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**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON
ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS**

**CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 16 OF THE INTERNATIONAL
COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS**

**Replies by the Government of Sweden to the list of issues (E/C.12/SWE/Q/5) to be taken up
in connection with the consideration of the fifth periodic report of Sweden (E/C.12/SWE/5)**

SWEDEN*

[26 September 2008]

• In accordance with the information transmitted to States parties regarding the processing of their reports, the present document was not edited before being sent to the United Nations translation services.
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Question 4: Please provide information regarding the nature and scope of those practices that the State party considers to be good practices in the implementation of the Covenant.

1. We would be grateful for clarification as to what kind of best practises the question pertains to, and which areas would be of special interest to the Committee in this regard.

Question 10: Please provide information about whether and how the proposed merger of the four discrimination Ombudsmen¹ takes into account the Paris Principles relating to the status of national human rights institutions (General Assembly resolution 48/134, annex).

2. The merger of the ombudsmen against discrimination into the Office of the Ombudsman against Discrimination is one of the measures taken in the new Discrimination Act (see question 9 below). The Paris Principles have been taken into account in the drafting of the new act and in most respects the new institution will be in line with the Paris Principles.

3. For example, the legislative history of the act refers directly to the Paris Principles when giving the Ombudsman its broad mandate. The Paris Principles are also referred to when deciding to regulate the competence of the Ombudsman in a legislative text. In certain other respects, however, the new institution is not in line with the Paris Principles, especially regarding the principles for the composition of national institutions and how their members should be appointed.

Article 9: the right to social security

Question 18: Please provide information on whether the State party's legislation and other measures focused on violence against women sufficiently address prevention, such as through the transformation of patriarchal gender roles and hierarchies, or targeting women with an immigrant, asylum-seeker, refugee or Sami background. Please include an assessment of their effectiveness.

4. Families with children and persons aged 18 to 28 without children may be entitled to a housing allowance. Families with children may receive a contribution towards housing costs and allowances for the children living at home or sometimes living at home. Persons aged 18 to 28 without children can receive a housing allowance. The amount payable depends on several factors, including the size of the household, household income, housing costs and the size of the accommodation.

5. The basic unemployment insurance is SEK 320 per day (five days per week) and is paid to a person who is not a member of an unemployment insurance fund or a person who is a member of an unemployment insurance fund but does not satisfy the condition applicable to the entitlement to income loss insurance. The amount per day is proportionately lower if the person has not worked full-time during the period the compensation is based on. The basic insurance is paid at the earliest from the date the unemployed person reaches the age of 20.

¹ E/C.12/SWE/5, paras. 24-25.

6. Persons who have not qualified for the social insurance system and/or unemployment benefits and who are therefore unable to support themselves during unemployment or sickness, may receive social assistance from the municipal social services. Persons who are entitled to basic unemployment benefit may also receive supplementary social assistance (financial support).
7. The individual shall be granted a reasonable standard of living through social assistance. The assistance shall be designed in such a way as to strengthen his or her resources for independent living.
8. Social assistance is a means-tested benefit based on an individual assessment. It is family-based and conditional on the incomes and circumstances of the family as a whole. It is granted to the person when all other resources have been exhausted. It is the ultimate safety net and intended to provide short-term assistance, although as many as one third of all recipients are defined as long-term recipients.

Article 11: the right to an adequate standard of living

Question 22: Please provide information on what measures are being taken by the State party to improve the standard of living, in particular of single women with children and elderly retired people, who according to the State party's report rank among the lowest in this respect.²

9. Swedish family benefits policy consists of general benefits, insurance benefits and means-tested benefits. Income insurance (parental insurance) leads to a certain reduction of disparities in living conditions between families with higher and lower incomes. The means-tested benefits (housing allowance, maintenance support and the allowance for sick and disabled children) have the largest effect on income disparities, as they are targeted at households that are most vulnerable financially. In 2006 and 2007 the child allowance and the maintenance allowance were raised. An "access allowance" was also introduced in the housing allowance system for parents who only have their child living periodically in the household. As of 2008, the new Government of Sweden changed the objective of the financial family policy to being to contribute to better opportunities for good financial living standards for all families with children. The previous objective was that the differences between the financial positions of families with and without children were to be reduced, within the framework of general welfare. The Government aims to appoint a committee of inquiry concerning the benefits that affect the children of parents living apart.
10. Furthermore, there is social assistance. Social assistance is a form of last-resort assistance. The assistance is given when a person (or a family) temporarily lacks (for a shorter or longer period) sufficient means to meet their necessary costs of living. In principle it is an individual right.
11. Over and above financial family policy, the Government of Sweden finds that positive opportunities for work are the most important measure to give all families with children the

