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CONSEJO DE DERECHOS HUMANOS  
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**APLICACIÓN DE LA RESOLUCIÓN 60/251 DE LA ASAMBLEA  
GENERAL, DE 15 DE MARZO DE 2006, TITULADA  
"CONSEJO DE DERECHOS HUMANOS"**

**Informe de la Relatora Especial sobre la violencia contra la mujer,  
sus causas y consecuencias, Yakin Ertürk**

**Adición**

**MISIÓN A SUECIA\***

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\* El resumen del presente informe de misión se distribuye en todos los idiomas oficiales. El informe propiamente dicho figura en el anexo al resumen y se distribuye únicamente en el idioma en que se presentó.

## Resumen

El presente informe contiene mis conclusiones en calidad de Relatora Especial sobre la violencia contra la mujer, sus causas y consecuencias tras la misión oficial que realicé a Suecia del 11 al 21 de junio de 2006. Empecé la misión para examinar la discrepancia entre los aparentes adelantos en el logro de la igualdad entre los géneros y los informes sobre la continuación de la violencia contra la mujer en el país.

La igualdad entre los géneros es un principio muypreciado en la sociedad sueca. La opinión pública y la política pública a este respecto están firmemente establecidas en un marco de igualdad de oportunidades, que ha conducido a adelantos impresionantes hacia el logro de la igualdad entre hombres y mujeres en la esfera pública, aunque persisten algunos desafíos. Por ejemplo, aunque las mujeres están excesivamente representadas en el sector de los servicios, los trabajos a tiempo parcial y de sueldos bajos, siguen estando poco representadas en los cargos de administración superior en el sector privado y en algunas instituciones públicas importantes como la policía y las fuerzas armadas. Las mujeres todavía ganan menos que sus colegas varones en cargos similares.

Aunque la agenda de la igualdad de oportunidades ha facilitado el camino hacia el logro de adelantos significativos en la representación pública de la mujer, no ha sido eficaz para hacer frente a las relaciones de poder desiguales y profundamente arraigadas entre mujeres y hombres, que explican la continuación de diversas formas de violencia contra la mujer. El mayor reconocimiento de esta contradicción se refleja en el Proyecto de Ley de igualdad de género del Gobierno de Suecia, de 1990, en que se estima que la violencia contra la mujer es una expresión del desequilibrio prevaleciente en las relaciones de poder entre ambos sexos.

En general, el marco de derecho penal en relación con la violencia contra la mujer es excelente, pero los bajos índices de enjuiciamiento y condena reflejan la necesidad de nuevas mejoras en su aplicación. Subsisten algunas deficiencias en cuanto a la protección de las mujeres expuestas a la violencia, y varias municipalidades deben incrementar sin duda alguna el nivel de sus respectivas políticas de protección. La prevención de la violencia contra la mujer sigue siendo un desafío al que habrá que hacer frente con diligencia para hacer de la tan preciada norma de la igualdad entre los géneros una realidad absoluta en la sociedad sueca.

Habida cuenta de las dificultades subsistentes, se pide al Gobierno en el informe que fortalezca su marco institucional sobre la igualdad entre los géneros como para garantizar la protección de todas las mujeres expuestas a la violencia y velar por que las autoridades investiguen activamente, enjuicien y sancionen a los perpetradores. El Gobierno, conjuntamente con la sociedad civil y los medios de difusión, debería también fortalecer los esfuerzos actuales por prevenir la violencia contra la mujer, atacando sus causas fundamentales, y trabajar para ampliar la base de conocimientos sobre las mujeres en peligro de ser víctimas de violencia.

**Annex**

**REPORT OF THE SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON VIOLENCE AGAINST  
WOMEN, ITS CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES, YAKIN ERTÜRK,  
ON HER MISSION TO SWEDEN (11-21 JUNE 2006)**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. At the invitation of the Government, I carried out an official fact-finding mission in Sweden from 11 to 21 June 2006. The mission was motivated by a seeming contradiction: despite the apparent marked progress towards gender equality Sweden was reported to retain a considerable level of violence against women.<sup>1</sup>

2. During the course of my mission, which took me to Stockholm, Uppsala, Malmö, Lund and Luleå, I held consultations with government officials, members of the Armed Forces, civil servants, local authorities, experts, researchers, and civil society representatives. I also visited the Emergency Unit for Rape Victims at Södersjukhuset Hospital in Stockholm, the National Centre for Battered and Raped Women in Uppsala and several shelters for women exposed to violence, where victims and staff members shared with me their experiences and valuable insights. I would like to commend the Government and civil society actors for the professionalism with which they received the mission and thank them for their excellent cooperation and support.

3. This report focuses on various facets of violence against women, including intimate-partner violence, sexual violence and violence in the context of prostitution. It also discusses the special vulnerabilities of immigrant, refugee, minority and indigenous Saami women. Sweden, in complying with its international commitments related to violence against women, has created a very good legal framework with few deficiencies. There are, however, still some discrepancies between the quality of the framework itself and its practical implementation. The report also demonstrates that the Swedish experience was less effective in countering the unequal power relations between women and men in the private sphere, thus resulting in the normalization of violence. In my conclusions and recommendations, I hope to offer tangible recommendations on how to further Sweden's efforts to eradicate violence against women and related forms of discrimination.

## **II. THE CONTEXT**

### **A. Gender equality: policy and practice**

4. Since the 1970s, the feminist movement has played an important role in Swedish society and politics. It created a broad social consensus on the principles of gender equality and prepared the ground for the current official government policy, which seeks to ensure that women and men have equal opportunities to shape society and their own lives. The government policy sets four specific objectives: (i) an equal distribution of power and influence in decision-making; (ii) economic equality and equal access to education; (iii) an equal sharing of unpaid care and household work; and (iv) an end to men's violence against women.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g. Amnesty International, *Men's Violence against Women in Intimate Relationships: An Account of the Situation in Sweden* (2004).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Government Bill 2005/06:155 (passed by the Riksdag on 16 May 2006).

5. A combined strategy of women-focused approaches and gender mainstreaming (the incorporation of a gender equality perspective in all policies and programmes of each ministry) is the principal model for gender equality work in Sweden. This dual strategy is complemented by efforts to establish gender budgeting practices and sex-disaggregated data.<sup>3</sup>

6. Gender mainstreaming initiatives are coordinated and monitored by the Minister of Gender Equality, who is advised by a Council on Gender Equality Issues, representing various stakeholders from the political sphere, civil society and the private sector. The county administrative board (the regional entities supervising and advising the municipalities) also employ experts on gender equality. Furthermore, there is an Equal Opportunities Ombudsman and an Equal Opportunities Commission. These independent government authorities derive their mandates from equal opportunity legislation and can therefore only intervene in discrimination cases related to employment or education.

