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Ministry of the Environment

Swedish policies to combat climate change

The Swedish Government considers climate change to be one of the major environmental and political challenges of this century. This is reflected both in Swedish national policies and Sweden's efforts to contribute to an international future climate regime post 2012.

Sweden has a commitment with respect to the Kyoto Protocol and the EU burden sharing agreement according to which emissions by 2008-2012 should not be higher than a maximum of four percent above levels of 1990. One point of departure of the Swedish climate strategy is that Sweden is to set an example by showing that it is possible to combine proactive climate policies and economic growth. Sweden has adopted a national short term target stating that by 2008-2012 emissions should be four percent lower than in 1990. Greenhouse gas emissions in Sweden were seven percent lower in 2005 than in 1990. During the same period the economy has grown by 36 per cent. Furthermore, Sweden has one of the lowest emissions levels per capita among industrialized countries.

The success of Swedish climate policy is based on the use of economic instruments. In particular the carbon dioxide tax, which Sweden, as the first country in the world, introduced in 1991. Energy taxes have also been of some importance in limiting climate impact in a socially and economically efficient manner. The carbon dioxide tax is based on the carbon content and net contribution to greenhouse gases of various fuels and thus the tax is relatively high on coal, lower on natural gas whereas biofuels such as wood and ethanol are exempt from the tax.

These economic instruments have contributed to increasing the use of biofuels and district heating in the heating sector. Moreover, emissions from households and waste have been reduced as a result of efficient economic instruments. Swedish electricity production is largely carbon neutral since it is based on hydro and nuclear power. Sweden has a system of green electricity certificates to stimulate the production of electricity from renewable sources, such as wind power, hydro power and combined heat and power production (CHP) based on biofuels.

However, further challenges remain, in particular in reducing emissions from the transport sector. The Swedish government has made investments to contribute to research and development on environmentally friendly cars. In order to stimulate the use of environmentally friendly and fuel-efficient cars the Swedish government has introduced a rebate which is granted to private individuals purchasing a new green car. Moreover, delivering a car for scrapping is possible without charge. Product liability has been introduced. Starting on August 1st 2007 Stockholm will reintroduce a congestion tax.

The public sector is to take the lead and set a good example in order to accelerate developments amongst the public and for businesses. Thus there are requirements for a share of 85 percent of green cars in public procurement and leasing of cars. In addition, there is a requirement that at least 25 per cent of emergency vehicles are to be green cars. Measures are taken to improve energy efficiency in the public sector.

The Swedish government has taken a number of initiatives in order to increase involvement of the entire society in the endeavour of combating climate change, in particular to have broader and deeper cooperation with business and industry, the research community as well as the political sphere. These initiatives involve the setting up of a Commission on Sustainable Development, a Scientific Council on Climate Issues and a Climate Committee to review climate policy. One result of these initiatives will be a new climate policy bill which the Government intends to present to Parliament in 2008.

The work of the Commission on Sustainable Development will be action-oriented and focus on essential conditions to create sustainable development, analyse obstacles to sustainable development and develop cross-sectoral action strategies.

The Scientific Council on Climate Issues is to contribute to a scientific assessments to the government bill on climate policy in 2008. One important task is to provide scientific documentation and recommendations for future commitments to be made by the EU and Sweden, in particular what objective or objectives should apply to Swedish climate policy at both national and international level.

The Government has invited all parties represented in the Swedish Parliament to take part in a Climate Committee to review Swedish climate policy. The aim is to achieve broad political support for future Swedish action on climate policy. Its remit includes a broad review of Swedish climate policy and to assess the possibility of achieving the national target for the period 2008–2012 and to shed light on what additional action may be required.

Sweden works seriously with national climate policy, both in the short and long term. However, with a population of some 9 million, Swedish contribution to annual global emissions of greenhouse gases is nearly negligible. Therefore, Sweden believes that international co-operation is of

decisive importance in the effort to combat climate change. Sweden aims to take a leading position in developing a new climate regime after 2012. Sweden will hold the presidency of the EU in the autumn of 2009 – a point in time which may turn out to be crucial for a global climate regime post 2012.

Recently, on June 11-14 2007, the Swedish Minister of the Environment, Mr. Andreas Carlgren, hosted an informal meeting in Riksgården, Sweden for some 27 environment ministers to discuss climate change and a new climate regime. Discussions focused both on long term issues regarding principles and elements on a future climate change regime, as well as concrete issues related to the preparations for the important meeting in Indonesia. As stated in the Chairman's summary minister there was broad consensus that the forthcoming negotiations in Bali should establish a Road Map with a timetable and concrete steps on the future regime with a view to reaching agreement in 2009. Ministers discussed how the elements of a future international regime can be brought together and discussed a package that would include:

- Adaptation measures, to be adopted by all countries, but in particular for poor and vulnerable developing countries;
- More ambitious and legally-binding emission reduction targets for all developed countries;
- Enhanced mitigation actions by developing countries;
- Further action on the deforestation issue;
- Managing unintended consequences of adaptation and mitigation policies;
- Technology development, diffusion and commercialization, in order to support mitigation, adaptation, and more generally, decarbonisation of our economies.
- Investment, incentives, financing, capacity-building, awareness and education.

Ministers also discussed a shared vision for a future regime. The Chairman's summary underlined that the world needs an effective, fair and comprehensive multilateral regime based on concerted international efforts.

More information on

- Swedish Ministry of the Environment
 - Midnight Sun Dialogue Meeting, 11-14 June 2007
 - Swedish report to the UNFCCC (KP) on demonstrable progress
 - Fourth national assessment report to the UNFCCC
- and more can be found at: Swedish Government
<http://www.sweden.gov.se>