

**NordCham DiversiTV: The Network of Diversity Dialogue and Development  
22 September 2021, 1:00-2:30 PM Philippine time via Zoom  
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Ambassador of Sweden**

Good afternoon everyone, it is a great pleasure for me to be here with you today in this event organized by NordCham in cooperation with the Banco de Oro and the Embassy of Sweden and I am very happy to share this space with Marla Garin-Alvarez and of course with Bo Lundqvist and Jesper Svenningsen.

I arrived in the Philippines three weeks ago and am delighted to be here, taking up my post as Ambassador-designate to the Philippines, and looking forward to meeting with and working with you all during my tenure here.

I am certainly humbled by the task assigned to me here today of trying to talk about the importance of gender equality and diversity to a group such as yours which has worked on these issues for a long time in general and here in the Philippines specifically. I am much aware of the fact that the Philippines rank very high in global indexes on gender equality. For example, in the World Economic Forum's latest Global Gender Gap Index from March this year, the Philippines ranks 17th, far ahead of all other countries in Asia and of the majority of countries in Europe.

Nevertheless, Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden all rank among the five most advanced countries in this area so the Nordics possibly have something to contribute although I am very much looking forward to also hear and learn from you, what we the Nordics can learn from the Philippines.

I will focus my intervention on the Swedish experience, why I believe we are where we are today in terms of gender equality, what remains to be done and I will also say a couple of words about initiatives taken by Swedish companies that aim to close the gender gap in the private sector.

And I am looking forward to the Q&A and the discussion afterwards.

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear partners and friends:

As you may know, the Swedish government adopted a feminist foreign policy in 2014 and in 2019 it adopted a feminist trade policy. Why did we do that? The rationale was quite simple: Women constitute 50% of the world's population and have a 50% representation in every segment of the population, in every group or minority of a society, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, socio-economic level, religion, skin colour, sexual preference or disability. However, women still don't have the same rights, the same representation, or

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the same resources that men have. The feminist foreign policy thus aims to address these inequalities and to seek parity, so that women can enjoy the same Rights, Representation and Resources that men enjoy. These are the three R's that constitute the simple formula of the feminist foreign policy and that we pursue in every area of work, be it political, economic, social or cultural, administrative, of course adapted to the context, the local circumstances in every case.

Why do we do this? It is because we are convinced that parity offers advantages for everyone, for a family, for a company, for a country. That more equal societies – both socially and from a gender perspective - have better public health, economic development and social security. That they are more peaceful and sustainable, creative and innovative, because more perspectives, experiences and ideas are included.

Sweden wasn't always a country that focused on gender equality, when I was a child in the 1970s, Sweden was still a macho - machista society.

There were few women in government, few women in parliament, most men worked all the time like my father and most women were at home with the children, as was my mother, although more women had started to work part-time.

What changed this situation?

Several factors:

1. Firstly, the Social movements, including the feminist movements of the 1960s, they helped change the perception of what it was to be a woman and moved the focus to parity, equity.
2. Secondly, the Political leadership of the 1960s and 70s - progressive male politicians like my father who emphasized that men and women had the same value, the same rights, that they were equal. They couldn't really change in practice, like my father, but in theory, and this was very important for setting the stage for the future.
3. Thirdly, and Most importantly, the laws, the reforms (and the institutions that implemented them), and I will give a few examples:
  - o In 1969-70: we adopted the law that schools should promote the equal treatment of boys and girls, this was very important for my generation, I started primary school in 1970.
  - o In 1971: we adopted the individual – or separate - taxation of income between spouses, the male breadwinner became two bread winners. This was an extremely important reform: until then, the married couple had been seen as a unit, and due to high taxation women's wage work was not financially rewarding. This is an example of using economic incentives or tax policies to change behavior.
  - o In 1974: we adopted the shared and gender-neutral parental leave and the social security benefits that came with it. Today we have 180 days of parental leave (and paid at 80% of the earnings) allocated to each parent out of which 3 months are non-transferable. This means that if the father doesn't take at least three months parental leave, the couple will lose the three months
  - o Also in 1974: it became legal to obtain a divorce only with the consent of one spouse.
  - o Also in 1974: abortion became legal until the 18th week of pregnancy
  - o In 1976: equal treatment between men and women in the public sector as a whole became law
  - o In 1980: we got the law against gender discrimination in the work place