7. Initially, the women's movement and the Swedish Government focused strongly on ensuring equal opportunities for women and men in the public sphere. This equal opportunity agenda has led to some very impressive achievements. Today, Sweden ranks third among 80 countries assessed by the Gender Empowerment Measure of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *Human Development Report 2005*. More than half (58 per cent) of all students enrolling in higher education institutions are women.<sup>4</sup> In 2005, almost four out of five women in Sweden were in the labour force and the economic activity rate for women (80 per cent) was only slightly lower than that of men (86 per cent).

8. Differences remain, however, with regard to the types of employment women and men have. Women tend to work in professions that are less well paid and they are six times more likely than men to work part-time.<sup>5</sup> A large part of the women in part-time work are actually underemployed, as they lack longer work-hour options. Albeit small, a genuine gender pay gap also continues to exist. Even if one takes into account differences between men and women with regard to age, level of education, working hours, sector and occupational group, a gap of about 8 per cent seems to be explainable only by sex.<sup>6</sup> The Government is undertaking sustained efforts to eradicate the pay gap between the sexes. The Equal Opportunities Act, for example, requires all employers to carry out a survey and analysis of wage disparities between men and women to assess whether they result from discrimination.

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<sup>3</sup> The Official Statistics Ordinance requires that all statistics be disaggregated by sex, unless there are specific reasons for not doing so. In practice, sets of statistical information on a given subject always have at least one sex-disaggregated table. However, in many sets the information is still not consistently broken down by sex in all tables and diagrams. See Statistics Sweden, *Official Statistics of Sweden - Annual Report 2005*, at 19.

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications, combined sixth and seventh periodic report by the Government of Sweden on the measures to give effect to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW/C/SWE/7), at para. 231.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, paras. 254-255.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 274.

9. A glass ceiling is particularly evident in the private sector as women move up the career ladder. Only about 16 per cent of all senior managers in business are female. In 2004, a mere 4 out of 300 companies listed on the Swedish stock exchange had female managing directors. The previous Government had considered imposing gender quotas for boards of directors, but these plans are apparently no longer pursued by the current Government.

10. Equal representation is much more pronounced in the public sector, particularly in elected office. Almost half of all Swedish parliamentarians (47 per cent) and Cabinet-level ministers (9 out of 22) are women. Women remain grossly underrepresented though in some traditionally male-dominated public institutions such as the National Police or the Swedish Armed Forces. Only 20 per cent of all police officers and 4.4 per cent of all military officers are women. Both security institutions are trying to improve the gender imbalance - for example by actively promoting networks and mentoring relationships for female officers.

11. During the 1970s and early 1980s, many in the Swedish feminist movement hoped that equality between men and women could be reached by removing the obstacles that prevented women from accessing educational opportunities, participating in the labour market, and assuming political functions. It was assumed that women would transform existing gender power relations once they had the necessary political clout and economic independence. Over the years, it became increasingly clear that the equal opportunity agenda is a necessary, but not a sufficient element of a successful gender equality strategy, since a gender power hierarchy is reproduced in the private sphere. This turned attention to critically examining the construction and perpetuation of deeply rooted patriarchal gender roles and their continued impact on gender relations. Violence against women, which remained a significant problem despite women's visible advancements, moved to the centre stage of the gender agenda. The dominant explanations of gender-based violence, which had emphasized the psychological abnormality, violent upbringing or alcoholism of the perpetrators, came under scrutiny. The critics highlighted how violence against women was used to uphold and perpetuate unequal gender power relations.

12. Gradually, these insights have also influenced the political agenda. The 1990 Government Bill on Gender Equality recognized violence as an expression "of the prevailing imbalance of power relations between the sexes".<sup>7</sup> Three years later, the Government established a Commission on Violence against Women, charged with the task of scrutinizing issues related to violence against women from a feminist perspective and to propose measures to counteract such violence. The main report of the Commission, published in 1995, reflected a change in Swedish political thinking and emphasized that violence against women must be viewed from a perspective of gendered power. The Government formally adopted this view in the 1998 Law on Violence against Women.

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<sup>7</sup> Government Bill on Gender Equality (Prop. 1990/91:113), as translated in Eva Lundgren, *The Process of Normalizing Violence*, Stockholm: Riksorganisationen för Kvinnojourer och Tjejjourer, 2004, at 5.

13. In recent years, activists and policy initiatives that address remaining gender inequalities have faced some backlash. The feminist movement in particular has been openly attacked by some media and civil society actors. In May 2005, for instance, the Swedish National Television broadcast the documentary “Battle of the sexes” (“*Könskriget*”), which depicted the women’s shelter movement as extremist and hostile towards men as a group. The Swedish Broadcasting Commission, an official media watchdog, eventually published a formal report that criticized some of the programme’s segments as misleading and inaccurate. Some circles have also tried to reframe the issue of gender inequality as an integration problem - a problem reimported into equal Sweden through immigration from developing countries.

### **B. Changing demographics: “old” and “new” Swedes**

14. The composition of Sweden’s population has significantly diversified since the Second World War. Today, one in five persons living in Sweden is either an immigrant or has at least one foreign-born parent. Immediately after the war and during the economic boom years of the 1960s and 1970s, Sweden experienced an influx of migrant workers from other Nordic countries and Southern Europe, whose integration into mainstream society was largely unproblematic. Since the 1980s, immigration trends have changed. Newcomers are more likely to be non-European and/or non-Christian with many coming as asylum-seekers. According to the Swedish Migration Board, between 1984 and 2005, Sweden received almost 500,000 asylum-seekers. Countries such as Bosnia, Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan have emerged as major countries of origin for newcomers.

15. Today, family reunification is the main reason for immigration flows into the country. The provisions in Swedish immigration law on family reunification have attracted much public debate in recent years. Critics argue that they are used to bring new immigrants into the country through arranged marriages between Swedish nationals or permanent residents with foreign roots and individuals in their country of origin, which in many instances may be forced marriages. Another form of arranged, transnational marriage is also on the rise: matchmaking agencies broker marriages between Swedish men and women from poor countries in Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America. The phenomenon, which some have chosen to label “mail order brides”, exists throughout Sweden, but reliable estimates of its size are not obtainable.

16. The religious and ethnic diversification of immigration constitutes an ongoing challenge for Swedish society. While few “old Swedes” perceive the newcomers as an outright threat or hold openly racist attitudes, a large majority expresses support for diversity, but at the same time often expects the “new Swedes” to quickly adopt the values of Sweden’s consensus society. Subtle, unstated prejudices have emerged towards ethnic and religious minorities that are not prepared to readily assimilate, rather than only integrate.

