



Introduction to the CEC Conference on Diversity and Equal Opportunities in Stockholm on June 7th and 8th, 2007

Welcome address from Mrs Elias, Ledarna President

Message: we managers are in charge – we can make a difference – make sure you do!

Welcome to Stockholm, capitol of Sweden! It feels especially good a sunny summer day like today to welcome so many different people from many countries from all over Europe. This is the time of year when Sweden shows its most beautiful side. I'm proud to have the honour of hosting this year's CEC conference. Looking at the programme I'm sure we will spend some very interesting hours together dealing with one of the most important managers' issue; equal opportunities for all.

As the chairman of the board of Ledarna, your host at this conference, I'd like to say a few words about our organisation. Ledarna is the Swedish association for managers and executives. We have been in the market for over 100 years developing from a traditional trade union for managers to a professional services organisation supporting our members also in their leadership capabilities.

Ledarna represents managers. Only managers. This makes us unique; we are the only one in Sweden exclusively to represent the interests of managers!

In our world, everything starts from the individual. Our role is to develop our members' leadership capabilities - and, as a result, the success of our member community of approximately 70 000 managers.

Sweden is for many people around the world the country of equal opportunities between men and women. Swedish women's participation in the labour force is among the highest in the world. Many foreigners are amazed when visiting our cities to see the many fathers on parental leave walking around in office hours pushing a baby pram in front of them. But maybe it is so with numbers and statistics as it is with the Swedish weather; it can show you a the brightest sunniest side as well as a much colder and rainier side. Truth is, when it comes to managers; Sweden is behind other countries. The amount of female managers and CEOs is still low. Only one out of four top managers at our state owned companies is a woman. This is especially disappointing as these companies have an owner who heavily stands behind the equal opportunities between the sexes.

Diversity is a managers' issue

This is where we, managers, become important. Managers hold the key to making diversity real. Managers set the tone at work. Managers create the atmosphere where diversity and equal opportunities can prosper. Or fade away....

A working place with people representing many different backgrounds is more human **and** more competitive. Different experiences and competences create a more creative approach in reaching customer satisfaction and thus, business success.

Diversity is also a question of our future and the leaders of tomorrow. Tomorrow's leaders of our country, our companies, authorities and organisations. And of millions of people who go to work everyday. The next ten years will see the record generation of the 1940s leave the labour market. The managers of the 1940s need to be replaced. In Sweden alone, we have estimated that we will need some 250 000 new managers. There

are few young managers today and even fewer young female managers. The generations of the 1970s and 1980s are not necessarily planning for a busy, hard-working career as a manager. If we are to be able to secure the future supply of high-quality managers, addressing the problems of discrimination will be necessary.

Some say that time will solve the problem. Research shows that behind each milestone of development there has been something more than just time to help development. And frankly, how much time do we really have? We managers can make a difference. We managers hold the key to the next milestone. Let's decide to use it!