² E/C.12/SWE/5, para. 296.

opportunity for good financial living standards. The Government has a work-first principle, and several reforms have been implemented lately to contribute to a well-functioning labour market, increase employment and reduce social exclusion. Recent changes in terms of taxes and subsidies will also have a major impact on the financial situation of families with children.

12. Basic protection within the pension system, in the form of guaranteed pension and housing supplements for pensioners, is important to prevent financial exposure amongst elderly retired people. In addition, there is a means-tested maintenance support for elderly people with low income or no income at all. The housing supplement for pensioners was strengthened in 2006 and 2007 to increase the disposable income of the pensioners with the lowest incomes. The Government has indicated that further measures will be announced in the near future to improve the financial situation of the pensioners with the lowest incomes. The living standard of pensioners is measured regularly and monitored specially by the Government.

Question 23: Please provide more detailed data on the income distribution gap and how this affects the groups concerned.³

Table 1
Disposable income (a) including and (b) excluding capital gains
per consumption unit in 1991 and 1995-2006

| Year | Median value (a) including capital gains per consumption unit | Gini coefficient | | Top 5 per cent, mean value |
|------|--|------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| | | (a) including | (b) excluding | (a) including |
| 1991 | 136.5 | 0.226 | 0.208 | 366.0 |
| 1995 | 124.2 | 0.227 | 0.213 | 318.6 |
| 1996 | 125.2 | 0.237 | 0.217 | 344.3 |
| 1997 | 127.7 | 0.253 | 0.221 | 413.0 |
| 1998 | 131.2 | 0.245 | 0.223 | 374.4 |
| 1999 | 136.5 | 0.261 | 0.226 | 445.3 |
| 2000 | 143.5 | 0.294 | 0.240 | 607.1 |
| 2001 | 147.6 | 0.266 | 0.235 | 484.1 |
| 2002 | 151.8 | 0.258 | 0.235 | 468.8 |
| 2003 | 152.7 | 0.253 | 0.230 | 461.1 |
| 2004 | 156.7 | 0.258 | 0.231 | 504.6 |
| 2005 | 161.0 | 0.271 | 0.237 | 573.0 |
| 2006 | 166.9 | 0.287 | 0.245 | 659.5 |

³ E/C.12/SWE/5, para. 292-294 and tables 11:1 and 11:2..

Table 2
Equalized disposable income by type of household and age;
median value in SEK (thousands), 2006 prices.

| Year | Children 0-19 years | | Adults 20- years | | (c) Cohabiting | (d) Cohabiting with children | (e) 20-64 years | f) 65- years |
|------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| | (a) Children of single parents | (b) Children of cohabiting parents | (a) Single person household | (b) Single people with children | | | | |
| 1991 | 108.6 | 131.0 | 120.8 | 110.9 | 153.0 | 137.5 | 151.1 | 111.3 |
| 1995 | 97.7 | 116.2 | 111.9 | 101.3 | 139.5 | 123.1 | 134.1 | 114.5 |
| 1996 | 97.0 | 116.4 | 112.8 | 102.2 | 141.1 | 122.8 | 135.7 | 116.6 |
| 1997 | 96.8 | 119.0 | 113.9 | 99.9 | 146.3 | 126.7 | 139.4 | 116.4 |
| 1998 | 98.5 | 125.1 | 114.7 | 102.8 | 149.1 | 131.6 | 142.2 | 118.4 |
| 1999 | 104.5 | 129.9 | 120.6 | 107.9 | 155.1 | 136.9 | 148.1 | 121.8 |
| 2000 | 107.0 | 138.7 | 124.4 | 110.6 | 165.6 | 146.5 | 158.3 | 122.2 |
| 2001 | 109.4 | 144.3 | 125.3 | 113.8 | 168.4 | 151.1 | 161.9 | 123.2 |
| 2002 | 110.4 | 148.0 | 131.0 | 114.9 | 173.4 | 154.7 | 166.6 | 128.9 |
| 2003 | 110.9 | 149.0 | 131.0 | 115.0 | 175.1 | 156.4 | 167.5 | 129.5 |
| 2004 | 112.5 | 151.8 | 133.9 | 116.8 | 178.1 | 160.3 | 171.1 | 135.2 |
| 2005 | 114.7 | 156.4 | 138.5 | 122.6 | 182.8 | 163.7 | 175.4 | 140.1 |
| 2006 | 119.6 | 163.8 | 142.5 | 125.5 | 191.6 | 170.3 | 183.1 | 144.2 |

