The Permanent Mission of Sweden presents its compliments to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and with reference to the OHCHR's note of 13 January 2011, regarding "Preventable maternal mortality and morbidity and human rights: follow-up to Council resolution 11/8", has the honour to submit following information from Sweden in attachment.

The Permanent Mission of Sweden avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.

Geneva, 4 April 2011

OHCHR

GENEVA

OHCHR REGISTRY

- 4 AVR. 2011

Recipients: [Redacted]
OHCHR report on good or effective practices in adopting a human rights-based approach to eliminating maternal mortality and morbidity – Experiences from Sweden’s International Development Cooperation

a) how initiatives embody a human rights-based approach

Sweden’s work to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity takes place within and is characterized by the inextricable interlinkages between maternal health and the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Sweden thus considers that maternal health is a matter of human rights and gender equality. Maternal deaths in low income countries are largely due to inadequate attention to women’s health, and to repressive structures that prevent women and young people from being able to exercise their rights to health and well-being and to exert influence over their own lives and futures based on personal capabilities, choices and preferences. Such choices include being able to decide if and when to have sex, and to determine if and when to have children, how many children and to space births.

High maternal mortality and morbidity rates are also due to lack of access to adequate SRHR services such as sexuality information and education, contraceptives, skilled attendance at childbirth and pre-natal, delivery and post-natal health care, as well as to safe and legal abortion.

b) elements of initiatives that are succeeding in achieving reductions in maternal mortality and morbidity through such an approach

Changing health practices among young people
Support from Sida to IPPF’s El Alto youth project in Bolivia (44 million US-dollars over four years) is changing sexual and reproductive health practices by providing services such as voluntary counseling, condom distribution and clinical health services to young people living on the street. The project targets groups with high rates of unwanted pregnancy, unsafe abortions and sexually-transmitted infections including HIV.

c) ways in which similar initiatives could give effect more fully to a human rights-based approach

As in this project, it is essential to target groups that can be particularly vulnerable to maternal mortality and morbidity. This includes poor women, particularly young women and adolescent girls. It is also essential to ensure access to contraceptives and that their use is voluntary and results from an expressed demand on the part of those who use them. It is also important to listen to and provide sexual and reproductive health counseling for women and young people as well as men, and to recognize and respect their right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health.