

**REMARKS BY VICE MINSITER OF PLANNING AND INVESTMENT
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HEAD OF THE VIETNAMESE DELEGATION AT VIETNAM'S REPORT
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION THE INTERNATIONAL COVENENANT ON
ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS**

Geneva, November 10th 2014

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to represent the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in presenting the Combined 2nd to 4th Reports of Vietnam on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at the 53rd Session of the CESCR.

Our report has outlined all the achievements, challenges and efforts of our Government in promoting economic, social and cultural rights in Vietnam during the 1993-2008 period. In the response to the Committee's questions, besides providing additional information as requested, we have also touched on the achievements Vietnam has made regarding economic, cultural and social aspects from 2009 until now. We wish that during this dialogue, the Vietnamese delegation would receive the due attention and support as well as constructive inputs form all members of the Committee.

As a responsible member of the Human Right Council, Vietnam has conducted the universal periodic review on the promotion and protection of human rights (UPR) of the Human Rights Council in Feb 2014. We have accepted 182 out of 227 recommendations, including all 65 recommendations related to the economic, social and cultural rights of such vulnerable groups as women, children, people with disabilities, minorities, etc. The Prime Minister has tasked relevant ministries and agencies with developing the plan for implementing these recommendations and reporting results on an annual basis. The accepted UPR recommendations form the basis for Vietnam to identify priorities in policy development and resource allocation to better ensure the fundamental rights and freedoms for our people

Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Vietnamese delegation, I would like to summarize the economic, social and cultural achievements Vietnam has made since we submitted

our first report to the Committee.

The Vietnamese Government always considers people the goal, the heart and the engine of development. We therefore remain committed to the goal of sustainable economic development in conjunction with social security and environmental protection. These 3 major pillars must be harmoniously promoted in the SEDS of Vietnam.

In 2013, the National Assembly has adopted a new Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, which marks a meaningful progress toward better assurance of human rights as well as the political, civil, economic, cultural and social rights of citizens. The Constitution dedicates the entire 2nd Chapter to Human rights and Citizens' Fundamental Rights and Duties. This document reiterates Vietnam's consistent policy of ethnic equality and unity, mutual respect and support among all peoples for progress, including the assurance of the lawful rights and interests of minorities. In particular, the Constitution also provides for Vietnam's participation in international treaties on human rights, subject to approval from the National Assembly.

Since 2009, many important laws have been promulgated and amended, including those related to economic, social and cultural rights, such as the Land Law, Trade Union Law, Law on Dissemination and Education of the Legislation, Law on People with Disabilities, Publication Law, and Public Investment Law. The Government has also approved and implemented 41 national strategies and target programs on socio-economic development with priorities given to disadvantaged groups in society.

Vietnam has completed the SEDS for the 2001-2010 period. This has helped our country to escape the under-development status and join the middle-income country group. Currently, Vietnam is implementing the SDES for 2011-2020 with a view to becoming a modern-oriented industrial country by 2020. With growth averaging 7.3%/year during the 2001-2010 period, Vietnam has been constantly increasing its income per capita. In 1990, GDP per head was merely US\$100. In 2013, it amounted to US\$1,908. According to the national standard, the national percentage of poor households was substantially reduced from 58.1% in 1993 to 9.6% in 2012. The UN recognized Vietnam as one of the best performers in the realization of the MDGs. Until now, we have attained ahead of schedule the 3 goals on poverty reduction, universal education, and gender equality. The remaining 5 MDGs are expected to be accomplished by 2015. In 2013, the UNFAO awarded Vietnam the "Diploma for Meeting the MDG-1 on Poverty Reduction and Food Security".

In recent years, the Vietnamese economy has suffered from the impacts of the

global economic recession. However, the Government still gives high attention and priority to ensuring social security and improving people's living condition and quality, especially disadvantaged groups.

Regarding social security, in 2011 and 2012, our Government spent more than \$1 billion in health insurance aid. Thanks to this support, 29 million people including poor people, minorities and children under 6, were able to obtain free health insurance cards. Support policies for the poor and minorities have always been implemented in a consistent manner in order create favorable conditions for the poor and the ethnic minorities to increase their income, improve their lives and get out of poverty. By the end of 2012, 19 thousand poor households have received housing assistance.

Regarding job creation, the 2012 Labor Code lays an important legal platform for ensuring fair and equal employment opportunities and conditions for all. By the end of 2013, 1,399 vocational training institutes recruited and provided training for thousands of people. Each year, about 1.58 million jobs are created nationwide, thus bringing the unemployment rate down to 3.7% in 2013.

In terms of education, training, science and technology, Vietnam has accomplished the goal of universal primary education and universal lower secondary education quite early on. We are now aiming at higher goals such as universal secondary education. The State budget for education has been on the rise and accounted for 20% of total annual budget spending. The State prioritizes investment and encourages individual and organizations to engage in research and development, transfer and effective application and science and technology, ensure the rights to scientific and technological research, and protect intellectual property right.

Regarding healthcare, Vietnam has made encouraging results. A system healthcare facilities has been in constant and active development, particularly in remote and minority-populated areas. We have also given high priorities to maternal and child-care. In 2012, Vietnam's mortality rate of children under 1 year was one the lowest in ASEAN. Vietnam is undertaking the National Target Program on Clean Water and Rural Hygiene in 2012-2015. By the end 2013, 82% of Vietnam's rural population has had access to clean water. 60% of rural households had clean toilets.

Regarding the social and cultural aspect, Vietnam always ensures people's right to take part in cultural activities. In order to preserve and promote minority

cultural identity, the Vietnamese Government has approved the Plan for the Preservation and Promotion of Minority Cultures until 2020, which gives special attention to the culture of very small minority groups. Minorities all over the country can freely take part in their unique cultural activities. The UNESCO has recognized certain cultural heritages of Vietnamese minorities as world cultural heritage, such as the “Central Highlands Gong Culture Space” and the My Son Sanctuary.

Amid the global trend of information technology and freedom of information and speech, popular media has been blossoming in Vietnam in the recent period. By July 2014, there were 98 electronic press and magazines licensed in Vietnam along with 1600 news websites and 31 million Internet users. People have access to large global media and television channels, which allow them to stay connected with all aspects of the global life.

Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Vietnam always adheres to its international commitments and the fulfillment of its duties, including reporting to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the 2nd Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on promoting and protecting human rights and basic freedom. We are also preparing the report to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). In 2014, Vietnam is expected to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Convention Against Torture. We are positively considering the participation in the two remaining conventions, namely the Convention Against Enforced Disappearances and the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. Our Government holds dialogues with development partners, international organizations, domestic and international NGOs, and civil political organizations on a yearly basis to discuss matters regarding poverty reduction, disaster prevention and relief, anti-corruption to enhance the quality of policy-making and better satisfy people’s demand for development. Vietnam is well aware of our responsibilities and our role in regional and global cooperation. Through South-South cooperation programs, Vietnam has taken efforts to share our experience in the development of agriculture, healthcare, and education with fellow developing countries.

Mr. Chairman,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the time to come, besides our continuous work toward the completion of the 3rd 10-year SEDS, Vietnam remains committed to building on the obtained achievements and overcoming all challenges to promote the realization of the economic, social and cultural rights as provided in the Covenant. We will also join all countries around the world in realizing the MDGs while actively working with UN organizations and member countries to develop a Post 2015 UN Development Agenda that accommodates the specific conditions of each country.

In this dialogue, we are open to all constructive comments from all members of the Committee to ensure higher quality and efficiency for our national policies and programs in the coming years.

Thank you.