Source: Statistics Sweden, Statistiska meddelanden HE 21 SM 0801.

13. The figures in the tables above are just a sample of a large set of data contained in Statistics Sweden's publication *Statistiska meddelanden* HE 21 SM 0801. Statistics Sweden summarizes some of their findings for the period 1995-2006 below (note that for some of the figures in this summary there is not a direct link between the figures set out in this text and the figures in the tables above).

14. On average, income for persons aged 20 and above increased by 34 per cent during the period 1995-2006.

15. Worst-off were singles with children, whose incomes only increased by 24 percent. Labour market conditions are the primary influence on income development. Since 1995 income levels for those aged 65 and above have increased by 26 per cent. This means that the oldest age group now has a disposable income that is considerably over the standard held by the

corresponding group in 1995. This is mainly because those in the new age groups have retired with considerably higher pensions.

Question 24: Please provide information on measures undertaken to combat unemployment and poverty among people of active working age taking into consideration the information provided by the State party in paragraph 295 of its report.

16. The Government's policy for permanently higher employment and reduced exclusion has a broad approach and a long-term perspective. The policy focuses on measures that stimulate both the supply of and demand for labour. The in-work tax credit, changes in unemployment insurance, "new start jobs" and the new job development guarantee are some examples (see replies under article 6). The in-work tax credit means a reduction in the taxation on labour, which makes it more profitable for people who are currently unemployed or inactive to take work. The cost of hiring staff has been lowered for the young, the elderly, immigrants and people who have been outside the labour market for a long time.

Question 27: Please provide absolute numbers regarding poverty among children, in particular how many children live in poor families (7 per cent), as well as with regard to the economic standard of retired persons (increased by 18 per cent since 1995).⁴

Table 3
Poverty among children 0-19 years according to their parents' level of employment, 1991 and 2003.

| The parents' employment as a percentage of full-time | Percentage of poor children | | Number of poor children | | Difference between 1991 and 2003 |
|--|-----------------------------|------|-------------------------|---------|----------------------------------|
| | 1991 | 2003 | 1991 | 2003 | |
| More than 75 | 1.7 | 1.0 | 16 000 | 9 000 | -7 000 |
| 25-74 | 6.7 | 6.2 | 49 000 | 41 000 | -8 000 |
| Less than 25 | 10.7 | 16.3 | 41 000 | 81 000 | 40 000 |
| Total | 6.0 | 7.3 | 106 000 | 131 000 | 25 000 |

Calculations based on the absolute poverty line (which stands for constant purchasing power). Source: Using data from the HEK, Statistics Sweden.

⁴ E/C.12/SWE/5, paras. 299, 309.

Table 4**Poverty in 1991, 1997 and 2003 among persons born before 1910, in the 1910s and in the 1920s**

| | | Level of income standard compared with the absolute poverty line. |
|---------------------------|--------|--|
| Number of poor people | | Less than 1.00 Poor (%) |
| Persons born before 1910 | | |
| 1991 | 30 482 | 12.7 |
| 1997 | 23 151 | 29.9 |
| 2003 | 1 862 | 11.4 |
| Persons born in 1910-1919 | | |
| 1991 | 26 448 | 4.3 |
| 1997 | 58 026 | 13.8 |
| 2003 | 17 130 | 8.4 |
| Persons born in 1920-1929 | | |
| 1991 | 31 683 | 3.7 |
| 1997 | 48 738 | 6.6 |
| 2003 | 28 792 | 4.8 |

Calculations based on the absolute poverty line (which stands for constant purchasing power).

Source: Using data from the HEK, Statistics Sweden.
