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**NATIONAL REPORT SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPH 15 (A)  
OF THE ANNEX TO HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL RESOLUTION 5/1 \***

**Viet Nam**

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\* The present document was not edited before being sent to the United Nations translation services.

## **I. METHODOLOGY**

### **A. Drafting process**

1. This report is drafted in accordance with the guidelines of Resolution 5/1 dated 18 June 2007 of the Human Rights Council to review the implementation of human rights in the territory of Viet Nam. A drafting committee was established with the participation of institutions related to the protection, implementation and promotion of human rights, namely the Office of the Government, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Public Security, Government Committee for Religious Affairs (under the Ministry of Home Affairs), Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Committee on the Advancement of Women, Ministry of Information and Communications, Ministry of Planning and Investment, Committee on Ethnic Minorities, People's Supreme Court and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the coordinating agency.

### **B. Consultation process**

2. In preparing the report, Viet Nam sent delegations abroad to study international experience in drafting the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) national report, and attended United Nations-organized training workshops and UPR sessions. Viet Nam also hosted seminars with the participation of United Nations experts and representatives from States that had been under review to introduce the UPR mechanism and experience in making reports.

3. The report is drafted in a comprehensive manner thanks to the active contributions of Government agencies, mass organisations and local authorities through consultative meetings. The consultation process provided opportunities for open and candid dialogues between the Drafting Committee and mass organisations, including the Viet Nam Labour Confederation, Viet Nam Fatherland Front, Viet Nam Youth Union, Viet Nam Women's Union, Viet Nam Union of Friendship Organisations, Viet Nam Lawyers' Association, Viet Nam Journalists' Association, Viet Nam Committee for Catholic Solidarity, Viet Nam Buddhist Sangha, Viet Nam Association for the Protection of Children's Rights, Veterans Association of Viet Nam, Institute for Human Rights Studies, Farmers' Association and Viet Nam Association for the Protection of Disabled People and Orphans.

## **II. COUNTRY BACKGROUND**

### **A. Overview**

4. With 64 provinces and cities, Viet Nam covers an area of 331,216.6 sq km spreading from latitude 23°23' North to 8°27' North. The country is located on the Indochinese peninsula in Southeast Asia and has a large number of islands and archipelagos. Its geographical length and the diversity of its regions have created the country's uniqueness and cultural richness, but also challenges to the protection and implementation of human rights for each and every individual in Viet Nam.

5. With a population of 86 million, 75 per cent of which lives in rural areas, Viet Nam is the 13th most populous country in the world. 54 ethnic groups, with the majority Kinh making up 86 per cent of the population, live in harmony and have their own cultural identities, languages and beliefs. Religions like Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism and Islam have integrated with local beliefs to mutually develop or joined to create new indigenous religions imbued with Vietnamese characteristics such as Cao Daim, Hoa Hao Buddhism and Four Debts of Gratitude (Tu An Hieu

Nghia). As a result, Viet Nam has become a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country and this has been the foundation for Viet Nam's national unity throughout the 2,000 years of national construction and defense against foreign invasion. This particularity is also the basis for Viet Nam to implement policies to improve the material and spiritual life of the people, preserve cultural identity, and guarantee the right to development and equal human rights.

6. Having undergone 30 years of wars, Viet Nam embarked on nation building and development in face of high rate of poverty, a shattered economy and inadequate infrastructure, while having to deal with the aftermaths of war (e.g. victims of Agent Orange, unexploded landmines and bombs). Thanks to its reform policy, known as *Doi moi*, launched in 1986, Viet Nam has reached a turning point in economic growth, thus creating a momentum for the country's development and significantly improving the material and spiritual well-being of the people. The development of a market economy and the opening-up of the country also had adverse impacts, notably the rich-poor gap, urban-rural disparity and the low level of integration of vulnerable groups such as women, children, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities. These are challenges to Viet Nam in its efforts to strike a balance between increasing economic growth and ensuring social security and the people's full enjoyment of fundamental rights. It is in this particular historical, national and social context that Viet Nam's efforts in human rights protection and promotion will be comprehensively reviewed.

## **B. System of government**

7. Throughout the history of struggles for national independence and freedom, the people of Viet Nam have always treasured the sacred values of human rights, notably the right to self-determination, the freedom to decide one's own fate and the right to live in dignity. The first Constitution in 1946, which gave birth to the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, the now Socialist Republic of Viet Nam had all these rights inscribed. As they evolved to meet the new requirements for national development, the Constitutions of 1959, 1980 and especially 1992 (as amended in 2001) have not only fully recognized and guaranteed human rights and the rights of citizens in compliance with international law, but also clearly affirmed that Viet Nam is a rule-of-law State of the people, by the people and for the people, and is responsible for ensuring and promoting the mastership of the people in all areas.

8. The 1992 Constitution defines the structure and functions of the system of government. National Assembly is the supreme body of State authority representing the will and desire of the people. It is elected by the people and has constitutional, legislative, policy-planning for national development and oversight functions. The operation of all State authorities, including the Government, Court, Procuracy and the President is subject to National Assembly oversight. Government is the executive and top administrative body of Viet Nam responsible for the comprehensive management of all areas and implementation of the Constitution and laws. People's Councils are the local State authorities responsible for the implementation of the Constitution and laws, and management of all areas in their respective localities through the People's Committees – the executive bodies elected by the People's Councils. Having judicial functions, the People's Courts and People's Procuracies are entrusted with protecting the legal rights and interests of the people.

9. Viet Nam has incessantly strengthened the check and oversight mechanism among the organs within the system of government, especially the legislative and oversight functions of the National Assembly in order to increase the effectiveness, transparency and democracy of State institutions. Oversight has been comprehensively strengthened in all legislative, executive and judicial fields. Transparency and democracy within the system of government have been

intensified by the media and mass organisations. The media in Viet Nam has become a forum for the expression of views by mass organisations and the people, and is indeed an important force in the check and oversight over the implementation of policies and laws by State authorities, thus making positive contributions to the fight against corruption in Viet Nam. Viet Nam Fatherland Front is an alliance of all ethnic and population groups, and plays an important role in the oversight of the operation of State authorities and elected representatives (Article 9, 1992 Constitution). The Front also engages in consultations on the legal documents and policies introduced by the State before their enactment. Direct participation by the people through institutions such as election, self-nomination, question times at elected bodies, complaints and petitions, and promotion of grassroots democracy is the most effective oversight mechanism.