17. These prejudices translate into tangible discrimination on the labour market and other key areas. Non-European immigrants have considerably higher unemployment rates and earn less than native Swedes. Numerous studies demonstrate that the problems in the labour market do not result only from language or educational deficits. One extensive study from 2003, for instance, concluded that men both of whose parents were born in a non-European country

earn 17 per cent less than native Swedes with a comparable education, marital status and choice of residential location and that they have an 11 per cent higher probability of being unemployed.<sup>8</sup> The respective figures for women with foreign parents were 10 and 13 per cent.

18. On the basis of their concrete experiences of discrimination, many persons belonging to religious or ethnic minorities feel excluded from Swedish society and therefore reject ethical norms that are very often presented to them as “Swedish virtues”, which in fact may constitute universal human rights values. This becomes particularly obvious with respect to attitudes towards gender equality. In an effort to preserve their identity, second-generation immigrants from marginalized backgrounds, especially young men and boys, adopt very intransigent views on what constitutes appropriate behaviour for women. In some cases, women are viewed as “lacking virtue” for merely engaging with native Swedish culture. Interlocutors also drew my attention to another gender dimension of immigration: male immigrants from non-Western countries experience a severe status loss with migration whereas the process opens new options for women. This becomes a source of tension and often results in heightened control over women.

### III. MANIFESTATIONS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN SWEDEN

19. Significant levels of violence against women persist in Sweden despite a concerted effort on the part of the Government and society at large to eliminate it. Ending what is termed “men’s violence against women”<sup>9</sup> in Sweden is a priority objective of the Government’s gender equality strategy.

20. Official crime statistics can indicate trends over time, but they never reveal the actual prevalence of violence against women since they only reflect reported crime. Therefore, it is commendable that the Swedish Government commissioned a comprehensive prevalence survey on violence against women. This National Survey, published in 2001,<sup>10</sup> revealed a shockingly high prevalence of violence against women. Almost half of all responding women (46 per cent) had experienced physical and/or sexual violence committed by a man since their fifteenth birthday. One in every eight women (12 per cent) had been subjected to physical or sexual violence, including threatening behaviour, in the last year prior to answering the survey questionnaire.

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<sup>8</sup> Rooth and Ekberg, 2003, “Unemployment and earnings for second generation immigrants in Sweden: Ethnic background and parent composition”, *Journal of Population Economics* 16 (4): 1-28.

<sup>9</sup> Official government documents use the term “men’s violence against women” to make the gender identity of the perpetrators visible and highlight the fact that individual expressions of violence are rooted in unequal power relations between men and women. Some have expressed reservations about the term, fearing that it may stigmatize men as a group and that it does not take into account the participation of individual women in acts of patriarchal violence.

<sup>10</sup> E. Lundgren, G. Heimer et al. 2001. *Slagen Dam - mäns våld mot kvinnor I jämställda Sverige - en omfångsundersökning* [hereinafter “National Survey”]. For the survey, an extensive questionnaire was sent to a random sample of 10,000 women aged 18-64; 7,000 responded.



### **A. Intimate-partner violence**

21. Women in Sweden are at the greatest risk of violence when they are in their own home, especially if their husbands or other intimate partners are present. According to the National Survey on Violence against Women, more than one third (35 per cent) of all women who were married to or had cohabited with a man at least once in their life had been subjected to violence by a partner; 11 per cent reported to have suffered violence at the hands of their present husband or cohabitant partner. Physical violence was the most common form of violence reported. Official statistics on reported crime paint a similar picture: the vast majority of assaults on women take place indoors and are perpetrated by a person with whom the victim is acquainted.

22. There is still a widespread perception in Sweden that “normal” Swedish men do not abuse their partners. Instead, the perpetrators are assumed to be somehow “deviant” - unemployed men without education, men who are alcoholics or have a criminal history, men of a non-Western cultural background, etc.

23. While men of low social status and men with high levels of previous criminal involvement indeed appear to be relatively overrepresented among perpetrators of intimate-partner violence,<sup>11</sup> they only constitute a small segment of the population. In absolute numbers, the vast majority of the perpetrators of intimate-partner violence are “ordinary” Swedish men. The National Survey on Violence against Women, for instance, demonstrated that the majority of women who were subjected to violence by their husbands or cohabitant partner lived with Swedish-born men who did not have an alcohol problem. Two thirds of these women reported that their partner had employment. Almost a quarter of the abusive husbands or cohabitant partners had even completed a university education.

24. Likewise, there are no typical victims. A large number of victims can be found among well-educated women with a career and a high income. One study from 2002, conducted by the National Council for Crime Prevention, calculated that there must be at least 25,000 gainfully employed women who had suffered violence at the hands of their current or former partner in the year prior to the study.<sup>12</sup>

25. Contrary to commonly held expectations, women’s public-sphere empowerment has not led to the eradication of intimate-partner violence in Sweden. A closer look at the dynamics of the phenomenon reveals why. Studies show that the perpetrators very often do not commit violence against their partners in a sudden spurt of rage. Instead, the use of physical violence, systematic emotional abuse, isolation strategies and other forms of controlling behaviour are combined in a strategy to gradually undermine the victim’s self-confidence, take away her autonomy and prove the perpetrator’s masculine superiority. Starting at a relatively minor level, the violence and controlling behaviour incrementally increases in intensity and the limits of what constitutes acceptable behaviour in the eyes of both perpetrator and victim are gradually shifted.

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<sup>11</sup> See e.g. National Council on Crime Prevention, Violence against women in intimate relationships. An overview (2002).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

At the end of a long normalization process, the victim often perceives the violence as the partner's justified reaction to her personal deficits. She becomes mentally unable to leave her tormentor despite her educational and economic autonomy. The fear of public shame - being regarded as a tragic failure in a country of supposed gender equality - is said to pose an additional obstacle that prevents especially well-educated and economically successful Swedish women from reporting intimate-partner violence.

26. Intimate-partner violence has disastrous long-term consequences that go far beyond the physical harm done to the women. The victims often develop depression or psychosomatic problems, including sleeping or eating disorders. The National Survey on Violence against Women also indicated that exposure to intimate-partner violence increases suicide risk. Another Swedish survey showed that more than two thirds (70 per cent) of all female mental patients who had suffered violence in their lifetime linked their psychiatric problems to the violence.<sup>13</sup>

27. The victim's children very often suffer severe negative consequences too - even before they are born. A study undertaken at the Uppsala Centre for Raped and Battered Women indicated that about 1.3 per cent of all women had been abused during or shortly after pregnancy.<sup>14</sup> Such antenatal abuse can cause miscarriages, premature labour or direct injuries to the foetus. Studies have also shown that women who had been subjected to violence during their pregnancy were more likely than non-abused women to give birth to a child with low birthweight.<sup>15</sup>

28. Children are likely to be aware of and witness violence committed against their mothers. UNICEF estimates that 46,000 children in Sweden are exposed to intimate-partner violence committed against their mother.<sup>16</sup> Exposure to violence within an important and intimate environment is a traumatic experience for children, who feel helpless, unable to control the situation and fear that a loved one might be killed. According to professionals, the child may suffer a post-traumatic stress disorder that can seriously affect the child's cognitive and emotional development. Children who grow up in a violent environment are more likely to become victims of child abuse themselves and are also more likely to continue the cycle of domestic violence (as perpetrators or victims) when they grew up.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> A. Bengtsson-Toops, 2004, *Vi Är Många: Övergrepp mot kvinnor som använder psykiatrin. En omfångsstudie. Hägersten: RSMH.*

<sup>14</sup> K. Stenson, 2004, *Men's Violence against Women - A Challenge in Antenatal Care*, Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.

