



Speech

of United Nations Resident Coordinator, Mr. John Hendra

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Event: High Level Discussion on Social Protection

Madame Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan, Minister for MOLISA, Madame Michelle Bachelet, Chair of the Social Protection Floor Advisory Group and Under-Secretary General of UN Women, colleagues from the UN Country Team, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to be here this afternoon, on behalf of the UN Country Team, to open, with my colleague Minister Ngan, this High-Level Discussion on Social Protection. I would also like to take this opportunity to extend a very warm welcome to Madame Bachelet, on the occasion of her visit to Viet Nam as the Chairperson of the Advisory Group for the Social Protection Floor Initiative. Equally, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the Government of Viet Nam for providing such an incredible welcome for Madame Bachelet and extending such effective support in organising the visit.

It is very welcome indeed to see this event bringing such a strong focus to the issue of how best to ensure an effective Viet Nam's social protection system

The Social Protection Floor (SPF) is a global social policy approach promoting integrated strategies that guarantee a minimum level of social protection for all, including access to essential social services and income security. It promotes coherence among social, economic and labour market policies through a set of basic social security rights and transfers. It promotes

access to basic quality services in the area of employment, health, water and sanitation, nutrition, education and family-support, to protect and to empower poor and vulnerable people.

Here I would like to also emphasize the beautiful coincidence that not only is Madam Bachelet the Chairperson of the Advisory Group of the Social Protection Floor Initiative, she is also the newly appointed Under-Secretary General for UN Women. In many countries, if not all, do we see a strong relationship and integration between gender, women and social protection issues. Madam Bachelet, you personify – like our Madam Minister of MOLISA – that speaking of one means speaking of the other as well.

I am convinced that promoting the social protection floor approach in Vietnam can contribute to effectively implement the National Social Protection Strategy, as poverty patterns still present difficulties in reaching out the less fortunate and the poor.

The Social Protection Floor Initiative is co-led by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and World Health Organization (WHO) and involves a group of 17 other collaborating UN agencies aiming to address coherently accelerated and sustained economic recovery.

This is especially relevant for Viet Nam as it moves into Middle Income Country Status. Viet Nam is a fast changing country with increasingly mobile population – mobile demographically, economically and geographically. As Viet Nam continues on its path of rapid growth and poverty reduction, it will be critical to ensure that no-one is left behind, and to contain disparities and inequalities of wealth and access to opportunities and services.

Viet Nam's commitment to social protection is strongly stated in the draft SEDP and SEDS, with the draft SEDP recognizing the importance of 'building a diverse social security system which is able to provide support for every

member in society in overcoming risks, especially the vulnerable'. Viet Nam has made impressive strides towards achieving the MDGs, and has been very successful in reducing poverty. Viet Nam has a lot to share in terms of its experience in successful poverty reduction initiatives, having long had in place policies designed to help the poor. Yet, essential challenges remain to be addressed to make the social protection floor initiative a reality for all its citizens.

The UN is very pleased to be a partner in this effort, and stands ready to support the government of Viet Nam in this endeavour. The UN has a key role to play in supporting government to deliver as one, through its convening power to bring different partners together in support of national priorities, and in advocacy for the most vulnerable – those who are most in need of the protection and support the social protection floor will provide. The UN is well placed to draw on the assets of the system to support the Government, and I would like to thank my ILO and WHO colleagues for their initiative in bringing this focus today to the discussion on social protection in Viet Nam.

Thank you.

The Mission of the United Nations in Viet Nam

The United Nations, in partnership with the government and people of Viet Nam, works to ensure that all Vietnamese people enjoy an increasingly healthy and prosperous life with greater human dignity and expanded choices. Collectively and through its individual agencies, the United Nations cares and creates opportunities for the poor and most vulnerable, and for youth, to whom the future belongs.

In accordance with the United Nations Charter and Millennium Declaration, the United Nations advances the principles of equality and social justice, while providing impartial advice, technical expertise, access to global knowledge and local experience to meet Viet Nam's development challenges.