### **III. PROTECTION AND PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AT NATIONAL LEVEL**

10. For Viet Nam, the people are both the ultimate objective and driving force of any social and economic development policy, and protecting and promoting human rights are always the Government's consistent policy. The 1992 Constitution, the supreme law of the country, guarantees that all citizens enjoy equal political, economic, cultural and social rights, and are equal before the law. Every citizen has the right to participate in the management of the State and the society, the freedoms of religion and belief, the right to free movement and residence in the territory of Viet Nam, the right to complaints and petitions, the right to employment, education and healthcare etc. regardless of gender, race and religion. On that basis, Vietnamese laws enumerate the specific rights in accordance with international human rights standards.

11. Through practice, Viet Nam has come to understand that human rights are closely associated with independence, peace, democracy and development. The maintenance of a peaceful and stable environment since national reunification in 1975 has been a major success and laid a firm foundation for the protection and implementation of human rights in Viet Nam. In the course of *Doi moi*, Viet Nam has focused on macro-adjustments and socio-economic development programmes in order to sustain growth, better guarantee the material and spiritual well-being of the people. These achievements have created the premises for the implementation of human rights in all fields.

12. Viet Nam is recognized by the international community as one of the leading countries in poverty reduction. Indeed, poverty reduction has been the top priority of the Government in its effort to promote human rights as it suits the country's circumstances and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Thanks to the implementation of the "*Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy*" approved by the Government in May 2002 on the basis of the 2001-2010 Social and Economic Development Strategy, poverty (according to national poverty line) has been cut from 58.1 per cent in 1993 to 14.82 per cent in 2007, making Viet Nam one of the first countries to fulfill the MDG in poverty reduction.

13. The Government has also taken strong and comprehensive measures to implement the Strategy on Judicial Reform until 2020, Strategy on the Development of the Legal System until 2010 (vision 2020) and Social and Economic Development Strategy until 2010 (with the MDGs incorporated). Together with accelerated administrative reform, intensified implementation of democratic regulations and strengthened justice and social security, these measures are to promote simultaneously and harmoniously all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the people in accordance with national and community interests and the particular circumstances of the country.

14. The Government pays special attention to vulnerable groups such as women, children, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities, including victims of war, and people living with HIV/AIDS. For each group, the Government has put in place concrete priority policies to protect support and provide them with development opportunities and facilitate their social integration. The 2006 Law on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control, the 2006 Law on Gender Equality and the 2007 Law on the Prevention and Control of Domestic Violence are illustrations of the country's efforts in this area. The Government is currently working on a draft law on people with disabilities.

15. Viet Nam is a party to almost all core international human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Viet Nam is the second country in the world and the first in Asia to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The country has also ratified 17 conventions of the International Labour Organisation. Viet Nam signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 22 October 2007 and is seriously considering signing the Convention against Torture. Domestic legal documents are promulgated or amended to incorporate Viet Nam's obligations under international treaties to which it is a party and not to hinder their implementation (Articles 3 and 82 of the 2008 Law on the Promulgation of Legal Normative Documents).

16. Viet Nam always supports the work of the United Nations Human Rights Council and cooperates fully with United Nations human rights mechanisms. In 1998, Viet Nam received the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, and is undertaking procedures related to inviting the Special Rapporteurs on the Right to Education and the Right to Healthcare and the Independent Expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty. Viet Nam is actively engaged in the discussions to establish the ASEAN Human Rights Body and participates in various regional and international conferences on human rights. Willing to foster human rights dialogues and cooperation, Viet Nam has established dialogue mechanisms with a number of countries and partners, namely the United States, the European Union, Australia, Norway and Switzerland, and positive results have come out of these dialogues. In practice, Viet Nam has recorded many achievements in its efforts to promote human rights. They are as follows:

#### **A. Civil and political rights**

17. The right to live in independence and freedom, the right to self-determination and the right to vote and self-nomination are the most fundamental human rights. However, it was not until 1945 when President Ho Chi Minh delivered the Declaration of Independence proclaiming to the world that Viet Nam "is an independent country" that the Vietnamese people started to enjoy such fundamental rights. And since then, despite decades of wars, the enjoyment by every Vietnamese of human rights, including civil and political rights, has been guaranteed in an increasingly comprehensive manner.

18. The development and strengthening of the legal system is essential to the protection and promotion of human rights. With that understanding, in the brief time span since 1986, Viet Nam has promulgated and amended around 13,000 laws and by-law documents, in which civil and political rights are elaborated. The 1992 Constitution recognizes fully all human rights (Articles 2 and 50). These rights are present throughout the chapters and sections of the Constitution and are enumerated in many important legal documents, particularly in relation to civil and political rights, including the Law on the Organisation of the National Assembly, Law on the Election of

National Assembly Deputies, Law on the Organisation of the Government, Law on the Election of the People's Council Members, the Law on the Organisation of the People's Councils and People's Committees, Law on the Organisation of the People's Court, Law on the Organisation of the People's Procuracy, the Civil Code, Civil Procedures Code, Penal Code, Criminal Procedures Code, the Press Law, the Law on Publication, Law on Complaints and Petitions, Law on Amnesty and the Ordinance on Religion and Belief. Equality and non-discrimination (Article 52 of the Constitution) are the guiding principles for all legal documents and an important premise for the guarantee and promotion of people's rights in specific areas. Viet Nam's legal documents have incorporated in full the civil and political rights recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights treaties, especially the ICCPR.

19. Viet Nam endeavors to establish and strengthen institutions to ensure human rights in practice. Steps have been taken to strengthen the capacity of State authorities to better enforce the law and ensure the rights and interests of all citizens. Most prominent are the role of the National Assembly in overseeing the operation of State authorities, the independence of the judicial system, the efficacy of the State investigation agencies and the increasingly enhanced role of such specialized organisations as bar associations and lawyers' societies, notary agencies and legal aid offices. Greater importance has been attached to the role played by mass organisations like the Viet Nam Red Cross, the Labour Confederation, Women's Union, Youth Union, and the Elderly Association in all aspects of the social life.