<sup>15</sup> See C.C. Murphy et al., 2005, "Abuse: a risk factor for low birth weight? A meta analysis." *Canadian Medical Association Journal* 164.

<sup>16</sup> UNICEF, *Behind Closed Doors: The Impact of Domestic Violence on Children* (2006).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

## **B. Rape and sexual coercion**

29. Women in Sweden continue to face a substantial risk of sexual violence. The National Survey on Violence against Women indicates that more than a third (34 per cent) of all Swedish women have experienced sexual violence at least once since their fifteenth birthday; 7 per cent experienced such violence in the year prior to the survey. The most likely perpetrators are men with whom the victims have an intimate relationship. However, the perpetrators may also be colleagues, friends, neighbours, casual acquaintances or complete strangers. A shocking 5 per cent of all women who took part in the National Survey reported to have been forced into some form of sexual activity by a man with whom they did not have a prior sexual relationship.

30. Sexual violence has steadily risen over the last two decades despite all legislative attempts to strengthen women's protection. Between 1994 and 2004 alone, reported cases of sexual offences increased by 35 per cent; reported rapes and attempted rapes increased by 45 per cent.<sup>18</sup> In 2005, a new peak of almost 3,800 reported cases of completed or attempted rape was reached.<sup>19</sup> Experts and law enforcement officials informed me that this trend had continued in 2006.

31. Some have argued that the growth of sexual violence only reflects the general rise in violent crime that Sweden has experienced over the last decade. Official crime statistics demonstrate, however, that the increase in reported sexual offences has outpaced that of offences against life and health. Most experts I spoke with indicated that two developments were underlying the rise in reports of rape. Firstly, sexual violence may have become more visible. Government and civil society initiatives to raise awareness about sexual violence and improvements of the legal frameworks seem to have encouraged more women to come forward and report the crime. Secondly, and more worryingly, there also seems to be a genuine increase in the prevalence of sexual violence.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, a growing number of sexual offenders are boys or very young men. In 2005 alone, there were 187 cases of sexual crimes in which the suspect identified by the police was younger than 15 years old; 190 males suspected of sexual crimes were aged between 15 and 17 years.

## **C. Violence against women of immigrant, asylum-seeker or refugee background**

32. Swedish crime statistics are generally not broken down by the nationality or ethnicity of the perpetrators or victims. However, some studies suggest that women in Sweden with an immigrant, asylum-seeker or refugee background face a higher risk of violence than native

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<sup>18</sup> All statistics on reported crimes, prosecutions, convictions and restraining orders are based on Swedish National Council on Crime Prevention figures (available at [www.bra.se](http://www.bra.se)).

<sup>19</sup> This constitutes a rise of 44 per cent compared with 2004. Part of this drastic increase, however, has resulted from a legal reclassification of certain acts of sexual coercion and sexual exploitation as rape.

<sup>20</sup> See Swedish National Council on Crime Prevention, National Studies of Rapes Reported to the Police: English Summary (2005).

Swedish women.<sup>21</sup> Special vulnerabilities within this group of women result to some extent from their residence status. Immigrant or asylum-seeking women without a valid residence permit are often naturally reluctant to approach State authorities for protection and remain trapped in violent relationships. Women whose legal residence status in Sweden depends on their relationship with a Swedish national or permanent resident face similar problems.

33. A lack of familiarity with the Swedish language, institutions and law, sometimes coupled with a general distrust towards State authorities, may pose additional obstacles for non-native women. Women coming to Sweden on the basis of arranged marriages are particularly affected by these problems. Swedish privacy protection legislation prohibits the Swedish Migration Board, which processes entry visas, to match and link their computer files with local authorities. Therefore, the local authorities often do not know about foreign women moving into their community and cannot provide them with information on available language courses, legal literacy programmes or other integration support measures. Women who have no other connection to Sweden than their arranged husband and his family are therefore often isolated and vulnerable to entrapment in violent relationships.

34. While these types of vulnerabilities are generally not disputed and to some extent are also addressed by special legal provisions (see below), it is hotly debated whether cultural specificities contribute to the vulnerability of women with a foreign background. In this context, the phenomenon of “honour-related violence” has commanded much public attention, especially after the murder of Fadime Şahindal in January 2002.<sup>22</sup> The term - widely used by Swedish policymakers, researchers and practitioners without being clearly defined (which is a problem) - is generally employed to describe cases in which women or girls are subjected to, or threatened with, violence because they are seen as defying their family’s expectations of “honourable” social or sexual behaviour. Some also use the term to refer to cases concerning homosexual or bisexual boys and men suffering violence at the hands of homophobic family members. The Swedish National Police Board calculates that about 400 cases of honour-related violence come to the attention of the authorities every year.

35. Parts of the feminist movement in Sweden have cautioned about treating honour-related violence in isolation from other forms of violence against women, which in all its manifestations serves to uphold male superiority and subordinate women. Other feminists, including many women who are themselves from immigrant or refugee backgrounds, argue that women with an immigrant or refugee background have to live up to gender-specific expectations that are far more extensive than those directed towards native Swedish women; therefore, women’s oppression should not be generalized.

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<sup>21</sup> Swedish National Council on Crime Prevention, *Violence against women in intimate relationships: An Overview* (2002).

<sup>22</sup> Fadime, who grew up in a Kurdish family of Turkish origin, refused to enter into a marriage arranged by her family and had a Swedish boyfriend. She publicly spoke out against patriarchal oppression in immigrant families and also addressed the Parliament in this context. In January 2002 her father shot and killed her in the family’s home in Uppsala. He claimed to have committed the crime to restore the family’s honour.

36. From a pragmatic perspective, the decisive question is not why, but how honour-related violence is committed, because the means and methods of honour-related violence pose specific challenges to law enforcement authorities, social workers and other practitioners. Whereas perpetrators of many other forms of gender-based violence prevalent in Sweden tend to act alone to avoid social opprobrium, honour-related violence, in its most distinct form, distinguishes itself by the involvement of several family members (often condoned by other community members) who collude to enforce social norms shared by the group. This collective element makes it extremely difficult to separate the victim from actual or potential perpetrators, unless she is willing to break off all relations with her family and begin a new life outside her social frame of reference.

