



Ministry of the Environment and Energy

Note made by State Secretary on October 12th 2018 at the Arctic Environment Ministers' Meeting in Rovaniemi, Finland

Thank you very much for the presentations and the chance to share some thoughts on these issues. Obviously the Arctic is changing fast, not least due to climate change. This makes cooperation through the Arctic Council even more important. We need to strengthen our cooperation in order to limit climate change, increase resilience and strengthen adaptation to a fast-changing environment.

One example in case is how climate change and other pressures are affecting our oceans. Here, the Arctic Council's Task Force on Arctic Marine cooperation presented several recommendations that Sweden supports, but also stressed that further work is required in the future to fully address the issues of area based management. This includes marine protected areas and in particular to support the establishment of a well-functioning network of marine protected areas across the whole Arctic that is beyond national jurisdiction. We hope that we together through the Arctic Council can step up work towards this end.

In keeping with the Talanoa-tradition, I want to speak a bit on where we are, where we want to go, and how we get there. The easiest question to answer is probably the second one – where we want to go. For me, this is clear: we want to achieve the targets of the Paris Agreement and limit global warming to well-below two degrees, preferably staying below 1.5 degrees warming. But to answer the first and the third question, I want to present a couple of stories.

When I was in my twenties, I used to go mountain hiking with my brother. And of course, one of our goals was to hike the tallest mountain in Sweden – the southern peak of Kebnekaise.

How many of you have climbed the tallest mountain in your country? Those who have done so, probably share my experience: it's always colder and windier than you expect, but it's also worth it! From the top of Kebnekaise, you can see 11 percent of Sweden's total area. And luckily for my brother and I, it was a beautiful day so we could really enjoy the view, despite the temperature and the wind.

Of course, it's a bit easier for us in Sweden to hike our tallest mountain than it is for some of the rest of you. The peak my brother and I scaled was 2 111 metres above sea-level. Russians, Canadians and Americans, however, have mountains that tower more than 5 500 metres above sea-level. On the other hand, it's even easier for Danes who only need to climb 170 metres... But I think the driving force and the feeling is the same – you want to get to the very top of your country, and it gives your self-confidence a great boost!

Or at least it used to.

This summer my self-confidence took a downturn. I have officially not climbed the tallest peak in Sweden anymore. Due to climate change, the glacier that makes up the top of the southern peak of Kebnekaise has melted so much that it now measures below the rocky northern peak.

So here I am, 30 years older, a fragment of my former self with much less stamina, and I have to climb the northern peak.

That's where we are. My story may be trivial, but also illustrative: climate change is not science fiction, it's something that's happening here and now. And while climate change may have taken away parts of my pride, it will take away a lot more from my children and grand-children. The Arctic is changing so fast, affecting people's lives but also changing nature in a fundamental and an irreversible way.

So how do we get there, to halting climate change? Here again I want to tell you a story.

In the beginning of the 1990s, Sweden had a huge budget deficit and national debt was growing fast. People were nervous every time new government bonds had to be issued. The Swedish krona was pegged to the then-existing European Currency Unit, the ECU, and capital was flowing quickly out of the country.

The Government and the opposition agreed on a crisis package. On 16 September 1992 the central bank governor increased the marginal interest rate to 500 percent. But eventually, after a few very shaky days on the market, the Government capitulated and let the Swedish krona float.

Everybody in Sweden agreed: we shall never again end up in the same type of runaway economic disaster. After the crisis the Government and the opposition agreed to establish a fiscal policy framework to strengthen fiscal discipline. To cite Sweden's former minister of finance and prime minister Göran Persson: one who is in debt is not free.

Today, we are all heavily indebted. I am not speaking of a debt in krona, euro, roubles or dollars, but one measured in tonnes of greenhouse gases. And as the recent IPCC-report clearly shows, if we don't act now, our debt will soon be unserviceable.

In Sweden - based on experience from our financial crisis of the 1990s – the government and opposition together established a new framework: a climate policy framework. I spoke about this yesterday at the Talanoa lunch. The climate policy framework is not only supported by the Parliament – it has also been supported by a great number of stakeholders, including business, who welcome a clear and stable picture of where we are heading.

A few weeks ago, we had a general election in Sweden. And as you probably know, we have still not reached a conclusion on a new government yet. But I am confident that the new framework will be a powerful tool to ensure that the next government, and the one after that, and the one after that, will need to implement an ambitious climate policy in order to reach our targets.

I have been asked to convey that Sweden is firmly behind the collective aspirational goal of reducing emissions by black carbon by 25–33 percent between 2013 and 2025. It is important that all Arctic member states fully participate in this process by submitting national reports in order to share

best practice from national experience. We are also very happy for the active participation shown by observer countries in this work

Finally I would like to thank Finland for arranging this meeting. As Sweden arranged the first meeting for Environment Ministers in Jukkasjärvi 2013 – we truly appreciate the follow-up now made by the Finnish chairmanship.

Thank you for your attention!