

Opening remarks on OHCHR regional roundtable on reshaping the narratives on migration in Asia and the Pacific 17 December 2019.

Good morning all distinguished participants,

My name is Charlotta Bredberg, and I work at the Swedish Embassy managing Sweden's regional strategy for development cooperation in Asia and the Pacific.

I'm honoured to have been invited to this first regional round table on migration in Asia and the Pacific organised by OHCHR and I am very happy to be here at the launch of the new tool: ***“Seven Key Elements on Building Human rights-based narratives on Migrants and Migration”***.

Migration is not new.

Already 1.75 million years ago our pre-humans the so called the homo erectus started to move out of Africa and across Eurasia.

Early humans migrated due to factors such as changing climate and landscape and inadequate water and food supply. Later people migrated for reasons of colonialization, labor and refugee migration. During the first and second world war, persecution of minorities and genocide had a huge impact on migration.

Migration will remain.

Poverty and in-equalities within and between countries contribute to migration.

Migration affects the global development and global development affects migration.

The Asia-Pacific region is extremely vulnerable to climate change. If the global temperature increases to 3 degrees, as today's lifestyles and emission levels predict, sea level rise and extreme weather events will make it impossible for many people to stay where they are currently living.

Low lying Island nations will soon disappear, and coastal areas will be under water.

Displacement and migration will increase to new scales. People in already vulnerable situations will be the most affected.

Migration is complex.

Many countries in the Asia-Pacific region are dependent on migrant workers. They contribute to their prosperity and economic development. (e.g. Thailand)

We live in the times of globalisation and social media where information travels very fast.

A lot of media focus on migration tends to be negative. How can that be changed? How can the positive contributions from migration become more visible and exposed?

Political motives are intentionally building on people's fear to legitimise restrictions on migration. Religious and ethnic intolerance and hate fuels populism and fundamentalism.

The questions for today's round table are

- how we can deal with migration in a human-rights friendly way and reshape the narratives.
- How can we counterbalance hate speech, negative stereotypes and discrimination used against migrants?

Sweden's role is to strengthen the positive development effects of migration and to use the capacity of migrants and role of migrants as actors for development. A human rights-based approach, gender equality and the perspectives of the poor form the basis for Sweden's work on migration.

Migrants, refugees and internally displaced persons are target groups for support within several Swedish strategies for development cooperation. Sweden places a specific focus on migrants in vulnerable situations and with specific needs as rights holders.

Sweden believes that inclusive sustainable development is the foundation for achieving the Agenda 2030. The approach to migration is critical in how these goals will be achieved.

Sweden is active to ensure that states implement migration related commitments of Agenda 2030. Sweden supports the Global Compact for Migrants and took active part in its development.

Today's round table is about how to counter hate speech, stereotypes, stigma and discrimination used against migrants.

There is a delicate balance between freedom of expression at one hand, and restrictions on freedom of expression to counter hate speech, intentional negative stereotyping and disinformation about people and groups of people on the other.

How can we navigate this fine line and make sure that human rights of everyone are protected and respected?

I know that in this room there is a lot of expertise and experience in working with these issues and it is going to be very interesting to listen and learn from all you all.

I really look forward to taking part in rich and insightful discussions today.

Thank you for your attention.