37. Honour-related violence cases in immigrant communities are also gaining a transnational dimension. The murder of 19-year-old Pela Atroshi, which was related to me personally by her younger sister Breen, illustrates the specificities. Pela and her family moved in 1995 from northern Iraq to Sweden. Unwilling to accept the extremely oppressive rule that her father exerted on her and her sisters, Pela temporarily left the family home. When rumours emerged that she had engaged in extramarital sex with a boyfriend, a family council of male relatives living in Sweden and in Australia decided that Pela had to die to cleanse the family honour. Under a pretext, Pela and her sister Breen were lured to Iraq in 1999, where one of her uncles murdered Pela before the eyes of her younger sister. Breen was only able to return unharmed to Sweden due to high-level political manoeuvring and the dedicated work of a special unit in the Swedish National Criminal Investigation Department that has unfortunately since been disbanded. She testified against the perpetrators and the Stockholm City Court was able to sentence two of her uncles living in Sweden for murder since the crime had been planned in Sweden. The grandfather and another uncle, both in Australia, as well as the father, who remained in Iraq, escaped prosecution. Breen lives today under a protected identity at an undisclosed location as threats to her life continue.

38. Some Swedish researchers also classify female genital mutilation as a form of honour-related violence since it purports to protect the victim's honour, but actually serves to control her sexuality in a violent and gender-discriminatory manner. The Government's Action Plan on Female Genital Mutilation considers that immigrant or refugee girls from countries where the practice is highly prevalent could be at risk. There are no reliable figures though on how many female genital mutilations are actually carried out in or organized from Sweden.

#### **D. Violence against Saami women**

39. The very north of Sweden is also home to about 20,000 Saami (Sami), an indigenous people that can also be found in northern Finland, Norway and north-western Russia. No survey has ever been conducted on violence against Saami women in Sweden. Anecdotal accounts I received from Saami women suggest that they may face significant levels of violence within their communities.

40. Saami culture has very different manifestations and it develops in a dynamic fashion. This being said, many Saami communities retain strong patriarchal structures and in some communities divorce is reportedly still not a socially accepted option to escape a violent

relationship. Saami women's groups also reported that Saami women exposed to violence are often also hesitant to obtain help from mainstream Swedish institutions and authorities, which they consider alien to their culture and language.

### **E. Violence in the context of prostitution**

41. In Sweden, including in official government documents, it is widely considered that prostitution constitutes in and of itself a form of male violence against women, regardless of the consent of the women involved.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, the Swedish Parliament has enacted the Law Prohibiting the Purchase of Sexual Services, which entered into force on 1 January 1999. The legislation regards women in prostitution as victims of male violence and therefore they do not face criminal sanctions under Swedish Law. However, anyone who purchases sexual relations for himself or a third person in exchange for payment is liable to a fine or imprisonment for up to six months.<sup>24</sup> The policy enjoys widespread public support in Sweden and the Government has dedicated considerable resources to enforce it. A special prostitution surveillance unit targets buyers of sexual services from prostitutes. Between 1999 and February 2006, more than 1,300 men were reported for buying sex. Many of the reported men pleaded guilty to avoid a lengthy trial. In other cases evidence incidentally collected in anti-trafficking investigations, which employed wiretap and other intensive surveillance techniques, was used to prove the transaction between the sex buyer and the woman.

42. The Government considers that the new legislation has considerably decreased the number of both women in prostitution and male sex buyers in Sweden. While most observers widely concur that street prostitution has decreased, some who are sceptical about the law have asserted that prostitution has merely shifted from the streets to less visible indoor locations or to escort services that make use of the Internet and mobile phones to arrange contacts between women and sex buyers. It remains unclear whether the Law has increased or decreased the buying of sex by Swedish men abroad. Government officials and other supporters of the Law expressed the hope that in the long run it would transform attitudes towards the buying of sex and the construction of male sexuality in general.

43. At the time of my visit, a comprehensive review of Sweden's prostitution policy, prepared by independent researchers, had yet to be undertaken. It is therefore not entirely certain what effect the policy has had on the types of violence often connected to prostitution. The

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<sup>23</sup> See Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications, Prostitution and Trafficking in Human Beings: Fact Sheet, April 2005: "In Sweden, prostitution is regarded as an aspect of male violence against women and children ... In the legislation on gross violation of a woman's integrity (*Kvinnofridslagstiftningen*), the Swedish Government and Riksdag (the Parliament) defined prostitution as a form of male violence against women and children."

In a response to a draft version of this report, the Swedish Government clarified that Swedish penal legislation does not regard women in prostitution to be victims of male violence.

<sup>24</sup> The production of commercial pornography remains legal. Interlocutors explained that this seeming contradiction is due to the Swedish Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression, which also protects pornography involving consenting adults.

National Criminal Investigation Department and the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings have both come to the conclusion that the trafficking of women from abroad has become less profitable for the traffickers, since it is more difficult to establish contact between potential buyers and foreign victims. Human trafficking flows to Sweden have therefore reportedly decreased.

44. However, local women who remain in street prostitution, especially women addicted to heroin and other hard drugs, report increased vulnerability to violence and infection with sexually transmitted diseases. Now often operating alone to avoid detection by the police, women in prostitution can no longer offer each other information on and protection against the so-called “problem buyers”. Since the overall number of men buying sex in the streets has diminished, drug-addicted women are also under much more pressure to accept those clients, who are known to be violent or demand high-risk sexual practices, so that they can finance the immense costs (up to SKr 2,000 per day) of their daily drug consumption.

45. In the first years of its abolitionist prostitution policy, the Swedish Government largely neglected to address the situation of drug-addicted women in prostitution. This problem has somewhat improved in recent years. There are now institutions in the big cities, such as the NAVET centre in Malmö, which provide support and advice to women in prostitution. They also offer access to drug treatment programmes. However, waiting periods are said to be far too long.

#### **IV. STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY INITIATIVES WITH RESPECT TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

46. States have an international obligation to exercise due diligence to prevent violence against women, prosecute and punish the perpetrators, compensate the victims and protect women from all forms of violence. Sweden’s efforts to comply with these obligations are quite advanced. Nevertheless, in some areas significant improvements are still possible and necessary. As I emphasized in my thematic report addressing the due diligence standard (E/CN.4/2006/61), which I have presented to the Human Rights Council, States have done relatively little with respect to their obligation to prevent violence against women by adopting measures to transform patriarchal gender roles and hierarchies. This also applies to Sweden where significant gains have been achieved towards gender equality in the public sphere. The most effective and model measures so far undertaken by the Swedish Government are in the areas of protection and prosecution. While interventions to protect and punish may have transformative impact, innovative strategies of prevention remain a challenge that need to be met to make the highly valued norm of gender equality an uncompromised reality.

