by shifting financial risk. Hence, change must come from both public and private actors. The examples above illustrates that this will not happen passively. To reduce the gender-skewed impact of climate change, the government of Sweden must take adequate action aimed at making financial flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development. This includes, but is not limited to, the adoption of stricter financial and fiscal policies, effective regulations for the bank sector and government-backed institutions that foster the necessary shift out of fossil fuels.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

Sweden has ICEDAW obligations to avoid foreseeable harms to women's rights, including by taking adequate measures to address climate change.

There is little evidence that Sweden has adequately considered the gendered impacts of climate change at the national level or the correlative importance of ensuring women's voices and perspectives are taken into account in decision-making on climate action at the local and national levels.

Further, while Sweden has put in place a solid policy framework for addressing emissions reductions, Sweden's current climate targets are not sufficiently ambitious to address its full carbon footprint and to contribute its fair share of emissions reduction necessary to keep global warming to within the Paris Agreement goals. In particular, Swedish public and private actors continue to invest significantly in fossil fuels thereby directly financing high-emitting industries in disregard to the commitments of the Paris Agreement.

We urge the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women to include the following questions in its List of Issues for Sweden:

- 1. Given that Sweden has a feminist government and is a Party to the UNFCCC and the Paris Agreement, has Sweden taken sufficient measures to increase capacity on integrating a gender perspective in climate policy, planning and action at the national, regional and local level of administration, including in line with the recommended activities in the Gender Action Plan adopted under the UNFCCC in 2017?**
- 2. Given the foreseeable and serious adverse impacts on women's rights of global warming beyond 1.5°C, are Sweden's current financial and fiscal policies and bank regulations sufficiently ambitious to reduce its carbon footprint, including regulations for government-backed institutions, and**

to ensure Sweden mitigates climate change adequately to meet its obligations under ICEDAW and in line with the Paris Agreement?