20. Viet Nam pays special attention to ensuring the right of every citizen to participate directly or through their elected representatives in the management of the state and society. The high turn-out of over 99 per cent at the May 2007 election of the 12<sup>th</sup> National Assembly is evidence of the people's increasing awareness of their own rights and the role of the National Assembly in helping them exercise these rights. During each National Assembly session, the question time is televised live and has become an increasingly important forum for the people, through their elected representatives, to question the policies and the work of the Government as well as to recommend measures to overcome challenges.

21. Strengthening the mastership of the people at local levels, where Government policies are put into practice, is considered the ultimate goal and the momentum for ensuring the success of the reforms in Viet Nam. The Regulations on Grassroots Democracy, enacted in 1998, has facilitated the people's active participation in the making, implementation and monitoring of policies, and thus received the full support of the people. The mastership role of local people has been incessantly enhanced. All communes, districts and townships have set up a People's Inspectorate Board and 37 out of 64 provinces have instructed their respective local authorities to establish Public Investment Supervisory Board.

22. The people's rights to complaints and petitions are respected and protected. Much progress has been made in dealing with people's complaints and petitions. Between 2006 and 2008, 83.2 per cent of complaints and petitions to administrative agencies and 92.5 per cent of those to local judgment execution agencies were resolved. The law also provides for material and spiritual compensation for those who had been wrongfully convicted.

23. The people's right to form associations is protected under important laws and by-law documents. Article 69 of the 1992 Constitution and Decree 88/2003/ND-CP of 30 July 2003 regulate the organisation, operation and management for associations. There are currently 380 associations with nation-wide and inter-provincial/city operations (against 115 in 1990); 18

sectoral trade unions at national level, 6,020 local trade unions, and thousands of associations and clubs operating in all sectors of the society.

24. In Viet Nam, there are around 20 million followers of different religions and 80 per cent of the population has belief. Viet Nam considers religion and belief a legitimate need of the people and has made continuous efforts to create better conditions for religious and belief activities. As of 2008, there are 12 major religions in Viet Nam, of which Buddhism, Catholicism and Protestantism have the largest numbers of followers. Religious activities, particularly major annual festivities, are organized solemnly with the participation of hundreds of thousands followers. The United Nations Day of VESAK 2008 was successfully held in Hanoi with the participation of over 4,000 Buddhist dignitaries, monks and nuns, 2,000 of who came from 74 countries and territories around the world. Places of worship are frequently renovated while new places are built. Training activities for religious dignitaries, monks and nuns are regularly organized and expanded. Many are sent abroad, including the United States, France, Italy and India, for further studies. Religious organisations in Viet Nam actively participate in many cultural, social, healthcare and humanitarian activities, contributing to the country's development. International relations of Vietnamese religious organisations are continuously expanded, with religious leaders participating in many international fora, dialogues among religions and faiths and exchanges of views on religious beliefs and rules at important fora like ASEM and ASEAN.

25. The freedoms of expression, press and information of the Vietnamese people are clearly illustrated through the rapid and diverse development of the mass media. As of 2008, there are over 700 press agencies with 850 publications, nearly 15,000 licensed journalists, 68 radio and television stations at central and provincial levels and land-based digital TV stations (85 per cent of Vietnamese households have access to Viet Nam Television), 80 e-newspapers, thousands of news websites and 55 publishers. The media in Viet Nam has become a forum for the expression of views by mass organisations and the people, and is indeed an important force in the check of and oversight over the implementation of policies and laws by State authorities, particularly those relating to human rights. The people of Viet Nam are provided with greater access to advanced information technology, especially the internet, with about 20 million internet users, accounting for 23.5 per cent of the population, higher than Asia's average rate of 18 per cent. Apart from the domestic media, the people of Viet Nam have access to dozens of foreign press agencies and television channels, including Reuters, BBC, VOA, AP, AFP, CNN and many other major international papers and magazines.

26. It is Viet Nam's policy to guarantee human rights while strictly punishing violations of the law to ensure a healthy environment for the whole society in the interests of every citizen. An important aim of imprisonment is educate law offenders to become useful individuals and enable their early reintegration into the society. The conditions of detention centers and prisons are regularly improved to better meet the material and spiritual needs of inmates. Fundamental rights of inmates, including the right to be free from physical restraint, the right to life, to entertainment and the right not to be tortured, are protected by law. Inmates who have completed one third of the term of imprisonment with good record will be considered for commutation once a year. In line with the tradition of clemency and humanity, the State, on the occasion of major festivities, considers and grants amnesties to prisoners who meet the requirements of the Law on Amnesty. On the occasion of the Lunar New Year 2009, over 15,140 inmates were released before the completion of their term of imprisonment.

27. The achievements recorded in guaranteeing the civil and political rights of the people are manifestations of Viet Nam's strong commitment and unceasing efforts in this regard,

particularly given the socio-economic difficulties facing the country. This is an important premise for Viet Nam to continue ensuring the fundamental rights of its people.

### **B. Economic, social and cultural rights**

28. Until the late 1980s, Viet Nam remained a poor country, with a slow growing economy and stagnant production. The people were faced with a lot of difficulties, the rate of unemployment and illiteracy were high, while many of their spiritual and material needs were not met. Despite those difficulties, the people's economic, social and cultural rights were inscribed in the Constitution and law, reflected in specific national development policies and implemented in reality, particularly since the *Doi moi* process.

29. After more than 20 years of *Doi moi*, important achievements in economic and social development have been recorded. The economy has grown at a steady and high rate, averaging 7.5 per cent per annum. All economic sectors are encouraged to grow to contribute to the country's economic development, particularly to job creation and improvement of the quality of life. The sharp increase in total national investment has not only created a momentum for economic development, but also helped reduce the burden traditionally put on the State budget, thus enabling the Government to concentrate resources on such priorities as education, health, infrastructure development, human resource development, poverty reduction and assistance to areas with difficulties.

30. Viet Nam's legal system has been gradually improved in line with the country's social and economic development to ensure that economic growth is coupled with harmonious social development and improvement of the people's well-being. The 1992 Constitution and a series of laws, including the 1989 Law on Protection of the people's health, 1994 Labour Code (amended in 2002 and 2006), 1998 Education Law (amended in 2005), 2003 Land Law, 2006 Law on Social Insurance and 2006 Law on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control have created a clear and relatively complete legal framework for the realization of economic, social and cultural rights. Viet Nam's legal system in this area is believed to be in line with international standards and has laid a firm foundation for the country's comprehensive reform.

