



UPR 23rd session

Statement by Sweden in the interactive dialogue on Rwanda

*Delivered by Minister-Counsellor Josefin Simonsson Brodén
Geneva, November 4, 2015 (speaking time 1 min 20 sec)*

Mr President,

Sweden wishes to welcome the delegation and express our thanks for the information related to our advance questions.

The Rwandan constitution guarantees freedom of opinion and expression. Despite the reform of media legislation, provisions in the Rwandan penal code prohibiting genocide denial and divisionism, defamation, tarnishing the image of the state and its leaders and undermining state security, are used to silence critical voices and to re-inforce a culture of self-censorship on certain sensitive issues. While the constitution provides for freedom of association, the Government of Rwanda has limited the right in practice. The registration process for civil society organisations, in particular international organisations, is difficult and unduly burdensome. The constitution and Rwandan penal code prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention, but there are regular reports of people being arrested and detained arbitrarily and without due process, including being held incommunicado.

Women have the same legal status and are entitled to the same rights as men in Rwanda, and the Government of Rwanda is in many ways a global champion for gender equality. Still, gender based violence targeting women is a problem, despite the law on Prevention and Punishment of Gender-based Violence (Law no 59/2008). Sexual harassment is also common, including gender-based corruption. Political participation of women at local levels and the representation of women in key roles where policies are adopted and implemented remain a challenge.

Sweden recommends to the Government of Rwanda the following:

- 1) to take effective steps to ensure the implementation of the 2013 media reform legislation including the independence of Rwanda Media Commission, review legal provisions unduly restricting freedom of expression and the press and ensure that journalists are not harassed or intimidated.
- 2) to take measures to increase space for peaceful dissent, discussion and dialogue and ensure a conducive and safe environment for everyone exercising or seeking to exercise his or her rights to freedom of association including ensuring that CSOs

and political parties can carry out their activities without hindrances and a less cumbersome registration process.

3)to ensure due process and conduct effective and objective investigations regarding cases of alleged arbitrary arrest and detention, including those which may constitute enforced disappearances.

4)to continue to implement the law on Prevention and Punishment of Gender-based Violence and encourage a zero-tolerance among law enforcing agencies for gender-based violence. Eliminate, as a first step, judicial and administrative barriers that prevent women from accessing safe and legal abortions, and protect women from being reported and arrested or going to jail for unsafe abortion as well as to review the penal code in order to decriminalise abortion.

Thank you, Mr. President