Climate change and human rights questionnaire

Sweden, as a country in the arctic region, is witnessing from the first row how climate change is faster and more severe in the Arctic than in most of the rest of the world. The Arctic is warming at a rate of almost twice the global average. Even the slightest shift in temperature, bringing averages above the freezing point, will completely alter the character of the region.

Climate change in the Arctic is not just a local problem - it's a global problem. The feedbacks from the Arctic are increasing global sea levels, they are predicted to change global climate and precipitation patterns, and the effects of climate change on Arctic species are likely to be felt globally. By setting clear and ambitious long-term targets, it is our firm belief that we will not only improve our impact on climate change, but this will also lead to new jobs, growth and development. We need to end our thinking around the cost of action and instead focusing on the cost of inaction.

Climate change has been on the Swedish agenda for at least 30 years. The science was clear already back then, and we have always recognized our responsibility to take the lead as a developed country. Sweden put a tax on carbon already 1991 and since then, GHG emissions have gone down around 26 percent. Economic growth has remained strong, with GDP increasing about 75 percent. Cleaner air, a more efficient and competitive industry and new business opportunities are examples of clear co-benefits. Heating our homes is very energy consuming and has since the 90s gone from fossil energy dependent to be nearly fossil free today. Expansion of district heating networks, energy efficiency and biofuels have been the main factors in decreasing our emissions. Today we have gone from looking at climate action as necessary burden – to seeing it as an enabler that spurs strong green growth and creates a sustainable and healthy society.

In June 2017, Sweden’s parliament, the Riksdag decided by a large political majority to introduce a climate policy framework with a climate act for Sweden. This framework is the most important climate reform in Sweden’s history and sets out implementation of the Paris Agreement in Sweden. By 2045, Sweden is to have zero net emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. The framework contains new ambitious climate goals, a climate act and plans for a climate policy council. The framework aims to create order and stability in climate policy. It will provide business and society with the long-term conditions to implement the transition needed to address the challenge of climate change. For the first time, Sweden will also have an act under which each government has an obligation to pursue a climate policy based on the climate goals adopted by the Riksdag. Each government must provide clear reports on how work to achieve the goals is progressing, and an independent climate policy council will review how well the overall policy meets the climate goals. The reform is a key component of Sweden’s efforts to comply with the Paris Agreement.

The Climate Act establishes the following:

* The Government’s climate policy must be based on the climate goals in the Swedish climate policy, which sets out implementation of the Paris Agreement, and how work is to be carried out.
* The Government is required to present a climate report to the parliament every year in its Budget Bill. Every fourth year, the Government is required to draw up a climate policy action plan to describe how the climate goals are to be achieved.
* Climate policy goals and budget policy goals must work together.

The framework contains several new climate goals for Sweden. By 2045, Sweden is to have zero net emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and should thereafter achieve negative emissions. Negative emissions will mean that Sweden overall helps to reduce the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. That is, the amount of greenhouse gases emitted by Sweden is less than the amount of greenhouse gases reduced through the natural ecocycle, or through climate projects pursued by Sweden abroad. However, emissions from activities in Sweden must be at least 85 per cent lower than in 1990. Based on current population forecasts for Sweden, this means that emissions in Sweden will be less than one tonne per person by 2045. By 2030, emissions from domestic transport will be reduced by at least 70 per cent compared with 2010. It is suggested that it will no longer be allowed to sell new gasoline and diesel-powered cars from 2030. The proposal is to be investigated in 2019. By 2030, emissions in Sweden in the sectors that will be covered by the EU Effort Sharing Regulation should be at least 63 per cent lower than in 1990. By 2040, emissions in Sweden in the sectors that will be covered by the EU Effort Sharing Regulation should be at least 75 per cent lower than in 1990. These goals reflect Sweden’s great international climate leadership, and show that Sweden undertakes to achieve emission reductions that far exceed Sweden’s required emission reductions under the coming EU Effort Sharing Regulation.

As for the goal of zero net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2045, it will also be possible to achieve parts of these goals by 2030 and 2040 through supplementary measures, such as increased uptake of carbon dioxide by forests or investments in various climate projects abroad. Such measures may be used to achieve a maximum of 8 and 2 percentage points, respectively, of the emission reduction goals by 2030 and 2040. That is, by 2030 emissions from activities in Sweden should be at least 55 per cent lower than in 1990, and by 2040 at least 73 per cent lower than in 1990.

The third pillar of the framework is a climate policy council. The climate policy council supports the Government by providing an independent assessment of how the overall policy presented by the Government is compatible with the climate goals. The council evaluates if the present policy in different policy areas contributes or counteracts the climate goals.

Fossil Free Sweden was initiated by the Swedish government ahead of the COP21 climate change conference in Paris in 2015 as the United Nations launched an Action Agenda, to show how enterprises, cities, municipalities and organizations contribute to climate efforts. The ambition is to make Sweden one of the first fossil free welfare countries in the world. Not only because it is our responsibility to future generations, but because it makes economic sense. To achieve this, all actors in society must work actively to reduce emissions.

In Sweden, there are many enterprises, municipalities, associations and others that are able and willing to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions. They have realized that climate change adaptation paves the way for new business opportunities, technologies and better social solutions. Fossil Free Sweden is an opportunity for these actors to identify common challenges in their efforts to speed up the transition.

Fossil Free Sweden is open to all actors who support [the declaration](http://fossilfritt-sverige.se/in-english/declaration-by-the-actors/) drawn up for the initiative. The declaration stipulates that actors participating in the initiative share the view that the world must become fossil free and that Sweden should lead the way in these efforts. The declaration also stipulates that actors who participate must be able to present concrete measures to reduce emissions. Based on the decision by the parliament to make Sweden climate neutral by 2045, the Fossil Free Sweden initiative has encouraged business sectors to draw up their own roadmaps as to how they will be fossil free while also increasing their competitiveness.

In these roadmaps, the industries describe when and how they will be fossil free, what technological solutions need to be developed, what investments need to be made and what obstacles need to be removed. The roadmaps also contain the sectors’ own proposals regarding commitments for the sectors´ stakeholders and political solutions.

The roadmaps are managed by either industry associations or companies in an open process that aims to include the entire sectors. Thirteen roadmaps have been handed over to the Government and more are in progress.

We are aware that the future requires new solutions, both in terms of changing our behavior and in new technology. But also, to learn from and utilize traditional knowledge. Sweden therefore stresses the need to look at indigenous and local community knowledges and see it as important that platforms for example within UNFCCC, Arctic Council and CBD can play an important role for finding ways to adapt to the new situations we are facing and to strengthen the arctic resilience. Sweden is currently in a broader sense looking on ways to encourage Parties to the UNFCCC, and to find indicators and methods, to report on how human rights, indigenous rights and gender have and can be considered by Parties when taking a national determined contribution (NDC). We are also forming a new strategy to gender-proof the national implementation of the Paris Agreement.

It is important to reflect on why humanity have been able to build successful societies for so long. It is not only our creativity or endeavour but also the predictability of our climate. Imagine a world where every year brings new unpredictable weather changes. The economic and social costs would be astronomical. It is therefore of outmost importance that all actors and groups of society are involved in the transition to a fossil free world, which combines social justice with respect for planetary boundaries. This is the very essence of sustainable development. A just transition requires us to, both engage in dialogue, and make sure that no one is left behind.