

Delegation from the Kingdom of Sweden Position Paper for the General Assembly

The topics before the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN-GA) are *Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) for Sustainable Economic and Financial Development* and *Disaster Risk Reduction*. The Kingdom of Sweden recognizes the importance of the ICT sector for economic and communication development and the importance of disaster reduction and particularly prevention, especially considering the damage COVID-19 has brought to the world community in the last two years and the still enduring aftermath. Sweden looks forward to discussing these topics at the upcoming General Assembly Conference.

I. Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) for Sustainable Economic and Financial Development

The World Summit for Social Development (WSSD, Copenhagen, 1995) acknowledged that promoting access and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) allows people, especially living in developing countries, to fully participate in global economics and financial markets. With economic upswings, there are also socioeconomic changes that help people to fulfill social development goals. As of January 2021 there were 4.66 billion active internet users worldwide, making up 59.5 percent of the global population. For the majority of every day life, it is unimaginable to live without internet access, so the fact that 40 % of the world population does not have an access to the Internet must be the cause for ICT development becoming the priority for the world community.

Sweden is one of the leading countries in the ICT-industry. Sweden was ranked first by *Forbes Magazine* for the best country for business in 2017, not only due to its well-developed communication and transportation infrastructure, but also because Sweden's tax structure is transparent and efficient. The corporate tax rate is 22 % which is low compared to international standards. The *Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications* considers the ICT sector to be its primary development goal; especially Stockholm is a hotspot for ICT innovation. The region around Stockholm has a highly skilled and creative workforce with years of experience in the field of ICT. Furthermore, Stockholm is home to 134 of the fastest growing private companies in Europe, according to the *INC. 5000 Europe Award 2017*. Sweden is invested in educating its workforce at the highest level and creating an environment that is ideal for young entrepreneurs. Sweden's historically early interest and investment in the tech-industry has fostered successful ventures, such as Ericsson, which brought \$25 billion in 2016. In the same year, investments in startups in Sweden rose from \$1 billion to \$1.6 billion. Sweden's government spends 3.2% of their GDP for research and development, allowing high research outputs. As more companies which started up in Sweden expand beyond its borders, many of their founders in turn, invest more capital in Sweden's startup ecosystem, allowing for more future Fortune 500 companies to grow. It must be shown that the ICT sector is more than profitable for companies as well as government agencies.

On the international stage, the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) provides a platform for Member States to exchange ideas and proposals. Sweden especially endorses the continued effort for *ICTs and Youth: Launch of the WSIS Youth Campaigner for engaging Youth* in the WSIS and SDGs processes in the *WSIS Forum 2022*. The ICT sector is the future for economic development and therefore unthinkable to neglect. Sweden also welcomes the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) for its effort to interconnect the world community. The recent COVID-19 pandemic has shown the world how far behind countries were at advancing digitalization; this moment of clarity and the momentum that comes with it must be capitalized on to ensure that national governments take action and advance their telecommunication technologies. Particularly as the scientific community becomes more complex, ICTs are becoming essential to keep track with complex algorithms and experimental data that are essential for a variety of scientific research and development projects.

While in developed countries, governments work on increasing access to 5G-network, people living in developing countries sometimes do not have access to any internet. The Kingdom of Sweden urges Member States to invest in ICT companies in developing countries, which will in turn only benefit themselves because access to the internet allows for the participation in the global financial market, which will improve the economy of all Member States since there will be new markets to explore. Sweden asks fellow delegations to consider a revitalization of the *United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force*. It cannot be that a task force dealing with something that could not be more contemporary lost its mandate back in 2005. A future without ICT is unimaginable and unmanageable. The international community must come together and find a way for the entire global population to benefit from the internet and other related technologies.

