



**SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM  
MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**866 UNITED NATIONS PLAZA  
SUITE 435  
NEW YORK, NY 10017**

---

*Please check against delivery*

**Statement by**

**H.E. Ambassador Le Luong Minh,  
Permanent Representative  
of Viet Nam**

At the Third Committee of the 60<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly

On agenda item 71(b):

*Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for  
improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and  
fundamental freedoms*

New York, 31 October 2005

Mr. Chairman,

Speaking on agenda item 71 (b) concerning human rights questions, I wish to express my Delegation's sincere gratitude to the Secretary-General and the Special Rapporteurs for their respective reports. We welcome the convening of the informal interactive panel discussion last week.

Mr. Chairman,

It is both alarming and unacceptable, as Mr. Ziegler, the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, notes in his report that in a world richer than ever, hundreds of millions of people are suffering from food insecurity and hunger. Persistent hunger and extreme poverty are detrimental to the full enjoyment of all human rights. The right to food must be fully recognized as a human right that deserves and needs our due attention. In a larger context, we always attach special importance to the right to development, the realization of which is indispensable and constitutes a prerequisite for a people's full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms. In fact, right after it gained independence, Viet Nam declared war on hunger and made hunger eradication, poverty reduction and people-centred development our top priorities, and with relentless efforts and perseverance, we have scored encouraging results in social and economic development and is maintaining steady progress towards achieving the MDGs, creating an enabling environment of peace, stability which is essential for the protection, guarantee, promotion and full enjoyment of any and all human rights. We would like to reiterate our support for the work of the Working Group on the right to development and look forward to a positive outcome of its January 2006 session, especially in light of the upcoming report of the Task Force on the implementation of the right to development.

Mr. Chairman,

Having mentioned the above, let me once again reaffirm our fundamental approach to treating human rights issues. Our view is that all human rights -economic, social, cultural and political- are important, indivisible and interlinked. Overemphasizing certain human rights to one's liking while downgrading, neglecting or even refusing to recognize other legitimate human rights has proved to be a wrong and counterproductive approach. Genuine concern for human rights has no room for selectivity and double-standards. It is the application of selectivity and double-standards which has politicized the Commission on Human Rights and is paralyzing this most important UN human rights body. Now that the World Summit last September has decided to set up a Human Rights Council to replace the Commission on Human Rights. Our aim must not be establishing a Human Rights Council just for the sake of creating a new highly politicized mechanism, thus further paralyzing our human rights work. As the process of consultation and negotiation on setting up the Human Rights Council is going on, we support the idea of establishing a Working Group to study and work out details towards this end.

Mr. Chairman,

Last August, with the intention of helping the world public better understand our approach to human rights issues and the work we have been doing with a view to promoting human rights and the enjoyment of human rights by our people, Viet Nam issued a human rights white book. Time will not allow me to touch upon all areas in which this work is taking place. Let me mention some of them.

Viet Nam is a multi-religious and multi-ethnic country. We are fully conscious of the importance of the promotion of equal and harmonious coexistence and development of all religions and all ethnicities.

The freedom of religion and belief which is guaranteed in the Constitution was recently further concretized in the Ordinance on Religion and Belief adopted by the National Assembly in August 2004. On 4 February 2005, the Prime Minister issued Directive No. 01/2005 on Protestantism, which prohibits any attempt to force people to follow or renounce the religion, and provides for favourable conditions for Protestants in their religious activities. Currently, nearly 25% of the population follow 6 main religions in Viet Nam – Buddhism, Catholicism, Caodaism, Hoahaoism, Protestantism and Islam, and the number has kept arising in recent years. The Government is doing its utmost to facilitate the practice of religion- and belief-related activities, such as granting the right to long-term land use to religious communities and providing tax exemption for the land used by religious places. This policy has resulted in the increasing construction, restoration of temples, churches, worship places and seminaries. Religious dignitaries participate in the National Assembly and People's Councils at different levels. At present, 7 religious dignitaries are members of the National Assembly. In 44 out of 64 provinces and urban areas, 1,171 religious dignitaries are members of People's Councils at all levels, including 74 at provincial level, 265 at district level and 832 at commune level. Vietnamese religious organizations and practitioners also actively participate in international exchanges and studies through conducting overseas visits and receiving religious organizations and practitioners visiting Viet Nam.

Mr. Chairman,

Vietnam has 54 ethnic groups of which 53 ethnic minorities are living mainly in mountainous areas, especially the North West, Central Highlands and the South West, making up 13.8% of the total population, or 10 out of 82 million people. The ethnic groups living in Viet Nam have a strong tradition of solidarity and mutual assistance in the struggle against foreign invasion and natural disasters as well as in national construction. Each ethnicity has its own cultural identity, thus bringing about the diversity and richness of Vietnamese culture. The Government attaches special importance to the policy of ensuring equal rights and development of all ethnic groups and considers it as a decisive factor for the country's sustainable development. This policy is implemented in all political, economic, cultural and social areas and has been enacted into law. People belonging ethnic minorities are encouraged to participate in the decision-making processes at all levels. At present, there are 86 ethnic members of the National Assembly, representing 17.27% of the

total membership, which is higher than the ratio of 13.8% of ethnic minorities in the total population. The proportion of ethnic deputies to People's Councils at all levels is also relatively high: 14% at provincial level, 17% at district level, and 19% at commune level. Ethnic minorities in Viet Nam receive particular attention and actively participate in designing and implementing various socio-economic development strategies, programmes and plans specially designed for them such as those on the socio-economic development in specially difficult communes of ethnic minority, mountainous and remote areas; on priorities for infrastructure development and the allocation of cultivation and residential land; on housing and other necessities for poor ethnic minorities; on poverty reduction and job creation, on tax incentives for agricultural products, financial assistance for enterprises, price subsidies to essential commodities such as salt, medicine, fertilizer, writing paper, etc. for ethnic minorities; on forest development and habitat protection in mountainous areas; on the priorities of training and employment of ethnic minority staff; on the universalization of education, development of boarding schools, admission of ethnic minority students into universities and vocational training schools, etc. In our national efforts towards achieving the MDGs, we have prepared a separate MDGs strategy for ethnic minorities entitled "Localizing MDGs for Poverty Reduction in Viet Nam: Promoting Ethnic Minority Development", which is the single example of such kind mentioned in the Secretary-General's report on the Effective promotion of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities. The strategy sets a number of minority-specific targets, such as the universalization of primary education for ethnic minorities by 2010 through providing more multilingual education, minority language textbooks, training ethnic minority teachers and encouraging teachers to learn minority languages. We have also developed an MDG index to provide a baseline and to measure progress towards the goals.

Mr. Chairman,

While affirming the country's primary responsibility in the protection and promotion of human rights, we attach great importance to strengthening international cooperation on the basis of equality, mutual respect and understanding, and constructive dialogue. During the past year, Vietnam conducted useful human rights dialogues with the European Union, Australia and Norway, and received many foreign delegations to exchange experiences in the promotion and protection of human rights. We have also hosted a number of symposiums, workshops, such as the Workshop on the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhumane and Degrading Treatment and Punishment in December 2003, the Vietnam-EU Seminar on Capital Punishment in November 2004 and the 6<sup>th</sup> Human Rights Seminar co-sponsored by Canada, China and Norway in December 2004 with the participation of delegates from over 20 countries in the region. We believe constructive dialogue aimed at bettering mutual understanding, and not confrontation, can help advance our noble human rights cause. We look forward to continuing to participate in the Committee's work in this spirit.

I thank you for your attention!