Agenda Item 8: Swedish Statement on the UNFPA Annual Report 2014

Mr. President,

Let me start by thanking the Executive Director, Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, for his inspiring speech and for his strong leadership and outstanding engagement for gender equality and every individual’s right to sexual and reproductive health.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights are human rights. They are critical for individuals and families, as well as for gender equality, poverty reduction and sustainable development. Every individual, without discrimination, has the same right to access to sexual and reproductive health information, education and services, including comprehensive sexuality education for young people. Sweden is firmly committed to the mandate and work of UNFPA as one of our most strategic partners in this area.

In 2014, Sweden especially thanks UNFPA for its active and constructive leadership in the ICPD Beyond 2014 review process and excellent collaboration on the IPCI conference in Stockholm as well as its leadership during the UNGA Special Session on ICPD Beyond 2014. Attention is now on the post-2015 development agenda and its future implementation. Sweden appreciates UNFPA’s efforts to ensure that the outcome of ICPD@20 will be reflected in the agenda, where it rightly belongs. Sweden would also like to thank UNFPA for great support and collaboration in the Swedish campaign midwives4all, which has the purpose to spread knowledge about the benefits of midwives and evidence-based midwifery.

Mr. President,

Global discussions are crucial for norm setting, but the need for development is critical on the ground.
Sweden appreciates that parallel to intensive advocacy work, UNFPA has increased its efforts to build a more focused, transparent, efficient and result-oriented organisation. The many transformative changes initiated by the management team during the last couple of years have paid off, as demonstrated by the MOPAN evaluation of UNFPA that was carried out in 2014. We also welcome the recent changes at HQ level. Sweden sees potential in further strengthening the capacity and competence at regional and country levels. The amount and lengths of vacancies should also be reduced, and we appreciate UNFPA’s efforts in this regard. In this context, we also welcome that UNFPA has developed a new recruitment policy and established a leadership pool.

The first report on the results of the progress made on the Strategic Plan 2014-2017 also points in a positive direction. UNFPA is on track in relation to the majority of the indicators. Sweden also notes the good progress of alignment to the new strategic plan. The report with annexes is comprehensive, informative, firmly anchored in a results-based approach and provides a clear overview of progress made. We would, however, have appreciated a more analytical approach in the main report, including how results, and their advancements and challenges on an output level, relate to UNFPA’s overriding goals. We note that a common methodology for measuring some of the QCPR related indicators is yet to be developed by UNFPA together with the other Funds and Programmes. We expect this work to be concluded promptly so that data on these indicators can be collected and reported on next year.

Sweden appreciates UNFPA’s increased focus on adolescents and young girls. There are more young people in the world than ever before and our ability to provide them with opportunities is crucial for their possibilities and achievements. Boys are twice as likely as girls to attend secondary school. One of the primary causes of girls dropping out of school is early marriage or pregnancy. It is therefore worrying that interventions to promote adolescents, and especially young girls, needs and rights are reported to be the most affected by cultural sensitivities. Sweden encourages UNFPA to work even more with capacity building and advocacy in this regard and would welcome increased efforts to involve men and boys in programmes and projects at regional and country level.

Speaking about factors that hamper UNFPA’s possibility to delivering on its mandate; Sweden welcomes that UNFPA’s management has started to work on developing an Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) framework and policy as well
as developing a consolidated register that helps UNFPA reduce barriers to delivering on its mandate. Sweden also notes that UNFPA is working on developing partnership strategies and would like to hear more about these initiatives.

Sweden highly values UNFPA’s increased focus on humanitarian work. Sexual and reproductive health and rights have often been neglected and underfunded in the context of humanitarian crises. UNFPA has a vital role to play in humanitarian contexts, in particular when it comes to ensuring effective prevention and response to gender based violence and to push the work on sexual and reproductive health and rights in this area forward.

Mr. President,

In order for UNFPA to fulfil its important mandate and implement its strategic plan, it needs adequate, predictable and flexible funding. Sweden welcomes that UNFPA surpassed its target for core funding in 2014 and managed to maintain a healthy balance between core and non-core resources. However, five traditional donors still account for over 60 percent of UNFPA’s core support, out of which Sweden was the largest donor in 2014. Against this background, Sweden welcomes UNFPA’s work to develop a resource mobilization plan, and looks forward to further engaging on these issues during the structured financial dialogue to be held at the second regular session of the executive board in September.

Sweden strongly encourages UNFPA to plan and harmonize theses dialogues with other UN agencies. Collaboration on this matter will lead to considerable and important synergies. This will be particularly important as the world moves towards new funding modalities for the post-2015 development agenda, which are expected to become both more diversified and complex.

In conclusion, Mr. President, let me once again assure you of Sweden’s steadfast support to UNFPA’s work and mandate, politically as well as financially. We are looking forward to our continued collaboration and stand ready to work together for our common goals.

I thank you.