

Malmö Kvinnoforum 13 June, 2014

"More women in leading positions in the EU" , SKEN seminar: Introduction by Global Utmanings president Kristina Persson

Ladies & Gentlemen,

It is great to be here and feel the energy and strength of so many women who are prepared to take up leading positions on different levels in society! This is much needed in the world we are living in.

Global Utmaning is an independent think tank, addressing systemic challenges and risks, in relation to a) Climate change, b) The Economy and c) Unemployment /Increasing inequality. In short – we are seeking to find ways and means to make Sustainability possible in all three senses of the concept - Ecological, Economic and Social.

It may seem a bit overambitious, for a not so big NGO/think-tank like ours but we see it as necessary to combine all three aspects of sustainability. Because what we need in politics is a **holistic approach and a system perspective**. It is needless to say that so many women and men in this world will suffer from an inability of our leaders today to do something radical about these interconnected challenges.

We are just about to leave an era of neoliberal economic policies that spread around the world from the 80s and onwards but the new and better policies are not yet here. The old policies have been proven wrong or just very inefficient. What we now need is a new way of thinking and organising ourselves to protect the common good – to address Climate Change, Financial crisis and Mass-unemployment. This is being discussed more and more, even among former advocates of the old school, like IMF and OECD.

The question is, can women really make a difference? As I see it we don't only need more women in leading positions but we need to

change the logic and priorities in political life. We are not helped by sisters who just imitate and adjust to the male culture of political leadership.

Will this happen? In Sweden we have more or less the same number of both sexes in government and parliament, but in relation to the need for profound and long-term changes not much has happened. I believe that it is very important that women hold top-positions and that they have the strength and endurance to work for real change. We know that the top position is absolutely key for making changes possible, it may not be enough, but without the support from the top, important changes will not be possible.

As of July 2013 there were only 19% of Prime Ministers and presidents in power in the world being women. Sweden has never had a woman prime minister. In global business we currently hold 4,6 % of the positions as CEOs in the list of Fortune 500 companies and the same for Fortune 1000-list and Sweden is not much better.

I am personally very frustrated by the lack of leadership and interest among political leaders to understand the new landscape that globalisation has shaped over the last 20 – 30 years. And I am convinced that this new knowledge must be spread to the citizens; We need a new era of Enlightenment you could say - in the face of increasingly complex global challenges.

The results in the recent EU-elections was the consequence of an absence of leadership, a leadership that could meet the profound structural changes that globalisation and neoliberal policies during the last 30 years brought with it: Now we see that nationalism is spreading rapidly again in Europe, and elsewhere. And nationalism bears no solution whatsoever for any of the important problems in our time. It only reflects a lack of understanding what needs to be done.

The EU-elections delivered stark warning signals to us all and a call to women to take up more leadership. We know that the new anti-European nationalists are mostly men, who are not only xenophobic and racists but also anti-feminists. They dream about old times, when the white male was the master of a understandable universe.

Without new leaders and movements the picture seems rather bleak for the European project. And this will make it even more difficult to fight unemployment, inequality and the threats to our welfare-systems. And who do you think will be hit the most when the public sector cannot deliver?

Finally, do we have a reason to believe that women will do things differently and better?

I believe so. Women are strong advocates for humanitarian and green values. And there are plenty of indications that women as leaders are more oriented towards **result**, less on personal prestige and power for the sake of power and all its symbols. And that women are more collaborative, seeking solutions with and through others rather than acting as the lonely hero. And they don't give up so easily, they pursue and they are more creative than men in finding new solutions.

So after all, there is some hope! Thank you for listening.