31. The powers of financial, budgetary, investment, healthcare and education management have been decentralized to enable local authorities to proactively put in place and implement development policies suitable for the specific local circumstances. The National Committee on the Advancement of Women, the Committee on the Elderly, Committee on Corruption Prevention and Control have been formed to advise the Government on policies and solutions in relevant areas, to carry out information, communication and education activities to encourage the people to support and get involved in implementing government policies, and to monitor the implementation of policies by Government agencies. Mass organisations like the Viet Nam Labour Confederation, Viet Nam Women's Union and Viet Nam Farmers' Association have an increasingly important role to play in economic and social development as well as in improving the people's life.

32. The Vietnamese Government is carrying out its Economic and Social Development Strategy for 2001-2010 and Vision 2020 with the MDGs incorporated with the aim to achieve major changes in poverty reduction, education and training reforms, build an advanced culture imbued with national identity, protection of and care for the people's health, reduction of unemployment, development of a social security network and build a sustained social cohesiveness.

33. Comprehensive and sustained poverty reduction is defined as a key objective in Viet Nam's economic and social development. After 20 years of reform, the people's life has been significantly improved. Per capita income has increased from under US\$ 200 in 1990 to US\$ 1,024 in 2008. Poverty, according to the national poverty line, has been cut from over 60 per cent in 1990 to 13.8 per cent in 2008. Viet Nam's poverty line has been raised to approach the international poverty line.

34. Viet Nam sees investment in education and training as investment for development. Budget allocation for education has increased annually and now accounts for 20 per cent of State budget expenditures. More schools have been built throughout the country. Viet Nam completed the universalisation of primary education in 2000, 15 years prior to the MDG deadline. Universalisation of lower secondary education is being carried out. By the end of 2007, 42 of the country's 63 cities and provinces have met national targets on universalisation of lower secondary education. At present, Viet Nam is ranked 64<sup>th</sup> among 127 countries on education development by UNESCO.

35. Viet Nam creates the necessary conditions for the people to enjoy their right to health care, with priority given to women, children and ethnic minority people. Strategic programmes and policies on vaccination for children, health insurance assistance, free-of-charge medical treatment and examination for the poor and children under 6, prevention and control of tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS have proven to be effective. Under-5 mortality rate has been reduced from 58 deaths per 1000 live births in 1990 to 25.9 in 2007 while under-1 mortality rate has been cut from 31 deaths per 1000 live births in 2001 to 16 in 2007. Child malnutrition rate has decreased to 21.2 per cent in 2007. Maternal mortality rate has been reduced from 233 per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 75 in 2007. Almost all ethnic minority communes with difficulties have health clinics while community-based health services are available in most villages, contributing importantly to the prevention and control of many fatal diseases and improvement of the people's health and quality of life.

36. Viet Nam is actively carrying out the 2006-2010 National Target Programme on Employment with focus on giving loans for employment through the National Fund on Employment and supporting projects, helping to facilitate job search activities. From 2001 to 2008, 12.44 million new jobs have been created, 9.3 million of which are from social and economic development programmes and over 2.6 million through the National Fund on Employment. Since January 1, 2009, Viet Nam has, for the first time, introduced an unemployment insurance scheme to provide additional assistance to people searching for jobs. This is a remarkable step forward by Viet Nam in comparison with countries at the same level of development.

37. The 1992 Constitution states that every citizen has the right to participate in the creation and critique of works of art and literature and in other cultural activities (Article 60). A number of culture-related national target programs have been introduced and implemented to better meet the growing spiritual demand. Apart from mechanisms and policies to encourage investment by all economic sectors in culture development, the Government has introduced policies to support the preservation and promotion of traditional national culture, in particular the cultures of ethnic minority groups, including the preservation of spoken and written languages. To date, Viet Nam has been successful in building an advanced culture imbued with national identity and unity in diversity among the 54 ethnic groups of Viet Nam.

38. Viet Nam's achievements in economic and social development in the last 20 years have made important contributions to better guaranteeing economic, cultural and social rights as well as other rights of its citizens.

### **C. Rights of vulnerable groups**

#### **1. Children**

39. Viet Nam is committed to protecting children's rights and interests and facilitating children's exercise of those rights, first and foremost through the provisions of the Constitution (Article 65) and several legal documents, including the Civil Code, Penal Code, Labour Code, Education Law, Land Law, Law on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control, Law on Gender Equality, Law on Legal Aid, Law on Cinema, Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence Prevention and Law on Mutual Judicial Assistance. In particular, the amended 2004 Law on the Protection, Care and Education of Children has incorporated the fundamental principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child to which Viet Nam is a party, with emphasis on the principle of non-discrimination and ensuring that best interest of children is a primary consideration. The law gives children more rights, from passive rights of being cared for, nurtured and protected to more active rights like the right to freedom of expression and participation in social activities.

40. Agencies and organisations involved in the protection of children's rights include the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Viet Nam Association for the Protection of Children's Rights, Viet Nam Relief Association for Handicapped Children and Viet Nam Association for Disabled People and Orphans. They operate at all levels nation-wide.

41. Viet Nam has recorded encouraging achievements in guaranteeing children's rights and interests. Apart from the 2001-2010 National Plan of Action for Vietnamese Children, the protection and promotion of the children's rights have been incorporated into economic and social development strategies and plans, thus enabling children to enjoy their rights to a fuller extent. Free-of-charge medical examination and treatment programmes and measures to reduce infant mortality rate and the rate child malnutrition children have been effectively implemented. About 8.4 million children accounting for over 90 per cent of children under 6 have received free-of-charge healthcare cards. Right-age enrolment rate has seen a steady increase, with primary education enrolment standing at 95.04 per cent in 2005-2006 and lower secondary education at 80.3 per cent. Meanwhile, drop-out rate has been on decline. Preferential policies have been put in place to better assist poor children, migrant children and ethnic minority children. Safe and healthy recreation services are provided for children. 40 per cent of communes and wards and 80.3 per cent of districts have recreation facilities for children. 100 per cent of provincial libraries and 30 per cent of district libraries have sections dedicated to children. Children are enabled to express their opinions and participate in cultural and social activities at school and in the community through national and international forums, Teenage Association and Junior Reporters' Club.

