Prof. Dr. Dang Vu Minh, President of Viet Nam Union of Science and Technology Associations;

Madame Ha Thi Lien, Vice Chairperson of Viet Nam's Fatherland Front and of the National Committee for AIDS, Drugs and Prostitution Prevention and Control;

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nguyen Thanh Long, Vice Minister of Health;

Dr. Nguyen Huu Bay, Vice Director of Department of Social Affairs, Office of the Government;

Representatives of civil society;

Colleagues and friends,

I have been in Viet Nam for just two weeks and I am very excited to have this early opportunity to meet with so many representatives of social and community-based organizations.

I would like to begin by congratulating the National Committee and the Viet Nam Union of Science and Technology Associations for organizing this policy workshop to discuss the greater engagement of social and community-based organizations in the national response to HIV. This is critical in the context of ensuring a more efficient and sustainable national response as donor funding for HIV decreases.

On this occasion, I would also like to congratulate the Government of Viet Nam for its efforts to create an enabling environment for the participation of social and community-based

organizations in the HIV response. During my very short time in Viet Nam thus far, I have learned about the important role played by social and community-based organizations as the public health system reaches out to people who are highest at risk of HIV, especially people who inject drugs and their intimate partners, sex workers and their clients, and men who have sex with men. I have also learned of your hard work in supporting people living with HIV and their families, to adhere to antiretroviral treatment and care and to build sustainable livelihoods. And I am thrilled to hear about the steady strengthening of the Viet Nam National Network of People Living with HIV, as well as the recent emergence of networks of people who use drugs, sex workers and men who have sex with men and transgender people.

Colleagues and friends, I salute you all for your significant achievements, but there are still many challenges to overcome. HIV prevalence continues to rise among men who have sex with men, and HIV prevalence among drug users in many major cities and mountainous areas remains unacceptably high. Many drug users, sex workers and MSM know they are at risk, but they are afraid to access HIV services. Stigma and discrimination is high in many communities, and 06 centres are a frightening possibility for drug users. As a result, many of them avoid HIV tests until they can no longer deny they are ill. And by that time they may have passed on their infection to many other people.

Another challenge is the steady reduction of support to the HIV response by international donors, who currently provide more than 70% of the total national HIV spending. Thanks to Viet Nam's incredible economic growth and socio-economic development, the national budget for the HIV response is increasing. But not fast enough.

In the face of these challenges, UNAIDS would like to take this opportunity to propose to the Government, mass organizations, local NGOs and civil society participants of this conference the following priority areas:

- First, work together to further expand the role of social organizations and community-based groups in the HIV response. Civil society has huge comparative advantages, especially in a concentrated epidemic like Viet Nam's, and they can play even bigger roles in HIV testing, care and treatment service delivery;
- Second, work together to ensure that there are clear mechanisms for social organizations and community-based groups to receive funding from national sources so they can continue to support service delivery as donor funding declines.
- Third, work together to build the capacities of social organizations, community-based groups and national networks in two areas:
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The first area is delivery of high-quality, high-impact services for key populations, such as periodic referral to HIV testing, early initiation of treatment and treatment adherence. We now know that early and continuous treatment can effectively prevent HIV. Getting people living with HIV diagnosed and on treatment as soon as possible is a critical strategy to defeating this epidemic, and we certainly can't do it without civil society!

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The second capacity building area is leadership and management, including financial management. Civil society should be able to show transparency and accountability in their utilization and management of resources while delivering results. This is a must in resources mobilization.

Colleagues and friends, I learned recently about how President Ho Chi Minh established the Viet Minh Alliance Front in 1941 to fight for Viet Nam's independence and freedom. Ho Chi Minh successfully mobilized the combined strength of the Vietnamese people and achieved independence for Viet Nam in 1945. His rallying cry was: "Unity, unity, great unity – Success, success, great success". I believe the same approach – working together – will help Viet Nam achieve national targets in halting the spread of HIV and providing life-saving treatment to all people in need.

UNAIDS and the wider One United Nations in Viet Nam stands by your side as Viet Nam works to achieve the Three Zeros: Zero new HIV infections, Zero discrimination, and Zero AIDS-related deaths. I will end by trying to speak Vietnamese in public for the very first time and I hope you will forgive me if I make