



UPR 23rd session

Statement by Sweden in the interactive dialogue on Myanmar

Delivered by Ambassador Veronika Bard

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Mr President,

Sweden wishes to welcome the delegation of Myanmar and express our thanks for the information provided to address our advance questions.

Sweden recommends the Government of Myanmar:

- 1) To enact and enforce legislation that guarantees comprehensive protection from all forms of violence against women, and that addresses impunity for all perpetrators.
- 2) To implement concrete measures to combat religious and ethnic intolerance, restore full citizenship rights of the Rohingya and eliminate requirements for citizenship that discriminate on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity or any other status. Resume recognition of the Rohingya as an ethnic group legitimately residing in Myanmar.
- 3) To review and amend the Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Procession Act to bring it in line with international standards on freedom of expression and assembly.
- 4) To increase significantly the proportion of national expenditure allocated to health care, to address the regional differences in access to health care services and to expand the human capital within the health care sector, especially to ascertain that an adequate number of midwives are educated and dispatched across the country.

Since the last UPR, some improvements have been made in the area of women's rights. However, structural barriers to gender equality still exist. The absence of women in the ongoing peace negotiations is particularly evident. Previous UPR recommendations to amend laws on violence against women and to prosecute and punish perpetrators of sexual violence are still waiting to be implemented. Investigations into crimes of sexual violence by the military are lacking, with impunity as a result.

The Rohingya ethnic Muslim minority is still being denied citizenship. Discrimination, violence, and abuse against the Muslims in Myanmar have increased. In 2014, the Rohingya were excluded from the nationwide census. They have been excluded from forming political parties and running for elections.

Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya could not participate in the November general election. Over 140,000 Rohingya and Kaman Muslims remain confined in internment camps in Arakan State.

Freedom of speech and expression are areas where Myanmar has opened up in recent years. New legislation has introduced some degree of media freedom, such as the prohibition of censorship and rights of media workers. However, media remains largely under government control, reporters are subject to state laws regulating journalistic ethics and media representatives are being arrested and prosecuted when exercising their rights. The Penal Code is applied to imprison protesters and activists. Rules and regulations for permitting public gatherings are restrictive and often unclear. New laws further restrict peaceful protest and freedom of speech.

Maternal mortality is still high in Myanmar – particularly among the poorest and the ethnic minorities. The awareness of, and access to, sexual and reproductive health and rights, is inadequate. Basic healthcare is underfunded with significant regional differences. One of the main obstacles is the lack of health workers. An estimated additional 7,000 midwives are needed.

Thank you, Mr. President