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WG3 New Goals meeting 2 November 11.30,

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Ladies and gentlemen! On behalf of the Minister for Higher Education and Research Helene Hellmark Knutsson I want to welcome you to Stockholm and KTH Open Lab. We are very happy to be able to host this meeting. The Bologna process and European cooperation is at the crossroads to the future. The choices we make now will influence the European Higher Education Area for long time ahead.

The Bologna process has a magnificent history, with the achievement of creating a EHEA, a common framework for Quality assurance, and a common three cycle system as only perhaps the prime examples. But the process has in my view slowed down considerably. And because the Bologna process has proven to be such a good tool for European cooperation from Lisbon to Vladivostok, it is especially important that we find new goals to give the cooperation new energy.

Education and especially higher education are becoming more and more important for securing democracy, tolerance and welfare. The importance of higher education for industry and innovation are well known. With a rapidly changing job market it is central that the Higher Education institutions, as well as supporting structures in the form of regulations and funding, follow the development in the labour market and society as a whole. We and the

Higher Education institutions themselves need to think ahead and create future safe frameworks for higher education.

For the Swedish government, higher education and research represent central aspects of building a strong, democratic society. There are big challenges facing the world today – migration flows, climate change, antibiotic resistance and the supply of energy, just to mention a few. These challenges are global, and we need to work together to meet them. The Swedish government is convinced that accessible higher education and investments in research will help us meet these challenges.

Internationalisation plays a vital role. The challenges we face cross borders, and we need to work together in order to face them. The Bologna Process is a unique platform to do so.

I would like to share with you the Swedish government's priorities in Higher Education and research in some of the key areas affecting the Bologna process. These are; our research policy, the expansion of higher education, the current migration situation, Life-long learning, digitalisation and finally internationalisation.

At the Ministry of Education and Research, we are currently preparing the upcoming research bill, which will be introduced to the Riksdag – the Swedish Parliament – in November. It will focus on meeting global challenges concerning health, climate change and digitalisation, as well as national challenges: building a sustainable society and improving the Swedish educational system. The bill will also address increased equality in academia Today, only 25 % of the Professors in Sweden are women. This needs to

change, and the Government has recently introduced new national goals for the appointment of Professors: In the year 2030, 50 % of the new Professors should be women.

Moving on to higher education. The Swedish Government's goal is to make higher education of high quality available and accessible all around Sweden. We are currently in the midst of expanding higher education across Sweden. Simultaneously, we are working to increase quality in higher education with an emphasis on humanities, social sciences, and teacher education. When more people have access to higher education, we raise the level of knowledge in our population, while at the same time meeting the changing needs of the labour market. Life-long learning needs to be a genuine possibility for more people, as the labour market changes and new demands arise. As society changes, we need to make sure that the possibilities to learn follow.

This becomes increasingly important since Sweden has welcomed many new inhabitants and citizens during the last couple of years. Many of them already have tertiary education, and we need to become better at utilizing the knowledge and skills that new Swedes bring with them. That is why the Government is investing in increased opportunities for supplementary qualification programmes for those with an academic degree from another country. Among others, there will be programmes for Engineers, Midwives, Economists, and Nurses etc. Many of these qualifications are also in high demand on the labour market.

It is natural that people increasingly will return to higher education after periods in the labour market in order to change careers or to deepen their

skills. Life Long Learning is turning into reality. Here Sweden is helped by the fact that flexibility, accessibility and a rich choice of courses and modules has been a hallmark of Swedish higher education. We see that there are aspects in our system that may be of use for many other higher education systems when further developing Life Long Learning. It is important that our frameworks for higher education are adapted to this new reality, and the Bologna process with its instruments needs to be a part of this adaptation. Digitalisation is the single most important game changer of our time, and it affects all parts of society. Digitalisation is demanding but it also gives us great opportunities, especially in the field of education. We have to make use of these opportunities in order to develop the European Higher Education Area. And again, it will be important that students have access to short courses and modules, the possibility to study in the pace and mode of their choice digitally in order to increase the accessibility and relevance of higher education.

Our education system needs to be up to date and this is becoming more challenging when technology development is fast and we need to make use of the possibilities that are offered and opened by digitalisation . But we also need to educate students from all different disciplines on how to use and develop these tools.

Internationalisation of higher education is high on the agenda. Our firm belief is that an increased internationalisation leads to higher quality in both education and research. Through international contacts and connections we can also create better intercultural understanding. We all have different backgrounds, different experiences. Meeting someone who has a completely

different perspective than you have yourself can be challenging to begin with, but in the end it means you will have learned so much more. This is true for higher education and research as it is for life in general.

That's why internationalisation is such an important part of higher education and research. To have an exchange of ideas, understand different perspectives and get new experiences is very valuable, to the individual as well as to society. The power of knowledge only grows stronger when we share it. These perspectives must be valued by employers in both private and public sector.

To summarise, the Swedish Government strongly believes that investments in higher education and research are central in order to meet the demands of the future job market, to strengthen democracy and to meet societal challenges. Going into higher education should be a real possibility for everyone, regardless of background. We also need to utilise the skills of people who have recently come to Sweden. The Government has ambitious goals for higher education and research. In order to meet them, an increased internationalisation is needed. On behalf of the Minister for Higher Education and Research, I can promise you that we will take initiatives to strengthen internationalisation of higher education and research.

Looking out across the world we see signs of disintegration and eroding cooperation as well as growing intolerance and distrust in institutions. In this light, finding new goals to provide more energy to the Bologna process has never seemed as important.

It is my strong belief that international cooperation, seriously taken on board by the top management of the participants – enhances the quality of both research and education, it develops ideas, highlights creativity and last but not least it reduces or even removes gaps between people from different disciplines and from different cultures and as such it should be looked upon as a giant peace project.

Thank you and good luck with your important work!