42. However, there remain shortcomings in the protection and promotion of the children's rights due to challenges posed by international economic integration, poor infrastructure and limited capacity of relevant institutions in developing and implementing policies on education, protection of and care for children.

## **2. Women**

43. Viet Nam is committed to supporting the advancement of women and gender equality, considering this as an important instrument to achieve equality and sustainable development. This is reflected in the Constitution, the Criminal Code, Civil Code, Labour Code, Education Law, Land Law, and Law on HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control, Law on Gender Equality, Law on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and many other legal documents on gender equality. Viet Nam is actively implementing the National Strategy on the Advancement of Women until 2010, in which many targets have been achieved ahead of schedule. Gender has been mainstreamed into many important national documents namely the Comprehensive Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy, the 2005-2010 Social and Economic Development Plan and other sectoral development strategies. Viet Nam is now working on the National Strategy on Gender Equality for the 2011-2020 period.

44. Agencies and organisations working for the advancement of women include the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, National Committee on the Advancement of Women and Viet Nam Women's Union. They operate at all levels nation-wide.

45. Viet Nam has recorded encouraging achievements in ensuring women's rights. Women account for 25.76 per cent of all members of the National Assembly in the 2007-2011 term, ranking 4<sup>th</sup> in the Asia Pacific Region. 83 per cent of working-age women are employed. Women are present at almost every state administrative agency and state-owned enterprises where 68.7 per cent of the public servants and 30 per cent of employers are female. They also participate in numerous political and social organisations, accounting for 30 per cent of these organisations' executive members at different levels. Women have their names recorded in Land-use Right Certificates/ House Ownership Certificates with their husbands. They also have equal rights with men in the issue of citizenship. Female adult literacy rate is 91 per cent, and women account for 30 per cent of all post-graduates. Female life expectancy is 73 while male 70. Women have 4 months of full pay maternity leave and are given one extra month pay.

46. According to the United Nations Human Development Index and Gender Development Index, Viet Nam ranks 105/177 and 91/157 respectively. Viet Nam is in the list of countries that have established the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) and ranks 52/93. According to the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, Viet Nam has one of the highest rates of economic participation of women in the world, is one of the more advanced countries with respect to gender equality, and stands out in East Asia for its success in closing gender gaps in the last 20 years.

47. In the years ahead, Viet Nam is determined to address some remaining problems such as discrimination, maltreatment and violence against women, prostitution and increase the rate of female participation in administrative agencies at all levels.

## **3. Ethnic minority groups**

48. Viet Nam's consistent ethnic policy is to promote equality, unity, mutual respect and cooperation for mutual development. This is enshrined in Articles 5, 6, 39 and 133 of the 1992 Constitution and other legal documents such as the Law on National Assembly Election, Nationality Law, Law on the Encouragement of Domestic Investment, State Budget Law, Information Technology Law, Forest Protection Law, Education Law, Publication Law, Youth Law, Law on Child Protection, Care and Education, Law on People Health Protection and Care,

Mutual Judicial Assistance Law, Marriage and Family Law, Gender Equality Law, Vocational Training Law.

49. Agencies and organisations involved in ensuring the rights of ethnic minorities include the Committee for Ethnic Minorities Affairs (a ministerial-level agency), the Ethnic Advisory Council, the Women's Union and the Viet Nam Association for the Protection of Children's Rights. They operate nation-wide at all levels.

50. Viet Nam is carrying out two National Target Programmes, namely the Assistance Programme on land for housing and production, and domestic water for poor ethnic minority households living in hardship (Programme 134) and the Socio-Economic Development Programme for communes in special hardship in mountainous, remote and border areas (Programme 135). The implementation of these Programmes has significantly improved the livelihood of people, especially in remote areas, improved infrastructure, thus enabling better access to science and technology applicable to production, heightening the sense of duty and contribution to the development and narrowing the gap among regions. In addition, the Government of Viet Nam has also introduced policies on price and charge subsidies, preferential loans for ethnic households in special hardship for production and settlement, support to small-population ethnic minorities, and free-of-charge provision of 18 newspapers and magazines for people in hardship regions.

51. The above policies have improved the equality for ethnic minorities in all areas. More and more of ethnic minority people are holding important positions in state authorities at national and local levels. The 12<sup>th</sup> National Assembly has 87 deputies from ethnic minorities, accounting for 17.65 per cent. The poor household ratio among ethnic minorities has decreased rapidly by an average of 3-5 per cent per year. Regions with special hardship have received significant investments in infrastructure: 96 per cent of communes with special hardship have motor roads reaching the commune centre; electricity is available in 100 per cent of the districts and 95 per cent of the communes. All communes have primary school and kindergarten; all districts have secondary schools. By the end of 2007, 71 per cent of communes with special hardship had accomplished universalisation of primary education and 80 per cent had accomplished universalisation of lower secondary education. All districts have health clinics and doctors and medical personnel; common diseases in ethnic and mountainous areas, such as malaria, goiter, leprosy and tuberculosis, have been prevented and reverted; the protection and health care for mother and child, and malnutrition prevention have recorded many success stories.

52. The traditional culture of ethnic minorities are attentively preserved and developed. Space of Gong Culture in the Central Highlands, an invaluable ethnic minority cultural heritage, was recognized as an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO. The preservation and usage of spoken and written languages of ethnic minorities are becoming more popular. There are 30 ethnic groups having writings in Viet Nam. The Ministry of Education and Training has developed curricula for 8 ethnic minority languages, namely Khmer, Cham, Chinese, Ede, Jrai, Ba Na, Thai and H'Mong, which have been officially introduced in ethnic minority primary and secondary schools in 25 provinces with large numbers of ethnic minorities. Viet Nam Television broadcasts Channel VTV5 in 10 ethnic languages; Radio the Voice of Viet Nam has increased broadcasting time and produced more than 4,000 special programmes in 13 ethnic languages, thus facilitating access to information for ethnic minority people.

#### 4. Persons with disabilities

53. There are over 5.2 million persons with disabilities in Viet Nam, accounting for 6.63 per cent of the population. Viet Nam encourages and creates favorable conditions for persons with disabilities to exercise, on an equal basis with others, their political, social, economic and cultural rights, stabilize their life, integrate into the community and participate in social activities. Persons with disabilities are supported by the State and the society in health care, rehabilitation, appropriate job creation and enjoy other rights in accordance with the law. This is reflected in the 1992 Constitution and further stipulated in other important laws such as the Labour Code, Education Law, Vocational Training Law, Law on Child Protection, Care and Education, Legal Aid Law, Information and Technology Law and the Ordinance on Persons with Disabilities.

