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Ministry of Employment  
Gender Equality Division

## Sweden's response to the Secretary-General of the United Nations relating to the implementation of the General Assembly resolutions:

- Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: sexual harassment (A/RES/73/148)
- Trafficking in women and girls (A/RES/73/146)
- Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation (A/RES/73/149)

REFERENCE: UNW/2020/0002

### Introduction

In November 2016, the Swedish government introduced a national 10-year strategy on preventing and combating men's violence against women, which includes forced marriage and violence and oppression in the name of honour. The strategy was drafted with the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (also known as the Istanbul Convention) as an important point of reference. It consists of four objectives, a clear organisation for implementation and an action plan for the years 2017-2020. So far, the Swedish government has allocated more than 1,6 billion Swedish Crowns for the implementation of the action plan.

#### ***Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls: sexual harassment (A/RES/73/148)***

- *Measures to address sexual harassment against women and girls, as per*

*resolution 73/148.*

Sexual harassment is prohibited according to the Discrimination Act (2008:567). The prohibition covers in large all areas of the society. The Act also states that employers and education providers are to have guidelines and routines for their activities to prevent sexual harassment and reprisals. The Equality Ombudsman is to supervise the compliance with the Act. The Government gave the Equality Ombudsman an assignment in year 2018 and 2019 on special information efforts to increase knowledge of the work against sexual harassment.

During 2018 and 2019, the Swedish Gender Equality Agency was tasked with gathering and disseminating knowledge about sexual harassment. The assignment was reported on in November 2019, and as a result the Agency developed a website where employers and training providers, as well as children and adults who have been subjected to sexual harassment, can find information about legislation, regulations and obligations, and about whom to contact in the event of being subjected to sexual harassment.

The Swedish Police Authority has decided to increase the number of people investigating domestic violence, rape and violent and sexual crimes against children by around 350 full-time equivalents from 2020 onwards. The Police Authority will also pay increased attention to ensuring that the available methodology manual is used in investigations, for example regarding initial evidence preservation and interrogation. In 2019, the Swedish Prosecution Authority and the Swedish Police Authority published a report on domestic violence and sexual crimes. The report showed that prosecutors and police who work in accordance with the agencies' common methodology manual had higher prosecution rates. The Swedish Prosecution Authority has in 2019 also updated its manual on restraining orders.

The Government has appointed an inquiry on further strengthening protection under criminal law against sexual violations, which will review issues relating to inter alia collection of evidence in sexual offence cases. The assignment is to be reported in early 2021.

Basic police training includes providing police officers with basic knowledge about crimes in close relationships, restraining orders and threat and risk assessments. In-depth training on investigative work related to crimes in close relationships, sexual crimes, crimes against children and young people and serious violent crimes, is also provided. In addition, there are specific trainings on advanced work with victims of crime and risk assessments.

An in-depth training for officials investigating sexual crimes was introduced in the autumn of 2018. The training lasts for two weeks and aims to strengthen officials' ability to apply current legislation and knowledge on factors that affect successful investigation of sexual crimes.

Regarding the Swedish Prosecution Authority's basic training for prosecutors, it includes training on violent and sexual crimes. The Authority's advanced training for prosecutors includes training on men's violence against women and on how to approach victims of sexual crimes. The Authority also arranges seminars regularly for prosecutors to share experience in the field of domestic violence and sexual crimes. During 2018, the Prosecution Authority has provided training on the new sexual offence legislation for all its prosecutors.

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society has carried out information initiatives regarding health and gender equality for newly arrived and asylum-seeking children and young people. The information covers issues such as honour-related violence and oppression, including female genital mutilation (which applies to the question about FGM further down), sexual violence, sexual harassment and legislation within the field, including legislation on the purchase of sexual services. The work has resulted in the website *youmo.se*, where information is provided in simple Swedish and English, as well as in the most common languages among the target group: Dari, Tigrinya, Arabic and Somali.