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- o Also in 1980: we changed the law about the succession to the throne: from that year onwards, the first born child inherits the throne no matter what sex. As you may know Crown Princess Victoria is next in line although she does have a younger brother.
- o In 1982: we changed the name law, it became possible to choose a woman's or a man's family name upon marriage. My sister...
- o In 1983: a gender equality agreement was reached among the parties of the labor market – those are the government, the companies and the trade unions –and they reached the agreement that all professions should be open to women including the armed forces.
- o In 1994, gender mainstreaming was adopted, meaning that decisions in all policy areas and at all levels were to be permeated by a gender equality perspective.
- o In 2009, the Discrimination Act replaced seven separate anti-discrimination laws.

Thus prohibiting in one law the discrimination related to gender, transgender identity or expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability, age, religion or other belief.

What results and changes did we see based on these reforms?

First some fun facts:

- o Priesthood in the Swedish Church which is Lutheran had actually been open to women since the 1950s. But we didn't get our first female bishop until 1997. But today, the arch-bishop is a woman.
- o We got our first female general in 2013 and our first acting female head of the army in 2019. But we are still to see a female head of the Armed Forces.
- o We didn't get the first female head of a Ministry until 1976 - today the Ministers of the government are 50-50, 50% of the leaders of the political parties are women, but we are yet to see a female prime minister.

So besides top positions, what results and changes did we see in society based on these reforms?

- I would say that in the 1970s and 80s, the focus was on extending women's participation in the work-place through labor market and other reforms, through the economic empowerment of women and through promoting their economic and social independence.
- In the 1980s: we still focused on the women: women were encouraged to apply for jobs in male dominated sectors, and to pursue education to reach higher positions. This was typical for my generation.
- In the 1990s: We started to focus on combatting violence against women, and saw the need for gender based research. Thus, the policy was extended to also include the role men needed to play to achieve gender equality, including in the area of sharing unpaid work and childcare.
- I believe that this transition to focus more on the role of men and on the male role model that took place over the years has been one of the most important developments to achieve a high level of gender equality. This change is illustrated by looking at how the image of the father changed over time: Men who took care of their children in the 1970s in Sweden were condescendingly called "velvet daddies", softies. In the 1990s, men who took care of their children were portrayed as power daddies, who dressed in business suits and pushed the baby carriage. The idea of shared childcare and

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new gender roles started to take hold, and this would help change the reality for future generations.

- From 2000 onwards: we have seen a continued focus on the man, on the advantages that men get through gender equality, for ex that they get better relations with their kids, that a man doesn't need to be the prime bread winner in the traditional way but also can focus on other things in life, including choosing the career he wants. And today we see in Sweden many male nurses, social secretaries, and men as care takers of children and the elderly – something that was almost unheard of when I was a child.

- I would like to give an example from the Swedish Foreign Ministry to illustrate this change. While men in my parents' generation didn't spend much time with their children, men in my generation and younger have stayed at home usually around six months (which is the law) with each one of their children while their wives have been working. We had an Under Secretary in the MFA who showed the way 20 years ago – he stayed at home with his children when they were small and he left the office to pick up his children at 5 o'clock every day thus showing that you could combine a high-level position with child caring duties, thus setting an example for other diplomats, they felt that if he could do it, they could do it too. We had a leader of a political party and some other well known people who did the same.

- In the Ministry for Foreign Affairs today, we are more or less 50/50 at all levels, from the Ministers to the administrative levels, and I would say that the advantage of this is that we do have a more comfortable work environment than we had when I started at the Ministry, an environment in which we are not any longer defined according to our gender, but according to who we are as individuals, human beings.