54. Viet Nam is one of the first countries in the Asia-Pacific region to develop and implement a long-term plan for persons with disabilities initiated by UNESCAP. Viet Nam has signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and is actively preparing for its ratification. Viet Nam has established a system of agencies and organisations operating at all levels throughout the country to protect the rights and interests of persons with disabilities, which includes the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, Viet Nam Association for the Support of Disabled Persons and Orphans, Viet Nam Relief Association for Handicapped Children, Viet Nam Blind Association, Viet Nam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin, National Coordinating Committee on Disability, Viet Nam Association of Business Enterprises of Persons with Disabilities.

55. The State of Viet Nam always creates all favorable conditions to continuously improve the enjoyment of the rights of Vietnamese persons with disabilities. Persons with severe disabilities, wounded soldiers, Agent Orange victims, including children, receive State-provided subsidies and care. The healthcare and rehabilitation network for persons with disabilities has been set up at all levels. During the last 10 years, more than 300,000 people, including tens of thousands of children, benefited from corrective rehabilitation and received corrective instruments free of charge, received assistive devices such as wheel-chairs and attendant-propelled chairs; and hundreds of thousands of persons with disabilities are provided with health insurance. Viet Nam is developing an integrated education model, converting textbooks into Braille, developing a system of sign languages and unified the writing system for the blind. The number of children with disabilities enrolled in secondary and tertiary education increases each year, many of them excel in their studies. Up to now, there are approximately 100 vocational centers for persons with disabilities and 35,000 people receive vocational training. Various public works, transportation, cultural and sports facilities have been built and modified to better suit persons with disabilities. With regard to Agent Orange/ dioxin victims, a special disability group, the State together with many other foreign and national individuals and organisations have supported them in life, education, work and healthcare with the total amount of tens of billions Vietnamese Dongs.

56. However, Vietnamese persons with disabilities, especially the poor, still encounter many hardships. The educational and vocational training for persons with disabilities still have many constraints. Discrimination and stigma still exist in education, at the work place and in community activities. These are areas that Viet Nam will endeavour to overcome in the future.

## **IV. ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES**

### **A. Achievements**

#### **1. The first lesson: To place the people in the center of national development**

57. Development is only meaningful when owned by and serves each person. When people are placed in the center of development, the economic growth, the development of the workforce, as well as and other social areas will be for the development and welfare of the people. Viet Nam has, therefore, always considered people as both the goal and the driving force of the national development. All development policies of Viet Nam are people-centered: economic development for the people; economic growth closely linked to social progress and justice in each development phase and policy; economic growth accompanied by cultural and educational development, improvement of people's knowledge, and environmental protection.

58. Through its legislative activities, the National Assembly has set up a legal framework for the country's sustainable and comprehensive development. The Constitution and legal documents have established the most important institutions, set orientations for the State's development, regulating every fields of political, economic and social life and ensuring the harmonisation between economic growth, social stability and justice and environmental protection. The Government of Viet Nam has carried out Strategy on the Development and Completion of the Legal System, Judicial Reform Strategy and Administrative Reform Programme, etc. with a view to developing and completing legislation on the organisation and operation of institutions in the political system in line with the objective of building a rule-of-law State of the people, by the people and for the people and ensuring human rights, freedoms and democracy for its citizens.

#### **2. The second lesson: Human rights can not be detached from national independence and sovereignty**

59. It is impossible for each individual to enjoy freedoms and other fundamental rights in a country which has not achieved independence and freedom. National independence is the condition and basis for the protection of human rights. Human emancipation, including the assurance of human rights, is closely linked to national liberation and social progress. National independence is the prerequisite for the broadest and fullest observation of human rights.

60. Through unwavering and unyielding struggles for centuries, the Vietnamese people have proved that the most sacred and basic rights of people are the right to live in independence and freedom and the right to self-determination. From a colonial and semi-feudal country, Viet Nam has become an independent and free country with an increasingly important role in the region and the world. From being enslaved, the people of Viet Nam have become the rightful owners of the country and the society, living in independence, freedom and democracy with all their human rights and being protected by the Constitution and laws. Every Vietnamese person has been actively promoting democracy to bring into full play the strength of great national unity and potentials of the people for national development. This is a great achievement, opening up a new chapter of development in the history of the Vietnamese nation. These are also the most basic achievements of democracy and human rights attained by the Vietnamese people.

### **3. The third lesson: Harmonisation of universal values of human rights and particularities of the nation, and promotion of international cooperation and human rights dialogue**

61. As a victim of many wars of aggression – the most serious violation of human rights, Viet Nam fully realizes that human rights have both universality, reflecting the common aspiration of humankind as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations Charter, and particularity characterizing each society and community. Viet Nam believes that the exercise of human rights is always linked to the history and traditions, and the level of socio-economic development of a country. Therefore, in an increasingly diversified world, in approaching and addressing the issue of human rights, it is necessary to harmoniously combine common standards and principles of international law with particular historical, political, economic, social conditions, and cultural, religious and belief values, as well as customs of each nation and region.

62. As a country characterized by ethnic and religious diversity and a developing economy with a low starting point having to overcome severe consequences of wars, the protection and exercise of human rights in Viet Nam have concrete priorities in accordance with the country's situation: poverty reduction, healthcare and education programmes are the focus of the State; special priorities are given to the development of remote and ethnic minority areas; respect for religions and beliefs in conjunction with interests and duty towards society is facilitated; the relationship among ethnicities and religions is respected and harmoniously addressed; the mass media is developing rapidly in forms and contents to better ensure freedoms of expression, press and information in Viet Nam.

63. Respecting the universality of human rights, Viet Nam has become party to almost all core international human rights treaties and other international treaties in this field, and seriously implements its obligations. This great effort of Viet Nam is recognized and appreciated by the international community. Viet Nam is fully aware that the implementation of international treaties on human rights is, first and foremost, the responsibility of the state party.

