

## Main messages

### *Sweden's main messages on the global response to Covid-19*

- **A global challenge:** No health system is stronger than its weakest link. As Governments deal with their national situations, they must simultaneously engage in the global response. Global action is a must to protect our populations, nations and economies. Solidarity, at the same time, remains a solid reason to act.
- **Supporting the immediate response.** Supporting the multilateral system through core-funding is the most efficient way to create flexible and fast global response. Additionally, strengthening and resourcing WHO, supporting strong UN coordination and the UN's recently launched joint Global Humanitarian Response Plan.
- **Coordination of global efforts.** Important that all our efforts are complementary and well-coordinated, including our support to the WHO Fund, the Global Humanitarian Response Plan and the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) that is being prepared. The International Financial institutions, including the multilateral development banks with their financial muscle and rapid response facilities have important roles to play. Close cooperation and coordination between the EU, MDBs and the UN system will be important.
- **Securing universal access to solutions.** Vaccines, anti-viral treatments etc. must be made available on an equitable basis as Global Public Goods to which access is not determined by purchasing power or other status. We will champion and support this including through considering Advance Purchasing Commitments and other financial instruments.
- **Closing financing gaps.** We must mobilize additional resources and not cannibalize on regular development and humanitarian work. As Official Development Assistance will come under pressure we must therefore innovate. Financial mechanisms that front-load expenditure could be an option, and other sources that complement ODA need to be developed.
- **Leaving no one behind.** Already discriminated and marginalized groups and individuals risk being severely affected by the COVID-19 crisis. It is therefore crucial to integrate a human rights and gender equality perspective in the COVID-19 response, both in the short and long term.
- **Universal Health Coverage.** The most vulnerable people are those most in need of our assistance also in normal times. They are also among those hit the hardest today and therefore need immediate social assistance. In the medium and longer term, we shall make efforts to achieve Universal Health Coverage across the globe. Equitable and

accessible health systems provide the foundation for future responses to global health challenges.

- **Observing principles.** Our efforts and responses must be guided by principles of equity, gender equality, inclusivity, democracy, rule of law and international law including full respect of all human rights. The fight against this virus needs to be conducted with a transparent, inclusive and rights-based approach. Any limitations of human rights in this situation must be in line with international law. We need to ensure that actions to combat COVID-19 do not undermine any of these principles and commit to the need to protect people's trust in democratic governance and institutions by ensuring an equitable global response to tackling socio-economic inequality.
- **Rebutting false choices and stories.** We will advocate for open, transparent, accountable and science-based work in the Covid-19 responses, with WHO as the global pillar. We will combat disinformation and false narratives, counting on international partners to actively do same.
- **Maintain focus on conflict prevention and peacebuilding.** We support the Secretary-General's call for a Global Ceasefire. It is key that UN institutions can function and operate under these circumstances, particularly the Security Council. We will advocate for new and innovative ways to continue peace talks, mediation and peace negotiations in times of Covid-19-crises. Our support for women's participation and strong involvement of civil society to be maintained. Local women's organisations can play key role in keeping societies together in times of crises.
- **Building back better.** If managed wisely, this may be the opportunity to lay the foundations for a more sustainable and equitable world with better global preparedness to take on new crises, including by investing in epidemiological surveillance, rethinking health. We need to acknowledge the call from the UN Secretary-General, to ensure that our recovery strategies keep us on track towards Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement, building a sustainable and inclusive economy.

## **”Lines to take”**

*Specific lines to take on Sweden's position on the global response concerning: the international system; EU; health; human rights; gender equality; peace and security*

- The Corona virus sees no borders. It is likely to affect the poorest countries with weak health systems the hardest, and the consequences will be particularly difficult to manage in countries that are affected by conflict or other humanitarian crises. We therefore need national as well as global actions to go hand in hand and address the needs of whole populations and societies. This is a time for collaboration, solidarity and for building back better, together and in the most inclusive way possible. We must stand up for and support international principles and institutions.
- The pandemic must be addressed globally with joint international efforts, including development cooperation and humanitarian assistance and with an integrated rights and gender perspective.

### **The international system**

- In the current situation, all actors of the multilateral systems – UN-agencies, development banks, vertical funds, humanitarian actors and individual countries – must act coherently and in coordination, not the least at country level, to be effective.
- Strong leadership and coordination by the UN is essential. We welcome efforts by the UN Development and Humanitarian systems to come together in the international response. We welcome in particular the joint UN appeal - the Global Humanitarian Response Plan COVID-19 - requesting 2 billion USD for the response. Sweden has already committed to an initial contribution of at least 10 million USD. Sweden’s initial support will focus on the most urgent requirements, focusing on: 1) community engagement and information, 2) isolation and care for the sick, and 3) infection prevention and control.
- To ensure maximum impact, Swedish support will focus on a few organizations that work directly with respective national health systems. Will also prioritize organizations that will enable the heavy logistics chain to function smoothly. Organizations that might be considered are UNICEF (overall health systems), UNHCR (special focus on refugees outside camps and certain IDP populations) and WFP/UNHAS (logistics).
- It is also essential to maintain support for pre-existing humanitarian crises and needs in order to meet urgent requirements and save lives. This includes the need to uphold sexual and reproductive health services, including maternal health.
- All countries must have access to essential medical equipment and supplies. In countries where sanctions could impede this, humanitarian exceptions must be respected.
- The outbreak and spread of Covid-19 will have long term effects on development cooperation. It is too early to say what the effects might be, but we are analyzing them as we

speak. It is of great importance to ensure the effectiveness and usefulness of the humanitarian system in a crisis such as this, and to bridge humanitarian assistance and long-term development actions.