- I should also underline the importance that a strategic family policy has had to achieve gender equality. With this I mean a solid societal infrastructure made up of a school system that covers the entire day, day care centers and kindergarten for all pre-school children, and after school activities for school children among other things. This system has made it possible for both parents to combine full time work with a family life.

Is everything then fine in Sweden? Of course not: There continues to be a lot of things to do, the work never ends.

- Firstly, I'd like to mention gender based harassment and violence that has gotten worse due to the pandemic as it has all over the world, the advantage for Sweden being that we have kept the schools open during the pandemic and kept our social security system intact which has meant that people have not lost their income, but more people have worked from home and mental health issues, domestic tensions and violence have increased according to the statistics.

- Secondly, there continues to be a lot to do in the private sector where Sweden has not yet reached parity as we have done in the public sector. On average, one third or 35% of the members of the Swedish company boards are women, and in the leadership groups one fourth or 25% of the members are women. Still only 10% of the companies feature a woman as their CEO, and less than 10% of the Board Directors are women. Attempting to change this situation was one of the reasons why Sweden adopted a feminist trade policy in 2019 and what we have seen in the last couple of years is that we have almost reached parity among the CEO's and the board members of the state-owned or partially state-owned companies.

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- Let me emphasize that we have never used quotas in Sweden, our tradition is much more based on trying to reach consensus among the parties concerned, this makes change take longer perhaps but when it occurs it is more sustainable, at least this is what we believe.

- When we look at the companies, the sectors that show the highest level of parity are real estate, finance, health and consumer services. The sectors that show the lowest level of parity include traditional industrial companies and manufacturing, energy and defense. And as regards to management within the leadership groups in most companies, the women present are most often heading the divisions dealing with human resources, public information and legal services whereas other more operational divisions continue to be headed by men. Thus, the situation is not that different than it is in similar companies from and in other countries.

- But the situation is changing, there is a strong incentive to improve the ratio, the parity from the companies' side, since they need to keep their comparative and competitive advantage in the area of innovation, for example, and to do this, diversity is key. And the companies also need to cater to an increasingly gender equal market with women as strong consumers. I would be pleased to hear from Volvo Cars which I believe is with us today because I know that you have been taking into account that more and more car owners and drivers are women and have other needs than men.

- Other big companies present on the Filipino market are consumer and service driven, and globally, companies such as IKEA and H&M and Transcom have a much better gender and diversity ratio than the average. When Team Sweden in Mexico where I served as Ambassador for five years before coming here, conducted a gender survey among the Swedish multinational companies with presence there, IKEA together with AstraZeneca came out on top in all categories researched.

- It is usually more challenging for traditional industrial companies, but also in this sector we find interesting developments. I will mention a few.

- SAAB is one of the world's leading companies in the area of defense and security, an industry traditionally dominated by men but today with a commitment to improve gender equality, including making sure that 35% of their managers are women by 2025 (up from 14% in 2007 and 27% in 2015), and promoting science, engineering and technology education to girls and young women between 12 and 19 years old.

- Another example - Volvo Cars was awarded a prize in 2017 for providing the best work environment for families and for facilitating the possibilities to combine work with family life for both men and women, among other things through active promotion of the taking of paternity leave among their male employees.

- And a third example - Volvo Group received a prize for its program "Leaders for the future" in which 50 % of the participants are women and which has adopted a gender perspective in its curriculum which includes discussions on values and norms and concrete measures on how to deal with gender-based stereotypes and fight machismo, macho-culture in the work place. All the men who participate in the program have senior female mentors. One objective of the program is to form ties and establish networks among senior women managers and future male managers to change the

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traditional dynamics. I also saw how this worked outside headquarters, in Mexico it was a very rewarding experience to get together with the participants of this “Leaders for the future-group” at Volvo Buses in Mexico.

- These were just a few examples and I am looking forward to hearing more stories from you, the companies attending this webinar. And of course, to discuss all the issues brought up here today with the broader audience. And I will be ready to answer your questions.

- Thank you very much for your attention.

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