II. Disaster Risk Reduction

Hurricanes, flash floods, cyclones, earthquakes. 2021 has seen a record number of natural disasters around the world, not to mention the COVID-19 pandemic which has been holding the world in its grip for more than two years. More than 5.8 million people died of the pandemic, more than 10,000 people became victims of the natural disasters and more than \$280 billion in overall economic loss, not counting the economic downfall from the pandemic. As global warming and the rising possibility and frequency of climate related disasters continues to haunt our international community, disaster risk reduction and prevention must become of the utmost importance for our international community.

On the international stage, the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030* (RES/69/283) recognizes that the state has the primary role to reduce disaster, but that responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders including local government, the private sector and others. It aims at three dimensions of disaster risks: exposure to hazard, vulnerability, and increase resilience. In Sweden, the *Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency* (MSB) is responsible for protecting the civilian population from natural disasters. The MSB cooperates with numerous other agencies around the world, such as with the EU or the *International Humanitarian Partnership* (IHP). Swedish disaster risk reduction (DRR) lies at the regional, local and national level, allowing for individual and customized responses which are highly effective. *The Civilian Protection Act* (2003:778) aims to strengthen mitigation work. Municipalities are mandated to develop action plans with measures for prevention. Ordinance (2015:1052) on emergency preparedness and the measures to be taken by designated authorities in the event of heightened alert aims to ensure that government agencies, through their activities, reduce society's vulnerability and keep increasing the ability to adapt their actions during crisis situations. *The Act on Municipal and County Council Measures Prior and During Extraordinary Events in Peacetime and during Periods of Heightened Alert* (2006:544) focuses on readiness for extraordinary events. The interconnectedness of Sweden's emergency response authorities makes it highly effective. The Swedish MSB takes the Sendai Framework extremely seriously by adopting national strategies according to the recommendations that the framework has put forward. Sweden has 17 agencies and organizations which together has established a national platform for DRR. The MSB's central role is to coordinate and to serve as a focal point. As Sweden is close to the pacific ocean, the government tasked the MSB with flood mapping, as a way of offering support to municipal risk identification and risk management work. Most disasters are a direct result of the human made climate change. Therefore, Sweden endorses the fact that the Sendai Framework works hand in hand with the SDGs, providing a viable way of approaching this problem. The main focus of the international community cannot only be to find ways on how to alleviate consequences from disasters, but rather to find ways to prevent those disasters from happening in the first place. As climate change continues to progress, it is becoming more and more apparent that natural disasters will become more frequent and devastating, not only in a humanitarian point of view, but also from an economics view. We must adhere to the goals set in the *Paris Agreement*, because if not, the goal to reduce disaster risks will become unmanageable and unfeasible. Our collective effort must be aimed at addressing the root cause, which is climate change, and not only dealing with the consequences, because in the fight against nature, nature always triumphs.

COVID-19 has shown all of us that the world was not ready when dealing with a pandemic, especially due our interconnectedness with each other, pathogens are able to spread extremely fast. One country alone was not able to stop the spread and one country alone will never be able to significantly change a situation, affecting the whole world. The UN must become the primary disaster response authority when dealing with catastrophes at the international level. Any one country's response will not significantly shift the development of a disaster, which is why the Kingdom of Sweden recommends that Member States further our international cooperation when dealing with natural disasters of any kind. Furthermore we ask Member States to acknowledge that Climate Change is the major cause of those disasters mentioned above. Global Warming will be a curse for the entire global community. However, not all Member States are equally affected by the effects thereof. It must be a priority of the entire international community that we support the most affected nations, especially island nations in the pacific. Sweden also asks Member States to consider establishing a fund within the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC), which will be used to support people whose homes have been destroyed or made unlivable. In the light of the current pandemic, Sweden asks the General Assembly to strengthen the World Health Organization's (WHO) position in the fight against the pandemic by passing a resolution in which Member States confirm their confidence in the WHO so as it can really become the focal point which coordinates our collective effort, because if one thing has been learned by the international community during this pandemic, is that a virus does not halt before any borders and that when a mutation creates a problem for one country, it soon will become a problem for every country.