

Message from the Vietnam Peace Committee on the implementation of human rights in Vietnam

The Vietnam Peace Committee (VPC) would like to share its views about Vietnam's achievements in the protection and promotion of human rights.

Since the early days of the country's establishment, Vietnam has always been trying to strike for its people's rights. Vietnamese people respect the great values of human rights, the right to national self-determination, the right to determine one's own destiny, and the right to live in dignity.

In Vietnam, the people's fundamental rights are secured by the law. This is shown in the Constitution, which ensures people's equal rights in all political, economic, social areas as well as before the law.

On the basis of the Constitution, the law of Vietnam continues to realise these rights in accordance with international human rights standards. Various laws were issued by the Government to ensure and promote human rights in all aspects of life.

1. Vietnam has gained great achievements in poverty reduction. The poverty rate was reduced from 58.1 percent in 1993 to an estimated rate of 14.5 percent in 2008. The food shortage rate was reduced by more than two-thirds, from 24.9 percent in 1993 to 6.9 percent in 2008. Progress has also been significant in reducing malnutrition, which fell from 41 percent to 11.7 percent in 2011.

The poverty rate in areas of large ethnic minority population declined from 32.6 percent in 2009 to 28.2 percent, 25.7 percent, and 24.3 percent in 2010, 2011 and 2012 respectively.

2. Vietnam has always considered education as the key to development. Education budget increases annually, currently making 20 percent of total public expenditures. Proper care is given to the mobilisation of resources from the society for education and training, especially in underprivileged or remote areas or areas of ethnic minorities. Education quality has also been raised. As of 2010, universalization at secondary school level has been achieved in all provinces and cities. 99.5 percent of the communes have primary schools, 93.2 percent junior high schools, 12.9 percent high schools, and 96.6 percent kindergartens. All ethnic minority and mountainous areas have colleges, vocational schools and professional training centres in the areas of agriculture, economic management, finance, education, and health. University graduates are found in all ethnic minorities.

In 2009, the literacy rate of people aged 15-24 years was 97.1 percent. The difference between boys and girls in primary school net enrolment rates was recorded at one percent.

3. Vietnam was fought for and established by the working people, thus the Government has always been concerned with their conditions. It issued a full Labor Code No.10/2012/QH13 to protect the rights of the working people. The Government has tried its best to create more jobs and reduce the unemployment rate.

4. The Vietnamese Government has consistently made efforts to help people enjoy their rights to health, with priority given to women, children and people of ethnic minorities.

Maternal mortality has declined considerably over the last two decades, from 233 per 100,000 live births in 1990 to 69 per 100,000 live births in 2009.

The total number of individuals on anti-retroviral treatment (ART) at the end of 2011 increased by 1.5 times compared to 2009, with ART coverage standing at 53 percent in adults and 83 percent in children.

Vietnam has already achieved the MDG on malaria control and is also acknowledged to have done a good job in controlling other epidemics such as SARS, H5N1 and H1N1.

5. Vietnam is a multi-religion country with all the major religions in the world (Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Islam..); the country has the second biggest Catholic community in Southeast-Asia. Vietnamese people can freely choose their religions and are protected by the legal system.

The consistent policy of Vietnam is to respect and facilitate the exercise of the right to religion and belief by all the people, while upholding the solidarity and harmony among religions and guaranteeing the equality and non-discrimination, as well as protecting activities of religious activities through the law.

Vietnam has had many religious activities. The 2011 Holy Year of the Catholic Church was a great success. Attending the closing ceremony were 1,000 priests, 2,000 dignitaries and 500,000 believers. The year 2011 was also the Centenary of Protestantism in Vietnam with major activities held in Ha Noi, Da Nang, Ho Chi Minh City attended by numerous followers from all over the country. Many worshipping places have been renovated or newly built. Training for religious dignitaries has been maintained and extended.

Religious representatives have participated in international forums, dialogues and exchanges of studies and knowledge, including within ASEM, ASEAN...In 2012, Vietnam and the Vatican successfully concluded the third round of the joint working group meeting (3/2012).

6. The right to freedom of press and information of the Vietnamese people has been reflected through the rapid and diverse development of the mass media. By 2012, there are 786 print newspapers (compared to 676 in 2009); 1,016 other publications (compared to 1003 in 2011); 18,000 registered journalists; 68 radio and television stations, 01 national news agency, 300 e-newspapers and thousands of e-portals on the internet. The number of registered social networks was 227... Especially, when the world is on the fast track of social network communication, such well-known networks as Facebook, Twitter and others have become very popular among Vietnamese people, especially the younger generation.

The Vietnamese people now have access to 75 international television channels, including such big names as CNN, BBC, Bloomberg, Australia Network and those from France, Germany, Italia, Korea and China...All the big news agencies and renowned newspapers are accessible to Vietnamese readers via the internet, including Reuters, BBC, VoA, AP, AFP, CNN, Kyodo, Economist and Financial Times...Newspapers have become a forum for many social organizations and people and an important instrument to protect the rights of people and freedoms of citizens, given their role in contributing to and monitoring the implementation of State laws and policies, especially those related to human rights.

Criticisms from the media and feedbacks from the people have greatly contributed to the fight against corruption and wrongdoings in Vietnam.

7. The Vietnamese people have the freedom of speech and opinion. The development of socio-political organisations, mass organisations and professional organisations has contributed to creating mechanisms for people to express their aspiration and participate in social management. Every week, a Cabinet member is responsible for answering citizens' questions through live TV and radio programmes.

Recently, the State has launched a campaign to collect people's ideas to the amendment of the country's 1992 Constitution. (More than 20 million ideas have been contributed to the draft amended constitution)

8. Vietnam has also had a variety of campaigns to raise people's awareness of human rights protection with cooperation between the government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Forums and conferences have been held with the participation of domestic and international scholars to discuss ways to improve the efficiency of human rights promotion in the country.

9. In Vietnam, there are now 54 ethnic groups living side by side with each other, of which the Kinh group accounts for the majority (85.7 percent). The remaining 53 ethnic groups amount to over 12,000 million, accounting for 14.3 percent of the total population.

The Government has launched National Programmes No. 134 and No. 135 targeting ethnic minority people with the aim of improving their living conditions.

Ethnic minorities are encouraged to participate in the political system, social administration and public management. The proportion of ethnic minorities in the political system is increasing. The ratio of ethnic minority deputies in the National Assembly is always higher than the rate of ethnic minorities in the whole population. In the last four tenures of the National Assembly, 15.6 percent to 17.27 percent of the deputies were of ethnic minority origins, while the population ratio of ethnic minorities was 14.3 percent.

We do appreciate the promotion and protection of human rights in Vietnam and believe that with the joint efforts of the Government and people, the country will be able to gain greater achievement in the issue.