



se2009.eu

Swedish Presidency of the European Union

Launch of the WHO report

"Women and health: today's evidence tomorrow's agenda"

9 November 2009, Geneva, Switzerland

Statement by Sweden

The EU would like to commend and express strong support for Director-General Dr Margaret Chan and WHO's commitment to further advancing the case for women's health. The report constitutes a pioneering effort to present an evidence-based comprehensive mapping of the current health status of girls and women across the globe.

The report is very timely. It coincides with the 15th anniversary of ICPD and the fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the 30th anniversary of the adoption of CEDAW, as well as with the recent General Assembly decision to set up a new UN gender entity to promote women's rights. It also comes just ahead of the high-level meeting on Millennium Development Goals, to take place in 2010.

The report further highlights the importance of WHO's leadership and normative role in addressing major global health challenges. We believe the report will serve as an essential tool in the much needed policy dialogue around the state of women's health and the need to strengthen health systems so that they are better geared to meet girls' and women's needs, in terms of access, comprehensiveness and responsiveness. The report will also contribute to a strengthened focus on the health-related Millennium Development Goals, especially those with a bearing on gender and health.

As the report states data may in some respects be sketchy and incomplete. Yet, we also note that there is enough evidence to show that persistent patterns of gender inequality and gender discrimination continue to result in considerable ill-health which, compounded by lack of access to adapted health care, disproportionately affects women throughout the life-course. As the report points out these are not purely medical issues, they are challenges that ultimately depend on our capacity and political will to address a number of underlying causes which on a daily basis continue to undermine millions of women's health and the full enjoyment of their human rights.

The report outlines a number of useful policy implications. We welcome the focus on health system strengthening based on the principle of gender equality. We welcome the importance attached to mainstreaming gender and integrating girls' and women's health in all policies, as well as the need to empower women, giving them the right and capacity to make decisions over their own lives and well-being. We are in full agreement with the need to ensure accountability and tracking progress through relevant indicators. Mainstreaming gender throughout the UN and incorporating relevant gender-sensitive indicators in policy and other documents remains a minimum requirement for progress.

We look forward to working with WHO and other multilateral partners in taking this agenda forward. The focus must be on achieving improved tangible health outcomes for girls and women. It will require leadership, political will and prioritization of resources towards these goals.

**WOMEN
AND
HEALTH**