

STATEMENT FROM SWEDEN:

Building back better after COVID-19 and acting where we will have the greatest impact on the SDGs

Session: Transformative pathways to realize the 2030 Agenda: a whole of society approach taking into account the impact of COVID19

Tuesday, 7 July 2020, 4:00 PM-5:00 PM

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Thank you Chair for giving the floor/screen to Sweden. Sweden, along with EU and its member states, is committed to ensure that the voices of stakeholders are heard in this forum. This is true every HLPF but in particular this year as HLPF is all virtual. Sweden has joined HLPF 2020 Voluntary Pledge to support stakeholders participation.

2030 Agenda asks us to be transformative, collaborative, and have a whole society perspective in all strategies, programs and policies that we design and implement, even in times of crisis. To be able to do that we need all stakeholders involved in a meaningful way.

Ensuring meaningful participation is a joint responsibility. Power structures, rights violations, and restricted resources are common challenges that impede meaningful participation. For the meaningful participation to happen, we need to ensure: protection of life and physical integrity, access to information, liberty and security, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of religion and belief, right to equality and non-discrimination. We also need information to be accessible for all, user friendly and disseminated in multiple ways. We know that when civic space is closing in a country, inequality becomes less visible. Unequal and exclusionary development policies and practices are more common, which risk leaving the most vulnerable behind.

Allow me to highlight the Swedish initiative **Drive for Democracy**, launched in 2019, which focuses on strengthening civil society, human rights, the rule of law, free and independent media, democratic processes as well as women's and young people's democratic engagement. Sweden is willing to join hand with partners around the world that share our concerns about the threats and challenges to democracy.

Sweden along with the EU and its member states have been a driving force in safeguarding the participation of Major Groups and other Stakeholders in the review of the HLPF and advocates for higher degrees of accountability and peer-learning in countries' VNRs. **Major Groups and Other Stakeholders** in all their diversity are crucial partners in the implementation, review and follow-up of the 2030 Agenda. They **are paving the way through their own efforts and by pushing decision-makers to act.**

Thank you.