



Resilience 2008

High-level Policy Roundtable

Keynote address

State Secretary Joakim Stymne

Dear participants, dear colleagues,

Let me begin by congratulating the organizers for convening this rather unusual meeting. It is not often that we get to engage in conversations and discussions between science and policy makers, between the private sector and public authorities, and between those who are active in either national or international contexts.

It shows that the importance of the topics addressed by the research community before and during this conference can hardly be overestimated. They are about overcoming a number of extremely serious threats to sustainable development in the North as well as in the South. These challenges require that we cross borders between disciplines, between constituencies and between nations. This we all know. But the opportunity for real dialogue is still rare. Therefore I wish to express my special thanks to the organizers.

One of the organizers is the Commission on Climate Change and Development, chaired by the Minister for International Development Cooperation, Ms Gunilla Carlsson. I wish to spend some time giving you a background to the Commission, since its creation, composition and terms of reference very much reflect how my Government views some of the issues under discussion here today.

First of all: the Commission is a complement to our national efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change. It is an attempt to meet our

commitments to help developing countries to work preventively and to cope with the consequences of climate change.

Secondly: it is an international commission and a highly representative body. Its members represent Asia, Africa, Europe, the Americas, as well as a range of disciplines and experiences, governments, international organizations and civil society. The synthesis of these backgrounds will enable the Commission to address some very difficult and challenging issues. Issues where there tend to be conflicting views that are difficult to reconcile. And – as we all are aware - there are plenty of those in the climate change discourse.

And thirdly: The Commission has been asked to take on a special aspect of climate change. Namely adaptation to its impacts, including the role of disaster risk reduction. Although the situation has improved, there is still not enough attention given to adaptation and disaster risk reduction as part of the climate change agenda.

And why is this so important? Because we already experience the impact of climate change! And, most severely so in the poorest countries and the most vulnerable communities. For instance, it is likely that part of the reason for the recent dramatic increase in global food prices, which has severe consequences for (poor) households across the world, are direct and indirect effects of climate change. Addressing these very serious consequences must therefore take place in parallel with intensified efforts at reducing emissions and concentrations of greenhouse gases.

The Commission met for the first time in Stockholm in mid February. It decided to focus on three priority areas:

- the first is what it has called the human dimension of climate change. It addresses the question what policy decisions at a global and national level would provide the support needed to strengthen the resilience of local communities that will face stresses beyond what they have ever experienced;
- secondly – it will look at the issue of financing adaptation – including through private-public partnerships;
- and thirdly –the institutional architecture in managing adaptation. Here, much is to be desired in terms of coordination and coherence.

Let me also underline that my Government sees the recommendations provided by the Commission as a contribution to the climate negotiations and other international processes. Its work should be carefully fed into other ongoing work. The recommendations will also constitute important policy input for the Swedish presidency of the EU during the second half of 2009.

It is also worth highlighting the special link between the Commission, the Stockholm Resilience Centre and the Stockholm Environment Institute. The Commission's secretariat is co-located with the SEI, and SEI actively supports the Commission with experts, along with other renowned research institutes. The Commission is consequently an example of a true partnership between science and policymaking.

Dear friends,

Allow me to conclude by saying a few words about the Government's development policy in the field of the environment and climate change on a broader scale. The Commission is of course an important part, but many other activities are ongoing.

Our international development cooperation policy has – as many of you are aware – undergone an extensive transformation process since the Alliance Government came into office some 16 months ago. It involves both a country focus process and stronger thematic prioritization. The environment and climate change have been chosen as one of three priority areas for our development cooperation. (The other two thematic priorities are democracy and human rights, and the promotion of gender equality and women's role in development. These three priorities are of course interlinked.)

The thematic emphasis on the environment and climate change does not, however, mean that we are creating a new sector of cooperation. Neither does it imply the eradication of present sectors in which we are already active. Rather, it gives us a clear direction for designing development policies, programs and projects in this field. The thematic priority will also always be a point of departure in discussions with partner countries.

It is a clear fact that the scale and nature of global issues and challenges like poverty, climate change, managing common resources, peace and security are such that they cannot be dealt with by traditional political means or within national borders. Not only are the individual challenges massive – they are also closely interlinked. For this we need coherent policies. Different sectors and actors must unite and utilize their respective strengths in a coherent manner. - My Government has recently revitalized its work in the area of policy coherence through adopting a new policy for global development. Six challenges have been identified as points of departure for this new beginning. One of them being climate change and development.

One example of how the Government works with policy coherence – which brings us right back to today's event and where I started out - is the setting up of the Commission on Climate Change and Development.

Let me conclude by expressing the Government's support for and interest in this conference, and in the high-level policy dialogue in particular. I now very much look forward to listening to other speakers. Among them the Norwegian Foreign Minister and Mr Anders Wijkman, who, as many of you know is chair of the Commission's expert group.

On that note: Thank you.