64. Viet Nam attaches much importance to dialogue and international cooperation in the field of human rights. This is a requirement of international integration and an opportunity to improve mutual understanding. Through dialogue and international cooperation, friends and the international community have come to better understand the real situation in Viet Nam, and Viet Nam has also learned from the experience of other countries in legislative development and law enforcement, with a view to better implementing human rights in Viet Nam, contributing to the cause of promotion and protection of human rights in the region and the world.

### **4. The fourth lesson: Maintenance of political stability, promotion of economic development in conjunction with ensuring social security**

65. Maintaining the social and political stability of the country in every situation is the primary task and the vital necessity of every state. Development can only be achieved based on social and political stability. On the contrary, without stability, states cannot achieve development and would regress and pay a high price for recovery and survival. To maintain national political and social stability, Viet Nam attaches importance to sustainable economic development, improvement of all aspects of the people's well-being and the protection of the ecosystem; promoting an advanced culture with strong national identity; and development of a progressive social security system ensuring the full and harmonious development of all people.

66. Viet Nam's development policies have always combined economic growth and cultural and comprehensive human development as well as the promotion of democracy, social progress and justice. Therefore, the economy has enjoyed a high and sustained growth rate for many years, averaging over 7.5 per cent per year; Viet Nam's Human Development Index (HDI) and Gender-related Development Index (GDI) rankings have been increasingly improved. Currently, Viet Nam ranks 64/127 countries in the UNESCO's list of education development. Although being a developing country with GDP per capita of US\$ 1,000, Viet Nam still spends 15 per cent of the national budget on public health and education services. Maintaining social and political stability, economic development in conjunction with social security is a condition for sustainable human development in Viet Nam.

### **5. The fifth lesson: Improvement of the people's awareness and capacity for the enjoyment of human rights**

67. Each individual is the object of benefits of human rights, as well as the subject exercising them. Viet Nam always attaches importance to raising awareness about the enjoyment of human rights in accordance with the law.

68. The people's supervisory role is promoted through the openness and transparency of the Government's and National Assembly's activities. National Assembly sessions, especially the question time, are broadcasted live on television, helping the people actively to participate in the country's political life. The people's consultations on draft laws and policies are now widely practiced.

69. The State have enacted and amended legal documents to enable the Fatherland Front and mass organisations to actively play the role of social supervision and criticism. State authorities have increased contacts and direct dialogue with the people and always listen to feedbacks on issues of the people's concern. A number of national target programmes have been implemented to provide free legal aid for the people, 98 per cent of whom are the poor and live in hardship, in remote and ethnic minorities areas, with a view to protecting their legitimate interests and, at the same time, helping improve their knowledge of the law, as well as their sense for respecting and obeying the law. The press has vigorously developed to better ensure the people's right to information and become fora for the people to actively exercise their ownership of and participation in the making of practical and adequate policies and laws.

70. A number of laws have been promulgated and amended several times, such as the Law on the Election of National Assembly Deputies, Law on the Election of the People's Council Members, Press Law and Law on Complaints and Petitions. Apart from the purpose of protecting and enforcing citizen's rights, these laws provide a vehicle for the people to exercise their right to participate in political life.

### **B. Difficulties and challenges**

71. For more than 20 years, the reform process in Viet Nam has brought about significant changes in all aspects of political, economic, cultural and social life, enabling the Vietnamese people to fully enjoy their human rights. However, Viet Nam still faces many difficulties and challenges.

72. First, the Vietnamese legal system in general, and in the field of human rights in particular, still contains inconsistencies and overlapping and conflicting at several points, leading to difficulties, even misinterpretation in application and enforcement at the grass-roots level.

This is the main obstacle to the development of the society and the exercise of human rights. Having identified this challenge, the Vietnamese Government is implementing the Strategy on the Development of the Legal System until 2010 with a vision to 2020. The Strategy first focuses on reviewing the entire system of normative acts to remove those that are overlapping, conflicting or out-dated, ensure the constitutionality, consistency, enforceability, openness, transparency, and accessibility of the normative acts.

73. Second, Viet Nam stretches over 2,000 km from North to South, where mountains and hills account for three-quarters of the area. The inhabitants are scattered over different regions with diverse languages, customs, traditions and living conditions. People living in remote and mountainous areas, ethnic minorities, due to constraints in access to healthcare, education and information services, do not have adequate awareness of laws and policies and law-compliance capacity. This hinders the efforts of national and local government authorities to develop and implement concrete policies to ensure the rights and improve living standards materially and spiritually for the people, as well as narrow the development gap between rural and urban, mountainous and lowland areas.

74. Third, despite rapid and sustained economic growth in recent years, Viet Nam remains a poor country with a low starting point. The livelihood of some groups of the population, especially those living in remote, mountainous and disaster-prone areas, still encounters many hardships. Despite the Government's priority policies on the development of areas in special hardship such as Programmes 134 and 135, due to limited resources, healthcare, educational, cultural and information facilities in many localities are far from adequate, thus affecting the full enjoyment of the people's rights.

75. Fourth, the transition to market economy entails worrying social issues, including increased unemployment, a significant rich-poor gap among groups and regions, increasing drug addiction, prostitution and HIV/AIDS infections, rising number of traffic accidents and degrading environment. Persisting local customs, traditions and stereotyping continues to breed gender disparity, especially in people's mentality. Male-supremacy attitude, discrimination and domestic violence against women still exist, especially where the awareness is low. These problems not only undermine the people's enjoyment of their rights, particularly the right to life and rights of vulnerable groups, but also pose a challenge for government authorities in developing and implementing policies for the improvement of the material and spiritual well-being of the people.

76. Fifth, changes in the world have produced adverse effects on Viet Nam. Diseases and epidemics remain pervasive with many complications, and together with climate change, particularly global warming and the rise of sea level; aggravate the devastating effects of natural disasters such as tropical storms, floods and droughts. These challenges not only directly affect each person, but also disperse the country's resources, thus diminishing the effectiveness of policies on the promotion of human development.

77. Sixth, awareness among certain groups of public servants at both national and local levels are incomplete in terms of international human rights law, Viet Nam's treaty obligations and even national legislation and policies. As a result, there have been cases of neglectful violation affecting the enjoyment of people's rights.

## V. NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND COMMITMENTS

### A. National priorities

78. With a view to overcoming those challenges and achieving greater progress in ensuring the rights of its people, Viet Nam has set a number of priorities for the next five years.

