

His Excellency Deputy Prime Minister Truong Vinh Trong, Chairman of the National Committee for AIDS, Drugs and Prostitution Prevention and Control,

Colleagues and friends:

Good afternoon.

It is a pleasure and a great honour to be here with you, members of the National Committee for AIDS, Drugs and Prostitution Prevention and Control, international community, and civil society.

I am here today as Resident Coordinator a.i. for the United Nations in Viet Nam. In this role, I would like to begin with a few words on the recent United Nations General Assembly High-Level Meeting on AIDS, which took place in New York in early June. The Secretary General Ban Ki Moon was highly appreciative that Viet Nam was represented at such a high level by DPM Truong Vinh Trong and other high-level delegates from across several sectors, which served to demonstrate on the global stage Viet Nam's commitment to a coordinated and effective HIV response. Viet Nam's delegation was one of the most senior from the region, and also demonstrated their commitment to the HIV response in the region. The High-Level Meeting provided an opportunity for DPM Trong and the delegation to share Viet Nam's successes in responding to the HIV epidemic, as well as to learn from other national responses.

Michel Kazatchkine, Executive Director of the Global Fund, Michel Sidibe, Executive Director of UNAIDS and Eric Goosby, United States Global AIDS Coordinator among others all encouraged Viet Nam to share with Eastern European and other countries their successful experiences responding to HIV among injecting drug users with methadone and needle and syringe programmes.

The High-Level Meeting resulted in a global commitment to intensify global efforts to eliminate HIV and AIDS, with the goal of achieving the "3 zeros": Zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. I congratulate the National committee who are currently developing their National Strategy, and are using these three zeros as a framework for the strategy.

It is clear that, without the successful elimination of stigma and discrimination, it will be impossible to reduce new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths – and a key priority for countries across the world will be to ensure that people living with HIV, and people most at risk of infection, are able to gain access to prevention, care, treatment and support services without impediment from stigmatizing perceptions of HIV or behaviours. The United Nations

very much looks forward to joining with the National Committee to continue Viet Nam's work towards the goal of the "3 zeros" in the months and years to come.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank DPM Truong Vinh Trong, who has provided such a strong example of leadership as Chairman of the National Committee. Viet Nam's progress in responding to HIV – as well as the issues of drugs and sex work – is in no small part thanks to his commitment and unflagging enthusiasm for identifying and implementing the most effective policies and programmes. The last year has seen an expansion in programmes that address links between HIV, drugs and sex work and are proven to reduce new HIV infections – such as methadone maintenance therapy and needle and syringe and condom provision programmes. I note in particular that as a result of these initiatives, the epidemic among people who inject drugs is more controlled than it has ever been. In the area of sex work, a lot of progress has been made in recent years to look at new ways of addressing this issue, and I would like to commend MOLISA for its leadership in this area. Another notable achievement has been the development of the National Targeted Programme on HIV, which will help to ensure domestic resources for the response, at least in the short term, and I hope the National Assembly will ratify this programme for the full 5 years. The United Nations in Viet Nam salutes Deputy Prime Minister Truong Vinh Trong for his crucial contribution to these and other successes in Viet Nam's HIV response.

I would also like, on behalf of the United Nations, to welcome the new leaders of Viet Nam who will be involved in the response. We are sure that the new generation of leaders on the National Committee will follow the bright example of DPM Truong Vinh Trong and other Committee members, and we very much look forward to working with them to continue Viet Nam's considerable achievements in the response to HIV, and to make yet further strides towards universal access to prevention, care, treatment and support in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goal number 6.

In light of the new leadership and Viet Nam's successes, but also in light of progress yet to be achieved, we have been delighted this afternoon to learn more about the project "Support to the National Committee for AIDS, Drugs and Prostitution Prevention and Control for Enhancing Capacity on HIV and AIDS Coordination, Resource Mobilization and Advocacy". We wish to thank the governments of Australia and Luxembourg in particular for funding such a valuable contribution to the response. It is particularly essential, in the context of declining donor resources in Viet Nam in general and for HIV in particular, that efforts such as these lead to more unified policies, programmes and activities at both the central and provincial levels, that coordination is increased and that resources are used in the most efficient way possible.

The United Nations in Viet Nam particularly encourages the new National Committee leaders to take advantage of the project to:

- Build on current successes, expanding community responses and harm-reduction approaches for key populations at risk (including the methadone, needle and syringe and condom programmes, and new ways of addressing sex work that I mentioned earlier). Expanding such approaches will not only contribute to protecting those most at risk (people who inject drugs, men who have sex with men and sex workers) but also to ensuring that

the epidemic does not spread to their wives and partners;

- Ensure that resources for prevention are spent on interventions where they can have a direct and strong impact. Some of the current approaches are highly expensive with minimal impacts, and can actually have negative outcomes for HIV, drug use and sex work.

- The government of Viet Nam needs to urgently increase resources for HIV prevention, treatment and care from the government budget, and at the same time ensure that resources that are available from the international community are used in the most effective ways possible.

- Expand treatment access for people living with HIV, looking at how we can make the program more effective- including earlier initiation of treatment, and the development of better combination treatment regimes, cheaper and simplified diagnostic tools, and a low-cost community-led approach to delivery. These methods will ultimately have a greater impact.

- The United Nations in Viet Nam is happy to continue supporting the National Committee and its members to achieve these goals, and looks forward to further sustainable and effective progress in the response to HIV.

Finally, I would like to thank the DPM once again – on behalf of the United Nations in Viet Nam – for his tireless leadership and commitment and to wish him all the best for the future. I wish him all the best for the next stage of his life, and I am sure he will not be retiring completely.

Thank you.