- Fundamental to assist developing countries, in particular the poorest, is to continue with a broad development agenda as well as to manage the socio-economic effects of the crisis. Multilateral Development Banks are key actors in this respect with their financial capacity and ability to front load, global reach, and deep knowledge of issues ranging from social safety nets and fiscal policy to supporting small and medium size enterprises. Also, vital that recovery efforts are aligned with the SDGs and the Paris Agreement.
- We need to make sure civil society organisations, human rights defenders, women's rights organizations and media actors can operate freely and do their job, including keeping the public informed and rulers accountable on all actions.

## **EU**

- Sweden welcomes a collective EU approach. A common European response to the outbreak of COVID-19 in our partner countries is critical for the needs to be met and to combat a narrative that the EU has turned inward. The geopolitical dimension of our collective efforts is now being tested.
- We need to acknowledge the call from the UN Secretary-General, to ensure that our recovery strategies keep us on track towards Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement, building a sustainable and inclusive economy. We already have the basis for this in the EU with our strong development policy, now supported by the Green deal. The roadmap for recovery, that EU leaders are requesting the Commission to start working on, could be accompanied by a roadmap for sustaining development, making sure that our development efforts continue supporting developing countries in delivering on Agenda 2030 and the Paris Agreement. Building back better from covid-19 is possible and should be our common aim.
- COVID-19 has potential long-term effects on gender equality. The situation once again stresses the need to further strengthen the systematic gender and rights' perspective in all aspects of EU external action, including through the development of a broad and ambitious Gender Action Plan III. The situation requires comprehensive, integrated, short- and long-term EU support for women and girls, to build a sustainable future for all. In this regard, re-emphasize the GAP's target that 85% of all new actions should contribute to gender equality and women's empowerment, significantly or principally.

## **Health**

- It is important to focus on resilient health systems. Health systems which can both respond to and cope with the present Covid-19 outbreak but also maintain normal health services. It is of outmost importance that equitable health service delivery, especially Primary Health Care and Sexual and reproductive health care and services, is not affected by the fact that all countries across the world is now focusing on the fight against Covid-19.
- Special attention needs to be given to the most vulnerable groups. Millions of people cannot normally afford basic health services. The present situation put many more people at risk. The needs of vulnerable groups must be carefully monitored, including access to sexual and reproductive health rights services.

- The present outbreak provides also an opportunity to review national systems for health to ensure that not only future outbreaks can be detected early enough to be contained, but also that people are able to avoid illnesses more broadly and live long and healthy lives.

### **Human Rights and Gender equality**

- We need to ensure not to cut financing in the area of human rights, democracy and rule of law at this crucial period of time. Concerned that some states use the situation as an excuse to unduly limit the enjoyment, protection and fulfillment of all human rights such as freedom of movement, freedom of expression, the right to the best attainable level of health, the right to protection and safety or right to privacy. Any infringement or limitations to human rights in this situation must be in line with international law. This area needs our continued financial and political support. It will be crucial in order to protect all human rights norms and democratic principles .
- Similarly, we need to ensure that we do not cut, but instead enhance, financing in the area of gender equality and women's and girls' enjoyment of all human rights at this crucial period of time. Covid-19 has dramatic implications for gender equality and women's and girls' enjoyment of all human rights since it hits the hardest at those already marginalized and discriminated against. The consequences can be seen in every field, including in the economic area since women, in every country in the world, tend to have lower wages, more insecure jobs (if any at all), less pension and less insurance coverage than men. Another consequence affects women's and girls' physical safety, as they suffer a greater risk than men of being exposed to gender-based violence including domestic violence— a violence we know increases in crises.

### **Peace and security (including prevention and peacebuilding)**

- The Covid-19 pandemic is a matter of global peace and security. We support the Secretary-General's call for a Global Ceasefire. Key that UN institutions can function and operate under these circumstances, particularly the Security Council.
- The response needs to take into account existing conflict dimensions in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Sweden will maintain focus on peacebuilding efforts and actively participate in relevant forums, such as the Peacebuilding Commission.
- Support and close cooperation with special envoys and other actors will be particularly important from both a preventive and peacebuilding perspective. Central to ensure that UN peace operations and political missions can remain operative under current circumstances while limiting spread of the virus and ensure health of personnel.
- A gender equality and conflict perspective is crucial. Support for civil society and women's rights organizations work with dialogue, confidence building and information becomes

particularly important. These must be heard in decision-making forums at both global and national levels.