79. Poverty reduction continues to be among the top priorities of the Government. Viet Nam is one of the first countries having achieved the MDG on poverty reduction ten years ahead of schedule. However, this progress needs to be sustained. In the years to come, Viet Nam will make efforts to accelerate poverty reduction, consolidate its past achievements, improve the quality of life and production conditions of poor households, and narrow the widening gap of income and living standards between rural and urban, mountainous and plain areas. Viet Nam has developed the National Target Programme on Poverty Reduction for the 2006-2010 period, with a budget of VND 43,000 billion, giving priority to vulnerable groups such as women, children, ethnic minorities, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

80. The National Programme on Employment includes targets to ensure employment for 49.5 million workers and create 8 million new jobs from 2006 to 2010, and reduce urban unemployment to below 5 per cent by 2010. To this end, Viet Nam is implementing credit-for-jobs projects, assisting workers in finding employment abroad and promoting labour market development.

81. Viet Nam will continue legal and administrative reforms in order to prevent and combat bureaucratic practices, corruption and extravagance as well as promoting democracy and the rule of law.

82. Viet Nam has adopted the Strategy on the Development of the Legal System with a view to building a uniform, consistent, enforceable, open and transparent legal system and a rule-of-law state of the people, by the people and for the people. The focus of this Strategy is strengthening the legal basis for the accountability of State authorities in implementing international human rights treaties to which Viet Nam is a party; improving the regime for State protection of citizens' legitimate rights and interests, the accountability of State authorities, particularly the courts; improving the legal basis for the oversight role exercised by elected bodies and the citizens over the activities of State authorities and public servants; and institutionalizing social equity policies to ensure that every citizen has access to public services, health insurance, social insurance, social relief and poverty reduction programmes.

83. Viet Nam has also adopted the Judicial Reform Strategy until 2020 aiming to build a healthy, strong, democratic, strict, just, effective and efficient judicial system with main avenues as follows:

(a) Developing the legal system on legal aid to meet the increasing and diverse demand for legal aid;

(b) Reforming judicial proceedings to ensure democracy, equality, openness, transparency, coherence, ensuring the participation of parties concerned and the quality of litigation at trials:

(c) Improving criminal laws with a view to reducing and limiting the application of capital punishment to a small number of especially serious crimes and imposing stricter criminal liabilities for law-enforcement officers or power abusers.

84. Viet Nam continues to give priority to healthcare and improvement of people's physical conditions, including the prevention and control of communicable diseases and epidemics, early detection and control of outbreaks, raising awareness on healthcare, improving access to clean water and sanitation services for all, with priority support given to the poor and entitled beneficiaries, ethnic minorities and regions in special hardship, ensuring food safety in accordance with regional and international standards, and gradually driving back and eliminating drug addiction. National Target Programmes (NTP) on the prevention of some dangerous communicable diseases and HIV/AIDS, on population and family planning, on clean water and clean rural environment (total budget of over VND 22,000 billions), on food safety (total budget of VND 1,000 billions) and on the prevention and control of narcotic drugs for 2006-2010 will continue to be implemented.

85. Viet Nam further gives priority to the development of a social security network and addressing the adverse effects of the market economy. This includes diversifying social insurance schemes, paying attention to the material and spiritual well-being of vulnerable groups, including the poor, women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, ethnic minority people.

86. Another priority of Viet Nam is to educate the youth and training a labour force with knowledge, skills and determination to advance in science and technology, and building a strong contingent of skilled workers, experts and scientists, entrepreneurs and managers.

87. The NTP on Education and Training until 2010 includes seven projects on the universalisation of lower secondary education, reform of the curriculum, textbooks and teaching materials, training of IT personnel; introducing IT into schools, training of teaching and managerial staff, support for education in mountainous, ethnic minority and poor areas, improvement of school facilities and enhancement of vocational training capacity. Budget for these projects is estimated at VND 20,270 billions, most of which comes from the state budget.

## **B. Commitments**

88. Recognizing that the promotion and protection of human rights are a continuous process requiring constant attention of the State, Viet Nam is committed to continuing to work with other countries, the United Nations and its agencies to ensure increasingly better enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on its territory and in the world. These commitments include:

(a) With regard to the international human rights treaties: Consideration of withdrawal of its reservations to Article 5 of the CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography; consideration of accession to a number of ILO Conventions and the Convention against Torture; ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children;

(b) With regard to cooperation within human rights mechanisms: Fulfilment of the obligations under international treaties to which Viet Nam is a party; active participation in a number of United Nations human rights mechanisms, such as the Human Rights Council, the

Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council; continuance of dialogues on human rights with other countries and international organisations; consideration of inviting the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, the Independent Expert on the question of human rights and extreme poverty, the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education and the Independent Expert on the Effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights to visit Viet Nam in the near future to have a better understanding of the country's situation and assist Viet Nam in better ensuring human rights in these areas;

(c) With regard to the promotion of human rights on the ground: Continuance of administrative reform, improvement of the legal and institutional frameworks with a view to strengthening the rule of law, better ensuring the ownership of citizens and their access to legal aid:

- (i) Scaling up poverty reduction and giving priority to job creation, income improvement, development of social security network and provision of basic social services to the poor and vulnerable groups and those in mountainous and remote areas;
- (ii) Universalisation of lower secondary education;
- (iii) Paying due attention to preventing and combating trafficking in women and children, strengthening education and information on the elimination of discrimination against the victims of trafficking and job and income generation for them; finding solution to the issues of child labour, street children and violence against children; close cooperation with other countries, especially in the region, on combating trafficking in women and children and transnational crime;
- (iv) Continuance of the national vaccination programme against seven diseases in children, information campaigns on HIV/AIDS prevention and give increased attention to maternal and child health, reproductive health and reduction of the ratio of malnourish children;
- (v) Consolidation of gender equality policies and information campaigns to eliminate gender-based discrimination, providing women, especially those in mountainous, remote and poor areas and ethnic minority women, with equal opportunities to education, employment and income; stepping up the prevention of and combat against domestic violence, information campaigns aiming at changing the male-supremacy mentality.

89. Viet Nam hopes other countries and international organisations will continue to share their experience with and strengthen their assistance and support to Viet Nam in building capacity for government officials as well as for the people, thus improving awareness on human rights.

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