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## **"Working Together to Respond to Climate Change"**

### **Annex I Expert Group Seminar**

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#### **Presentation by**

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1. I would like to use the opportunity of being part of this panel on adaptation by presenting the Commission on Climate Change and Development, its background and origin, the issues that it has decided to address, and ending with some questions that I think are worthy of further discussion by this meeting.
2. The Swedish Government took the initiative to create a commission to address adaptation and disaster risk reduction as it was felt that insufficient attention was given to this important issue. It is no longer enough to focus only on mitigation, the impact of climate change is already experienced by people in local communities across the globe and efforts at managing or adapting to its consequences happen as we speak.
3. The mandate given to the Commission focuses on adaptation and disaster risk reduction. When working on these broad areas, it has been asked to specifically address the situation of vulnerable communities in poor countries, being guided by the Policy on Global Development adopted by the Swedish Parliament a few years ago. Its purpose is to ensure coherence between different policy areas towards a common goal, with an emphasis on a rights perspective and the perspective of the poor on their own development.
4. The Commission, chaired by the Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation, consists of 12 members representing different regions, areas of expertise, experience and affiliation. Members come from India, China, Africa, Europe and the Americas, and represent international and regional organizations, civil society and the private sector. This means that the group is well suited to address contentious issues where there are diverging perspectives among different constituencies. In other words, the

Commission has a bridging potential. It is supported by an expert group, consisting of organizations and individuals active in the areas of environment, development and disaster risk reduction.

5. The Commission has been asked to deliver a report late spring 2009, i.e. immediately before Sweden assumes the presidency of the EU, a role that Sweden will consequently have during COP15 in Copenhagen, when we hope that the post-Kyoto deal will be struck. My Government is of course very interested in a Commission report with conclusions and recommendations that can be used as constructive inputs to promote a post-Kyoto agreement. This means a Commission with a life-span during a critical period as far as addressing climate change is concerned – between Bali and Copenhagen.
6. We have decided on a three-pronged approach as our working strategy. First, we want to be a communicating commission, inviting to partnerships, seeking complementarity and synergy with others. The climate change area is vast and complex with many actors. Its challenges are so serious and urgent that we cannot afford but to work in close collaboration, seeking to optimize the use of the resources we command together.
7. Second, we commission reports and studies to support the commissioners in their task. You can find a set of policy briefs on our website [www.ccdcommission.org](http://www.ccdcommission.org) as well as studies that we have requested. We are interested in highlighting what others are doing which is of value to our work, just as we are keen to share the result of our own efforts with others.
8. Third, the Commission will combine its meetings with country visits. This is not just about finding suitable venues. We want to understand climate change through country perspectives, how its impact positions itself among poverty drivers, conflicts over natural resources, institutional capacity and constraints at the national and local levels, in the periphery and centre of government, and in the dialogue with international organizations and donors. We feel that it is only through this understanding, rooted in concrete national realities, that ideas and recommendations can be offered that are both realistic and visionary.
9. Against this background, you will understand why the Commission has chosen its specific three priority areas to focus its work. First, we want to address what we call ‘the human dimension of climate change’. This means trying to understand the impact climate change will have at the very local level; among poor communities that have coping strategies to manage known risks, but that are likely to face stressors and risks that go beyond their historical experience. Through an understanding of their predicament, we are interested in the kinds of policy changes at the international level that are needed to strengthen their resilience in the face of adversity.
10. This ‘human dimension’ requires a multidimensional understanding. We are looking at community risks through lenses such as food security, livelihoods, ecosystem services, and health impacts, but also through the perspectives of social capital, governance and conflict. It will then be possible to situate the impact of climate change among other dynamic forces of change, some of which are likely to be seen by governments and communities as having more

impact than climate change. But it is through establishing the links between the impacts of climate change and these other forces that entry points for dialogue can be found. When looking at the National Adaptation Programs of Action – NAPAs – one finds that many of them actually address the urgent need for immediately reducing disaster risk at the community level. This provides exactly for the kind of dialogue entry point that can lead towards a more strategic and integrated approach to adaptation.

11. But it also means that factors fundamental for development will also be important to ensure adaptation. This includes meeting basic needs, establishing social safety nets, secure tenure, capable and accountable government institutions, having legal frameworks in place, and the political space for free and open public discourse.
12. From understanding the human dimension of climate change and what will be required for communities to become more resilient, the Commission will address its second priority – financing of these measures, or adaptation. This includes several sub-issues – the volume of resources needed, where they will come from, the appropriate blend of public and private resources, and the mechanisms through which they should be transferred to countries in need.
13. This last issue – financing mechanisms – has been judged to have immediate priority for a specific reason. Some large donors are now in the process of establishing climate trust funds managed by the World Bank. Although this will surely provide for efficient fund management, it also means a ‘democratic deficit’ since affected countries will not have the same part in decision-making as with the much smaller funds already existing under UNFCCC. There is a risk that this development will contribute to further widening the crisis in confidence between parties that already plagues climate negotiations.
14. My minister for international development cooperation, Ms Gunilla Carlsson, who chairs the Commission on Climate Change and Development, has proposed three principles that should characterize financial mechanisms and that all parties should be able to agree on. First, they must be robust and sustainable, so that they can be in place for many years to come. Second, they must be able to handle much larger volumes than has so far been the case. And third, they must contribute to building confidence between the parties.
15. This brings me to the third Commission priority – the international institutional architecture for managing support to adaptation, obviously closely linked to financing. It seems that some donors neglect to act in the spirit of the Paris Declaration on aid effectiveness, with its guiding principles harmonization, coordination, alignment and ownership. If they act unilaterally they will deprive developing countries the opportunity to lead national adaptation efforts. One aspect of arriving at an efficient institutional architecture is therefore to ensure that the Paris Declaration is applied and implemented also in the field of climate change adaptation.
16. Finally, the chair has encouraged us to identify questions for further discussion. Let me propose three. First, isn’t it time to leave behind the distinction between anthropogenic and non-anthropogenic causes when

looking at the impact of climate change and the incremental costs of adaptation? Is this not an increasingly meaningless exercise when looking at a fundamental threat to sustainable development? It is becoming obvious that resources considerably beyond current ODA volumes will be needed. Should we not then also regard adaptation as issues of a common concern, at least to be seen as regional public goods for countries sharing borders and depending on the same natural resources and ecosystem services?

17. Second, insurance as one way of strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities is increasingly being tried on a pilot scale. Results are sufficiently encouraging to advocate considerable scaling up. We now need to agree on the proper division of responsibilities between private and public sectors. The public sector should be responsible for interventions such as a strengthened infrastructure, enforcement of safety norms and investment in agricultural research to develop the drought and flood-resistant seed varieties in order to lower threshold risks and create the enabling environment for the private sector to engage even when risks increase.
18. And third, is it not time for a compact where high and middle income countries join forces with the least developed countries that are most at risk, engaging in joint climate screening and climate proofing of development projects and programs, enabling those with the least resources to take the lead and develop true ownership and leadership in their adaptation?
19. In summary, the Swedish Government has launched an initiative to contribute attention, ideas and a more forceful approach to adaptation. This is a challenge that can only be successfully managed as a collective effort. We invite you to share your ideas and suggestions to us working with the new Commission, to achieve this common goal, ultimately ensuring that people are able to live in safe communities and continue on their road towards sustainable development. Thank you.