##### **A. Prosecution and punishment of perpetrators**

47. In 1998 and 2005, Swedish Penal Law saw major reforms to enhance the protection of women against violence. A number of innovative norms that must be regarded as good practices have been enacted into law. In 1998, for instance, the offence of “gross violation of integrity” was introduced into the Penal Code. A person who commits crimes such as assault or unlawful coercion against another person with whom he has or has had a close relationship is liable to imprisonment for between six months and six years, if the acts form part of a repeated violation of the victim’s integrity and are suited to severely damage the victim’s self-confidence. If the

acts were committed by a man against his present/former wife or co-habitant partner, the man is guilty of a gross violation of a woman's integrity and liable to the same punishment. These criminal provisions encapsulate the peculiar nature of protracted intimate-partner violence situations and serve to ensure that the criminal sanction fits the severity of the crime.

48. The number of reported cases of gross violations of integrity/women's integrity has steadily increased: 2,690 cases in 2005 (538 reported offences concerned gross violations of integrity and 2,152 were for gross violations of a woman's integrity). In 2005 the overall clearance rate for gross violations of integrity/woman's integrity was only 50 per cent, of which 70 per cent were prosecuted. Observers point out that some police stations have still not adopted the proactive policing practices and meticulous recording routines that are necessary to prove systematic patterns of violence occurring over a long period of time and "build" cases of gross violation of a woman's integrity. For example, police officers often fail to videotape a victim's testimony immediately after an assault, even though it is well known that many victims refuse to eventually testify against their partners in court because they either fear their tormentor or develop a false sense of loyalty to him (the so-called battered person syndrome).

49. With respect to sexual violence, there are similar discrepancies between the high quality of the existing penal law framework and its actual implementation. The penal law provision on rape extends to non-consensual penetrative intercourse and also to other acts that are comparable to such intercourse, bearing in mind the nature of the violation and the general circumstances. Moreover, since 2005 a person can also be convicted of rape if he inappropriately exploits the fact that the victim is in a helpless state due to, for example, unconsciousness, intoxication, drug influence or mental disturbance. The latter amendment facilitates the prosecution of rapes using so-called date-rape drugs, because the prosecution no longer has to prove that the perpetrator himself administered the drug to render his victim helpless.

50. In practice, however, the majority of reported cases still result in impunity for the perpetrators. In 2005, the alleged perpetrators of only 835 cases of rape or aggravated rape were prosecuted, a mere 32 per cent of all cases reported in 2004. The approximate conviction rate for 2005 (also based on cases reported in 2004) was even lower, at only 8 per cent.

51. Physical evidence of sexual violence such as vaginal lacerations or DNA traces often disappears within hours. Many cases therefore do not even reach the prosecution stage due to a lack of evidence, a situation that could have been avoided if the police or medical personnel who had first contact with the victim had been better trained in gathering and recording evidence of sexual violence. In response to this problem, some Swedish cities have taken the positive step of creating emergency units for rape victims that are specialized in gathering and documenting evidence while providing immediate care to the traumatized victim.

52. Modules on gender equality and gender sensitivity form an important part of mandatory training for Swedish judges, prosecutors and police officers. These training programmes have helped to change the gender-based perspectives, norms and biases that often have an impact on the investigation, prosecution and adjudication of gender-related crimes. Nevertheless, some problems persist. Women's groups reported that some justice sector officials still display a gender bias in contested sexual violence cases. I was informed, for example, about a 2004 decision of the Sollentuna District Court concerning a 22-year-old man who had had a sexual relationship of three months' duration with a 13-year-old girl. The man met the girl through a



dating site for young teenagers and lied to her about his own age. The Court held that the man could not have known that the girl was younger than the legal age of consent and found him not guilty of a sexual offence.

53. Sweden has taken special measures to prosecute and punish violence specifically affecting women with a foreign background. As early as 1982, it passed the Act on the Prohibition of the Circumcision of Women and further strengthened it in 1999. The legislation prohibits, regardless of the consent of the victim or her parents, all operations on the external female genital organs, which are designed to mutilate or produce other permanent changes in them. The crime, which is punishable by a minimum of two years' imprisonment, has been made exempt from the principle of dual criminality. A person with a connection to Sweden can be prosecuted in Sweden for involvement in acts of female genital mutilation committed in another country, even if that country does not prohibit female genital mutilation.<sup>25</sup> In June 1999, the Gothenburg District Court convicted a Swedish national of Somali origin for having authorized and participated in the female genital mutilation of his 14-year-old daughter, even though the acts had taken place in Somalia. The man was sentenced to four years of imprisonment. The decision was upheld on appeal.

54. In 2004, Sweden introduced changes to enhance the protection of women and girls against forced and early marriages conducted in Sweden and abroad. The legal age of marriage is 18 years and exceptions are only possible with a special permit issued only under very narrow circumstances. Child marriages and forced marriages that have been concluded abroad are not valid in Sweden. There is no legislation specifically criminalizing early or forced marriages, but Penal Code provisions on unlawful coercion, illegal threats, sexual crimes and trafficking can be applied. The penal legislation is currently under review.

## **B. Protection of women at risk of violence**

55. Women at risk of violence have recourse to various protective instruments and institutions in Sweden. The Act on Restraining Orders allows a woman at risk to obtain a court order prohibiting a potential perpetrator of violence, persecution or serious harassment to approach or otherwise contact her. Violations can be sanctioned with fines or imprisonment of up to one year. If special circumstances indicate a clear risk that the person served with the restraining order will commit a crime against the life, health, freedom or integrity of his cohabiting partner, the potential perpetrator can be ordered to temporarily leave and stay away from the couple's joint domicile. This provision enhances women's protection and is an expression of the basic principle of justice according to which negative consequences of violence ought to be borne by the perpetrator and not his victim.

56. Restraining orders are meant to prevent future crimes that are anticipated on the basis of a forward-looking risk assessment. In practice, however, the authorities very often issue restraining orders only in reaction to crimes already committed, especially in cases involving

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<sup>25</sup> The double criminality requirement has also been waived for sexual offences committed abroad against a minor younger than 18 years, if the perpetrator has a connection to Sweden.

intimate-partner violence.<sup>26</sup> The National Police Board has acknowledged the problem and in 2005 published new guidelines on risk and threat assessment relating to domestic violence and restraining orders.

