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Statement by

Mr. Nguyen Tat Thanh, Deputy Permanent Representative of Viet Nam
at the Third Committee of the Sixty-First Session of the General Assembly

**Agenda item 67 (b): Human rights questions, including alternative
approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and
fundamental freedoms**

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Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, my Delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his reports under agenda item 67 and the Special Rapporteurs, Special Representatives and Independent Experts for presenting their reports to the Committee.

Mr. Chairman,

My Delegation believes that the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms can be improved through doing what matters the most for the people.

At the international level, what do the people see? They may see a certain degree of progress achieved in terms of institutional improvement and framework setting. Earlier this year the landmark creation of Human Rights Council brought many high expectations. Two months ago, after years of arduous efforts, the negotiations on the draft Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities concluded with great relief and a salvo of approval. However, those were just the tip of the iceberg that we started to see. Much remains to be done in terms of practical implementation. The real relief will come much later, if ever, and that is what the people need and what really matters.

It is now up to each and every one of us if we want the Human Rights Council to succeed or to be a *déjà vu* and persons with disabilities to effectively enjoy all human rights on equal basis with others or to be life-sentenced to vulnerability. The devil now lies not any more in the details of the negotiated texts, but in the ways and means we adopt to effectively implement them.

For the Human Rights Council to live up to its *raison d'être*, or any human rights machinery for that matter, it should be free from bias, selectivity and double standards, and be truly ruled by objectivity and the spirit of dialogue and cooperation, especially when reviewing the mandates, mechanisms, functions and responsibilities of the ex-Commission and devising and conducting the universal periodic review.

For the Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities to live up to the expectations of the latter, States will need to ensure the necessary condition for the full and equal enjoyment of human rights by persons with disabilities through fulfilling national obligations under the Convention, where as the international community will need to secure the sufficient condition through effective international cooperation.

At the local or individual level, however, people do not see the Council and the treaties influence their lives, especially if they are among those 800 millions subject to abject poverty and hunger. A person living in extreme poverty could not care less about his or her right to vote or about its significance, when he or she is unsure of his or her family's next meal. It is extremely hard for me to read this statement, thinking that every five seconds of it, some where else in the world, a child dies from hunger and malnutrition-related illness. Would anyone ask the dying child or his or her grief-stricken parents what right matters the most for them? The shame is on us all if we cannot guarantee the very basic right to existence for all while talking about improving the effective enjoyment of other human rights and fundamental freedoms. My Delegation concurs with the Special

Rapporteur on the right to food that this is a human right and its violation must be stopped at once. There are no more five seconds to waste. This must be a core obligation subject to immediate realisation, similar to the “core obligation” to eradicate extreme poverty mentioned in the report of the Independent Expert on human rights and extreme poverty. For those living with chronic hunger and extreme poverty, the responsibility to protect them from hunger and poverty is what matters. It is my Delegation’s view that this is the responsibility of both the national government and the international community.

In this regard, my Delegation notes with appreciation the emphasis and initiatives by the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights with regard to the right to development and the fight against poverty, as well as the theme of “Poverty and Human Rights” for this year’s Human Rights Day.

Having said that, it is not the intention of my delegation to over-emphasize certain rights, but rather to redress the imbalance in approaches to human rights.

Mr. Chairman,

At the national level, Viet Nam holds the view that the people are both the driving force and the goal of national construction, and that the promotion of human rights is an important factor conducive to sustainable development, and therefore has adopted a people-centered approach in designing and implementing its socio-economic development policies. In particular, Viet Nam continues to exert every efforts to do what matter the most for the people on the ground. With limited resources, Viet Nam is doing its best to ensure a better life, both material and spiritual, for all of its people.

On the material side, while maintaining the GDP growth rate at around 8%, Viet Nam continues to devise and implement concrete policies and measures that help ensure food security and socio-economic development for the people in poorest remote and mountainous areas. In this process, the people concerned are invited to actively participate to ensure that those policies and measures address what matters the most for them according to the principle “the people know, discuss, implement and verify”. Only through responding to the needs of the poorest of the population, could we make a difference in the effective enjoyment by all of human rights, including the rights to food, to live in dignity, free from hunger and poverty.

On the spiritual side, freedom of religions and beliefs has been further reinforced in recent years. All religions in Viet Nam, including Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam, Caodaism and Hoa Hao Buddhism, live side by side and enjoy equal treatment and freedom of practices. To date, there are 20 million Vietnamese who follow one religion or another, including over 65 thousand religious dignitaries, and more than 22 thousands places of worship, 10 religious colleges, 3 Buddhist institutes, 6 Christian seminaries and over 40 religious teaching facilities at different levels. During the period from 2003 to 2005, in 38 of the 64 provinces, there were 3.600 religious dignitaries designated, over 12 thousands people complete theology institutes, more than 800 places of worship newly created and over one thousand more restored. Religious practices by people in poor

mountainous areas have been facilitated through provision and construction of places of worship and celebrations.

It is an encouraging sign to see religious dignitaries and organisations express their interest in contributing to the national construction and unity, particularly in helping the needy, promoting social welfare, participating in poverty alleviation and disaster mitigation activities and promoting the cultural identity of the nation.

Mr. Chairman,

Through doing what matters the most for the people on the ground, we could create the necessary condition conducive to the enjoyment of all human rights. At the same time a balanced approach to the promotion and exercise of all human rights is the sufficient condition for a genuine improvement to the effective enjoyment of human right and fundamental freedoms. This is the approach that we have adopted and will continue to pursue.

Thank you for your attention.