



REGERINGSKANSLIET

Memorandum

17 August 2009

Ministry for Foreign Affairs  
Sweden

Opening Plenary Session of the 2009 World Water Week in  
Stockholm, “**Responding to Global Changes: Accessing  
Water for the Common Good**”.- Speech by Minister  
Gunilla Carlsson, 17 August 2009

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here with you today and would like to express my gratitude to SIWI (the Stockholm International Water Institute) for hosting this event and for inviting me to take part this year again.

World Water Week provides a unique platform and focal point for practitioners, researchers and policy makers in the water sector and I am glad that we have gathered here in Stockholm to talk about the importance of accessing water for the common good.

I would like to address *three* issues here today.

*First*, I would like to emphasise that equitable access to sustainable water services is fundamental to reducing poverty and promoting economic growth and social development, at local and national levels. The link between water management, growth and poverty reduction is

obvious. By increasing access to water we can change the lives and health of poor women, men and children for the better.

*Second*, adaptation to climate change is a challenge for every country and of particular importance to developing countries as they are more dependent on and exposed to the vagaries of the weather. The hydrological cycle is an integral part of the climate system. Adaptation therefore naturally evolves around water. By integrating competing demands for water within and between sectors, the burdens and benefits can be shared. It is crucial to strengthen the capacity of people and institutions to deal with this challenge.

*Third*, Sweden, holding the Presidency of the EU, is putting adaptation to climate change on the agenda of the upcoming UN Climate Conference in Copenhagen in December this year. I believe the precarious situation of the least developed countries, need to be addressed right away, if we are to secure an agreement and a sustainable development for us all in the future.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Nearly 4 million people die every year due to water- and sanitation-related diseases, diseases that not only take lives and affect health but also impact on subsistence agriculture and economic activities. The seventh Millennium Development Goal – secure a sustainable development - tells us, among other things, that by 2015 we should have halved the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. Sweden, together with the EU, is working to strengthen the capacity of businesses and organisations responsible for increasing coverage and improving management of water and sanitation at national and local level.

Water is inextricably interlinked with the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. To the majority of women and their families, better health and better life opportunities depend on safe and reliable water supplies. Women and girls often have the main responsibility for water provision and management at household level, for both consumption and production. Therefore they play a *crucial role* in all water activities and investments. We also know that a lack of access to water, toilets and adequate sanitation is a contributing factor to high educational drop-out rates for girls. That's why we, the Swedish Government, together with the other EU Member States, are working actively to ensure that gender equality is a core aspect in development programming and implementation.

The availability of water resources varies over both time and space, and has always done so. The problem we now see with climate change, is that these variations are becoming less predictable. The challenges and problems associated with water stand out as an area in which coherence and cooperation are needed: between different sectors, such as energy, agriculture and health, as well as between different nations, sharing water boundaries.

The fact that over 60 per cent of the world's population lives in river basins that are shared by two or more countries is something we cannot ignore. We therefore sincerely welcome the theme of this year's World Water Week with its special focus on transboundary waters. We have one such waters in our very city of Stockholm, the Baltic Sea. Its waves of history are filled with war and conflict, as well as with peace and cooperation.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Water is a major concern in this era of climate change. But the problems faced by Bangladesh, Poland or Tanzania, are different. This

is why environment and climate change are one of three priorities in my portfolio of international development cooperation as well as the main priority for the Swedish government as a whole during our presidency of the EU.

A clear illustration of the priority these challenges have for me and my government is that the Swedish budget for 2009 contains targeted measures in this area, with a focus on adaptation. The package amounts to around 400 million euros over a period of four years.

When resources – water, arable land, other natural assets – become scarcer, we know that those without power will lose out and become even more vulnerable. Their ability to adapt, needs to be strengthened and supplemented. In 2007 the Swedish Government launched an independent international Commission on Climate Change and Development. I was honoured to serve as the chair of that Commission. In its report, presented in May this year for the Secretary General Mr Ban Ki-moon, the Commission underlines the *human dimension* of climate change. It is private individuals and households, villages and municipalities that have to deal with and adapt to the changes.

Adaptation measures are therefore best implemented by those who are closest to the effects of climate change, by people at the local level. I believe that local authorities and organisations know their community best and should therefore be given primary responsibility both for identifying groups at risk and for supporting them in their efforts to build safe communities.

Sustainable development is dependent on long-term commitment and the building of trust between stakeholders. This can only be achieved through the full participation of all stakeholders at all levels. That poor people in rural areas can voice their views through democratic

channels is necessary in order to achieve equitable and efficient development. Good governance, human rights and gender equality are fundamental principles for water and climate as well as for society as a whole.

One of the priorities within development cooperation during the Swedish presidency of the EU, is policy coherence for development. Decisions in one policy area, may undermine decisions in the field of development cooperation. We see the links between the EU subsidies in the sectors of agriculture and fishery, and the difficulties for developing nations to compete with their products on the same markets. We do not only have a legal, but also a moral obligation, to ensure that EU fishing fleets are not emptying the waters of either the developing nations or our very own back yard. The fish stocks outside the coasts of Canada and New Zealand are improving, but the same cannot be said for the coasts of Senegal or Sweden.

Hence, transboundary water issues not only concern rivers or river basins, that require political and technical solutions between bordering nations, but also coastal areas and oceans, where no bordering nations exists. Eutrophication of our seas, needs solutions on land. And dumping sewage from ships into the seas, requires binding international anti-dumping laws. The common denominators are joint solutions and global agreements. We can only achieve success, if we recognise our interdependency and agree to come together for our solutions.

Thank you.