57. There are also continued problems with the enforcement of restraining orders. It is estimated that at least one in three restraining orders are breached and repeat breaches are not uncommon.<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately, the continuous and active follow-up work, which is necessary to ensure that restraining orders are respected, often is put back behind other policing priorities. Police often do not have the personnel resources to document all detected breaches and initiate sanctions proceedings. Against this backdrop, the question has been considered in Sweden whether to employ electronic devices to monitor the movement of persons subject to a restraining order. However, the practical feasibility and effectiveness of using such intrusive measures on a large scale seems to be questionable.<sup>28</sup>

58. Restraining orders, even if diligently issued and properly enforced, are only one part of a comprehensive protection strategy. Victims must also have access to safe and adequate shelter, if they cannot (or do not want to) remain in their home. According to the Social Services Act, the municipal social welfare services “should” (not “shall”) strive to ensure that victims of crime are given help and support and specifically take into account that women victims of intimate-partner violence need help and support. However, only a minority of Sweden’s municipalities operate a shelter that can provide emergency support to women exposed to violence. Most municipalities rely on a national network of about 150 non-governmental women’s shelters. Apart from often being the only option available, non-governmental women’s shelters are frequently also the preferred option of women exposed to violence since they offer anonymous support and the victims do not have to decide immediately whether to get the State authorities involved.

59. Some of the non-governmental shelters employ paid staff. Most rely on dedicated volunteers. Many shelters have to operate under severe budget constraints, because a large number of municipalities fail to fund the non-governmental institutions they use in order to fulfil their own legal responsibilities. A 2005 survey compiled by Amnesty International found that more than a third of Sweden’s municipalities give no or only symbolic funding to women’s shelters.<sup>29</sup> The same survey also showed that many municipalities had not established coordinated inter-agency approach to violence against women based on meaningful and periodically reviewed local action plans. Many municipalities also failed to provide adequate information material on available assistance and protection resources.

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<sup>26</sup> Swedish National Council on Crime Prevention, *Restraining Orders: An Analysis of the Law and its Application* (2003).

<sup>27</sup> Swedish National Council on Crime Prevention, *Reinforcing restraining orders using electronic devices* (2005).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Amnesty International, “Not a priority Issue” - A Review of the Work of Swedish Municipalities to Combat Men’s Violence against Women (2005).

60. In 2006, a government-commissioned inquiry into the shelter situation came to similar conclusions, finding that support to women exposed to violence does not seem to be a priority to many municipalities. The Inquiry Panel recommended that women exposed to violence and their children should be legally entitled to receive adequate support (including access to shelter). It also advised that municipalities should assess each case in accordance with national guidelines and that a fatality review be carried out whenever a woman dies from violence, so as to identify remaining deficiencies in the public system.

61. At the time I finalized my report, it was not clear whether and how the Inquiry Panel's recommendations would be implemented. Hopefully, the Government will recognize the essential role of non-governmental shelters in the protection framework and ensure that their core activities are funded. In 2006, the Government already took an ad hoc step in the right direction by earmarking SKr 81.5 million to directly support women's shelters.

62. Reforms in the institutional protection framework also have to address the situation of women with special needs. In recent years, the shelter movement has created specialized institutions for young women and teenage girls exposed to violence. Other groups with special needs are still underserved. For example, women with severe alcohol or drug problems are usually not given access to existing shelters if they face violence. Unless they agree to enter an addiction rehabilitation programme (and actually find a place), they face a protection gap. Therefore, I was pleased to learn that the Swedish Association of Women's Shelters (SKR) has established an open house in Göteborg, where these women can find safe shelter without being required to enter a rehabilitation programme.

63. Additional progress also has to be made with regard to the particular protection needs of women facing honour-related violence, who often encounter particular security risks because of the collective nature of the threat against them. The county administrative boards estimate that sheltered housing facilities with enhanced security arrangements are needed for 150-300 women facing honour-related violence.<sup>30</sup> So far, the Government has created just over 100 places. Non-governmental initiatives such as the Somayah Women's Shelter, which I visited, or the Terrafem Network, have filled the gap.

64. The authorities often resort to witness protection practices normally used in cases involving organized criminal syndicates to provide long-term protection for young women and girls at risk of honour-related violence. Some victims are given housing in undisclosed locations or even receive completely new identities. Yet, a comprehensive long-term strategy is still lacking to address the specific needs of young women and girls who are suddenly deprived of their family support network. Women at risk of honour-related violence often need hands-on guidance and support on how to start a new life. Furthermore, special security arrangements have to be made to ensure that young women and girls can safely maintain the contact with those family members that do not want to harm them. Unfortunately, the authorities do not always seem to be willing to dedicate the necessary resources. Breen Atroshi, the sister of murdered Pela Atroshi, for instance, told me that the authorities are not willing to provide her with security arrangements necessary to meet with her mother - contrary to what was promised when she agreed to testify against her sister's murderers.

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<sup>30</sup> CEDAW/C/SWE/7, supra at note 4, para. 108.

65. Sweden has introduced specific legislation to address the vulnerabilities of non-Swedish women stemming from their non-permanent resident status. Under the Aliens Act, a foreign woman who holds a temporary residence permit that depends on her marriage to a Swedish national or a permanent residence can only receive a permanent residence permit after two years of marriage. This dependency can trap women in violent relationships. For this reason, a special provision has been introduced into the Aliens Act which allows women to receive a residence permit of her own in cases where the relationship with the partner ended before two years had passed because she or her children suffered substantial violence or other violations of freedom and integrity at the hands of her partner. It is sufficient that the victim document the violence through reports from a hospital or a shelter; she does not have to take the often difficult - and sometimes dangerous - step of reporting her former partner to the police in order to legalize her status. Women's organizations and local officials have informed me that this excellent norm is unfortunately still underused, because foreign women exposed to violence are either not aware of its existence or are afraid to pursue this option.

66. On 1 October 2004, a new provision was introduced into the Aliens Act that allows the authorities to provide victims of human trafficking and other crimes with a temporary residence permit for the duration of the criminal process. The victim is also entitled to social security benefits. At the time of my visit, 23 foreigners, all women, had received such a permit. Additional amendments were about to be introduced to bring Swedish laws into compliance with European Union Directive 2004/81 on residence permits for trafficking victims and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, which Sweden has signed but not yet ratified.

67. In March 2006, Sweden reformed its refugee legislation substantially, enhancing the protection of women coming to Sweden due to a well-founded fear of gender-related persecution. In the past, women who feared persecution solely on the basis of gender were not entitled to refugee status; they could only obtain a subsidiary protection status. The new legislation abolishes this two-tier system and expands the refugee definition to include women and men who have a well-founded fear of persecution in their country of origin because of their gender or sexual orientation. Unfortunately, some problems may persist with regard to cases involving gender-related persecution by non-State actors (i.e. the typical cases). The official commentary on the new refugee legislation indicates that it does not suffice that a private actor persecutes a woman due to her gender. In addition, the State of origin has to fail in adequately protecting the woman precisely due to her gender (or one of the grounds outlined in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees: race, nationality, etc.). A woman who has suffered gender-related persecution by a non-State actor because the State cannot protect her due to lack of resources or inefficiency would therefore not be regarded as a refugee. This interpretation of the law, which would introduce a double persecution requirement, diverges from the Guidelines on Gender-Related Persecution of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).<sup>31</sup> It is to be hoped that Swedish officials and courts will not follow this restrictive interpretation.