- *Impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak in regards to violence against women and girls and measures undertaken to address those in the short, medium and long-term, particularly in the following areas:*
  - *Impact on the nature and prevalence of violence against women and girls, including violence in private and public spaces, and in on-line settings.*
  - *Adaptation of service delivery and prevention interventions to lockdowns and restricted movement.*
  - *Use of technology and innovation in responding and preventing to violence against women and girls in the context of COVID-19.*

There are no official orders of a lockdown or curfew in Sweden. However, the general recommendations are to limit social contacts and to stay at home in case of symptoms of a cold and, whenever possible, to work from home. Students in high school and university study from home, and formal education is cancelled. It is not allowed to arrange or participate in meetings with more than 50 people.

The societal and economic effects due to uncertainties caused by financial stress and disruption of everyday activities and routines, are affecting individuals, including women and children who live with domestic and/or gender-based violence.

The Swedish government has taken several actions that will strengthen society's possibility to combat violence. The government has increased funding to social services and health care as they are the ones who make decisive efforts every day to protect and save lives. In order to be able to follow the development and be prepared to take measures, the Minister for Gender Equality, Åsa Lindhagen, has continuously had meetings with organisations and authorities that work with domestic violence and men's violence against women. The Government has also increased funding to civil society and directed funding to reach out with information to victims of violence. These two measures responding to the increased vulnerability due to the spread of the corona virus were presented in depth at a press conference the 30 April held by minister Lindhagen together with the Director General of the Swedish Gender Equality Agency and the Director General of the National Board of Health and Welfare.

The government has assigned the Swedish Gender Equality Agency to identify and develop efficient methods on how to reach out to victims of violence with information concerning gender-based violence and honour-related violence and oppression. The methods elaborated are required to be adapted to the operations by the municipalities, and the Swedish Gender Equality Agency is assigned to carry out the mission in a quick manner and subsequently disseminate the methods to the municipal level. The Agency is given 1,8 million Swedish Crowns (approximately € 700 000) for the year of 2020 in order to complete the task.

The government has with extra funding strengthened civil society in their work to combat violence towards women, children and LGBTI-persons by violent partners or parents. This funding commissions the National board of Health and Welfare to distribute 100 million Swedish Crowns (approximately € 9 million) to civil society. Following the Covid-19 outbreak the civil society organisations may have a need to expand and develop their operations or find alternate ways of getting in touch with victims of violence. For instance, the organisations may find it necessary to enlarge their presence on the internet, in order to reach out to victims of violence.

The Minister for Justice and Migration, Morgan Johansson, together with the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brå) held a virtual conference discussing the efforts on how to combat and prevent crimes in Sweden, where gender-based violence are one of the top priorities.

***Trafficking in women and girls (A/RES/73/146)***

- *Measures to address trafficking in women and girls, as per resolution 73/146, including on the increased efforts to ensure prosecution of traffickers and improve protection of victims.*

The Government decided in February 2018 on a national action plan to combat prostitution and trafficking in human beings for all forms of exploitation. The actions are targeted at preventing and combating prostitution and trafficking in human beings for all purposes, as well as contributing to better protection and support for victims of human trafficking. Efforts to address the demand are crucial and the prohibition of purchase of sexual services is central in the work to prevent and combat prostitution and trafficking in human beings for sexual purposes.

The Government has since a few years back appointed an ambassador to strengthen the work to combat trafficking in human beings. The ambassador also works to contribute towards international efforts to combat trafficking in human beings. The Government has further assigned the Swedish Institute to support Sweden's missions abroad in their work to provide information about the Swedish prohibition of purchase of sexual services.

In 2016, the Government appointed an inquiry to review the protection under criminal law against the purchase of sexual services and the purchase of sexual acts from children. A legislative change entered into force on 1 January 2020 through which the penalties for purchasing sexual acts from children were raised. The minimum penalty was raised from a fine to imprisonment and the maximum penalty was raised from two to four years imprisonment. The offence was also renamed "exploitation of a child through the purchase of a sexual act", see "Criminal actions against the exploitation of a child through the purchase of a sexual act", (Govt Bill 2018/19:157).

The national assignment to coordinate the work to combat prostitution and trafficking in human beings for sexual and other purposes that was previously assigned to Stockholm County Administrative Board was made permanent with