Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

General Discussion

24 June 2021

“Equality and non-discrimination with a focus on indigenous women and girls and intersecting forms of discrimination”

Statement of Sweden

Speaker: H.E. Ms Anna Jardfelt, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Sweden to the UN in Geneva TBC

Madame Chair,

In many parts of the world democratic space is shrinking, not least for civil society. Human rights defenders are being intimidated, harassed and even killed for simply expressing an opinion. Indigenous women human rights defenders experience complex, multidimensional and mutually reinforcing human rights violations and abuses; especially so if they challenge traditional gender roles or defend environmental or land rights.

This has to stop. States have a responsibility to uphold human rights and ensure a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders.

In the frame of Sweden’s foreign policy initiative “Drive for Democracy” we have put particular focus on supporting human rights defenders and defenders of democracy. We support and promote a wide range of human rights defenders globally, including environmental human rights defenders, online as well as offline. Swedish missions abroad conduct a regular dialogue with local human rights defenders and other civil society actors.

The full enjoyment of human rights by all women and girls must become a reality. We must combat all forms of violence and discrimination that restrict their freedom and possibility to participate fully in all spheres of society. We will continue to push our feminist foreign policy, and we are glad several countries are joining us.

In domestic policy, we are working to fulfill the rights of the Sami people – the indigenous people of Sweden. The Swedish Sami Parliament is the representative body of the Sami people and plays a crucial role in implementing the right to self-determination. The Sami Parliament works actively with gender equality and has recently published a report with proposed actions to guide its work. Currently, a draft bill strengthening the right of the Sami to be consulted in matters of special significance to them is being finalized for adoption by the Swedish parliament later this year. We are also striving to finalize a regional Sami convention with Norway and Finland aiming to secure harmonized rights for the Sami in all three countries.

Sweden will continue to stand up for the rights of indigenous women and girls in both foreign and domestic policy.

I thank you.