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. UNHCR, Guidelines on International Protection: Gender-Related Persecution within the context of article 1A (2) of the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, HRC/GIP/02/01 (2002), para. 21.

## **V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

68. Sweden has firmly established a strong equal opportunity framework, which has led to very impressive advances towards the achievement of equal opportunities for women and men in the public sphere. At the same time, however, unequal power relations between women and men in Sweden continue to be fuelled by deeply rooted patriarchal gender norms, which will gradually erode provided that the Government and society at large sustain their strong commitment to transform relations between the sexes.

69. Owing to the survival of these hidden social norms, there are still significant levels of violence against women in Sweden. The ongoing rise in sexual violence is a particular matter of concern. The perpetrators and victims can be found in all segments and at all levels of society, although some women, including immigrant, refugee and minority women as well as women in prostitution, face particular vulnerabilities.

70. Overall, the Government and society appear to be determined to combat and eradicate violence against women. The penal law framework addressing violence against women is excellent, but low prosecution and conviction rates give a clear indication that its implementation must be further improved. Some deficiencies in protecting women exposed to violence remain and a number of municipalities clearly have to raise the standards of their protection policies. There is room for further innovative strategies to effectively respond to the remaining inequalities. Such strategies would need to address not only the reproduction of gender hierarchies in the private sphere, but would also have to remove the existing obstacles to the equal participation of immigrants and refugees in society.

71. In view of the measures already taken and the remaining deficiencies, I would like to make the following recommendations:

**(a) To the Government:**

- (i) Enhance and reinforce the institutional framework on gender equality by:**
- Strengthening efforts to establish and implement gender budgeting practices and expand them to all levels of State institutions;
  - Broadening the competences of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman to allow for addressing individual complaints from persons exposed to gender-related violence;
  - Developing guidelines and indicators to enhance the institutional capacity of municipalities in better fulfilling their obligation to protect women;
  - Considering ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings;

**(ii) Address root causes of violence against women by:**

- **Strengthening efforts to address the perpetuation of unequal gender power relations in the private sphere, including through measures at the school and preschool levels, to foster the development of male and female identities that break with notions of inequality and use of force;**
- **Strengthening efforts, including those outlined in the National Action Plan to Combat Racism, Xenophobia, Homophobia and Discrimination, to protect persons belonging to ethnic or religious minorities from discrimination in the labour market, the justice sector and other key areas. Special measures should be considered to facilitate the equal participation of women and men with an immigrant, refugee or minority background in the educational system and the labour market. The Government should also strongly consider signing and ratifying the International Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families;**
- **Acknowledging the diverse voices within different cultural groups and supporting those that respect and promote women's rights within their communities. Gender equality policies and efforts should avoid cultural essentialism and stigmatization by promoting gender equality as a universal culture that has emerged in response to a universal history of gender inequality;**

**(iii) Prosecute and punish perpetrators of violence against women by:**

- **Pursuing a policy of zero tolerance of gender-based violence and sexual harassment, particularly in law enforcement. The police should adopt a proactive approach in investigating and documenting cases of intimate-partner violence, especially those amounting to a gross violation of a woman's integrity. Good practices in this regard should be documented and disseminated;**
- **Ensuring specialized training for the police, medical personnel and other professionals who may have first contact with women exposed to violence on how to gather and document evidence in gender-based violence cases;**
- **Fostering international cooperation in cases of violence against women with a transnational dimension, especially honour-related violence, and consider re-establishing a special unit on such violence in the National Criminal Investigation Department which can coordinate Sweden's work with that of other countries. At the same time, local police and justice sector personnel should**

**continue to receive special training on the specific challenges related to particular manifestations of violence against women in different communities;**

**(iv) Protect women at known risk of violence by:**

- Issuing restraining orders against potential perpetrators of violence against women on the basis of a comprehensive, forward-looking risk assessment to prevent violence before it occurs. The police need to dedicate adequate resources to follow up restraining orders, detect breaches and initiate sanctions proceedings. Breaches should be consistently sanctioned with appropriate penalties;**
- Implementing the recommendations of the Inquiry on Social Services Support for Women Exposed to Violence. In particular, the Social Services Act should be amended to give women at risk of violence a legally enforceable claim against their local municipality to have their case comprehensively assessed and to receive all necessary protection and support (including, if needed, access to a safe and adequate shelter place);**
- Recognizing, along with the municipalities, the important role of non-governmental women's shelters and providing them with adequate funding for their core activities. Particular attention should be paid to the protection requirements of women with special needs, including women with substance-abuse problems, physically or mentally disabled women, young women and girls, and elderly women;**
- Developing a long-term protection and support strategy for women under threat or at continued risk of violence, including providing them with access to housing with suitable security arrangements and special security provisions to allow for their contact with non-hostile family members. Guidance and psychological counselling should also be made available for victims in enabling them to establish a sustainable and safe life on their own;**
- Offering special protection and support to all women who remain in prostitution. Existing projects to support women in prostitution with strong substance-abuse problems should be maintained and expanded. If they choose, these women should be provided with immediate access to a drug addiction rehabilitation programme;**

**(v) Expand the knowledge base on violence against women and related factors by:**

- **Strengthening efforts to implement the Official Statistics Ordinance's requirement of sex-disaggregated statistics. Unless there are special reasons for not doing so, sets of statistical information should be broken down by sex consistently in all tables and diagrams with sex as a primary and overall classification;**
- **Commissioning a comprehensive study, conducted by independent researchers, of the Swedish policy on prostitution and its impact on human trafficking and other types of violence often occurring in the context of prostitution. The study should also consider the policy's long-term effects and its potential impacts outside of Sweden;**
- **Commissioning a study on violence against Saami women, preferably through a joint initiative with the Governments of other countries with a Saami population;**

**(b) To the municipalities and non-State actors:**

- **All municipalities, supported by the county administrative boards, should adopt action plans on violence against women that lay down clear objectives, identify shortcomings, suggest relevant measures and point out areas for development and enhanced cooperation between authorities and civil society. The action plans should be tailored to the local situation taking into account the specific manifestations of violence against women actually occurring in the municipality. Adequate resources must be dedicated to implement the plans. The plans and their state of implementation should be annually reviewed;**
- **The women's movement should continue and strengthen efforts to integrate other constituencies into the struggle to achieve gender equality. Men who are genuinely willing to participate in appropriate initiatives should always be given the option to do so;**
- **The media, as set forth in the Beijing Platform for Action, must avoid gender stereotypes, show sensitivity for the needs of victims and their families when reporting on violence against women, and base reports on empirical facts. The media, in collaboration with other civil society actors, should work towards overcoming discriminatory social attitudes towards women.**

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