

ILO-IPEC Project on the Prevention and Elimination of Trafficking in Women & Children

Project Launch, Hanoi, 26 April 2005

Y.E. Ambassador Hattori

Ms. Truong Thi Khue, Deputy Chairwoman, VWU

Distinguished guests and representatives of government agencies and international organizations

Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

1. In August last year, the young delegates to a National Children's Forum entitled "Children speak out against Trafficking and Labour" adopted a 15 point agenda which required that every effort be made to protect Viet Nam's children against exploitation and trafficking using a wide gamut of activities which encompassed information, advocacy and other preventative action at every level, including that of the community.
2. The Project on the Prevention and Elimination of Trafficking in Women and Children on which the ILO and the Viet Nam Women's Union will embark today, with the support of the Government of Japan, through the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security is one response to this plea and it gives me much pleasure to join in welcoming you to this first meeting of the project.
3. The project's overall objective is to contribute to Viet Nam's on-going efforts to prevent and eliminate the exploitation and trafficking of children and of women and so to support the Government's new National Plan of Action for Combating the Crimes of Trafficking in Children and Women over the period 2004 to 2010. It will also support Viet Nam's efforts to give substance to its international commitments in this field, including its ratification, in the year 2000, of the ILO's Convention 182 on the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, which is the most recent tool in the ILO's legislative armory against child labour.
4. Trafficking, which the ILO defines as relocation and exploitation, is not a single, discrete act but is, rather, a series or a combination of events that take place in the child's home community, at transit points and at final destinations. The victims' relocation may be coerced but, all too often, it may even be voluntary, and may occur be across borders or even within a country. Exploitation may occur at any point in the trafficking process and could include sexual or labour exploitation.
5. While prevention and elimination requires action at all these levels and location, prevention itself could usefully begin in home communities. With this in mind, the ILO

will cooperate closely with the VWU and with other partners in the implementation of the project's activities in selected communities in three provinces - Can Tho, Hau (ho) Giang and Tay Ninh - but we hope that they will also serve as a demonstration and an inspiration to other communities elsewhere in Viet Nam.

6. The activities themselves will focus on improving awareness of children and young women - and their families and communities - about the dangers of trafficking, including through ill-prepared migration and on alerting them to the deceit and coercion often used by traffickers to trick victims into positions where they become vulnerable to exploitation.

7. Community capacity to prevent trafficking will be built using a participatory approach and will be reinforced and complemented by direct assistance to children and their families which will include the identification of new economic opportunities and the provision of appropriate skills training. In this, the project will build on prior programmes undertaken by the ILO and its partners in Viet Nam in addressing this and other labour issues.

8. The VWU and the ILO have a long and cordial history of cooperation in support of women and children, particularly at the community level. We very much welcome this new opportunity to work with the Information, Education and Communication Department of the VWU on an issue of such vital importance to the country - and to the ILO - and I would like to thank the VWU most warmly for its interest and support. We are also pleased that this project will enable us to deepen our cooperation with a number of the other agencies working on the prevention and elimination of trafficking and welcome their presence here today as well as their membership of the project advisory committee which has been set up to guide and monitor the activities of the project. I would also like to take this opportunity to extend the ILO's warm appreciation and thanks the Government of Japan for its support to the project.

9. I would like to conclude my remarks with two quotations. The first was a statement made by the ILO's Director General in the discussion that preceded the adoption of Convention 182 in 1999. He said: "We have it within our power to bring an end to the worst forms of child labour that are stunting the lives of millions of girls and boys (across the world). We have the resources.... We must use them fully". This statement is as relevant today as it was in 1999 and reflects the thinking that inspires this project.

10. The second quotation is from young delegates to the National Children's Forum that I mentioned earlier and is one to which I think we can all subscribe - it is - "children deserve the best". We expect this project to contribute to meeting this goal and I would like to thank you all for your presence here and for your support in making this goal a reality.