



Committee: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)

Country: The Socialist Republic of Vietnam (Vietnam or Viet Nam)

Topics: The Role of Infrastructure in the Development of South East Asia, Future of Food, Labour Migration & Illegal Trafficking in the Asia- Pacific

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Although not a founding member of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Vietnam has actively participated in debating and drafting many resolutions during the seventy-second session of the committee held in July 2016. As the eighth most populous country in Asia with 90.5 million people, Vietnam faces many unique challenges; however, it shares certain challenges with other Southeast Asian countries including infrastructural development, sustainable agriculture and international migration. During this committee session, the delegate of Vietnam looks forward to working with other countries' delegates to create a comprehensive resolution to solving these issues, while upholding the values of "prosperity, social equity and sustainability."

1. The Role of Infrastructure in the Development of South East Asia

Infrastructure development can be categorized into two main areas: (a) hard infrastructure, which includes long-term physical structures, equipment, facilities and economic services, and (b) soft infrastructure, which includes policy and institutional frameworks that support hard infrastructure. As a lower-middle income country (LMIC), Vietnam has focused on improving both the quality and quantity of its railways and public transportation system and the amount of electrical supply available to power this infrastructure. Over the past twelve years, Vietnam has invested 10% of its GDP in infrastructure, 3% higher than the recommended minimum of 7%, which has led to rapid expansion and better access. The delegation of Vietnam recognizes that continued investment in the transportation and power generation sectors is required to address persistent traffic jams and frequent blackouts. Maintaining economic growth will require these issues to be addressed under a sustainable development approach that will simultaneously help to reduce poverty, reduce debt and better enable global partnerships with governments and private corporations. There is a sound precedent for this approach. In 1986, the Vietnamese government initiated economic reforms which directly and indirectly led to Vietnam achieving one of the world's highest economic growth rates since 2000 and the highest ranking in Global Growth Generators Index in 2011. The delegation believes that this economic growth can be maintained in the long term with a strong plan for sustainable, regionally-focused, infrastructure development.

Vietnam has been a leader in recognizing the importance of the Asian and Pacific region cooperation to build a strong inter-dependent system. It is one of the only seven Asian-Pacific countries and one of the only two South-Eastern countries to sign an intergovernmental agreement on dry ports. These dry ports are part of an overall larger plan entitled, the "Asian Land Transport Infrastructure Development Initiative," which is

focused on facilitating land transport through an Asian Highway, a Trans-Asia Railway and dry ports. Unfortunately, over the past two decades there has been insufficient support from the Asian-Pacific community for its completion. As well, the government of Vietnam has issued the “Strategic Orientation for Sustainable Development in Viet Nam” (Viet Nam Agenda 21) and established a National Sustainable Development Council. While these actions demonstrate our government's commitment to delivering world-class infrastructure, the delegation of Vietnam believes that there are inadequate and insufficient policies to interlink the transportation networks between countries.

Further, Vietnam’s single largest source of energy is hydroelectric; however, this leads to underutilization of the existing thermal stations, especially since the wet and dry season power output ratio is so uneven. Therefore, Vietnam needs to determine the appropriate mix of hydro and thermal capacity that can meet its energy demands. The delegate believes that achieving this mix, along with a renewed commitment to follow the plan set out in 2004 Electricity Law, will attract investment and promote competition in the private sector to meet Vietnam's long term energy and developmental needs. The current policy of publicly funding provincial transportation facilities through government payments has cost billions of dollars and has little measurable performance improvement. The delegation recognizes the need for a well-coordinated national plan to identify strategic large-scale projects, such as (a) an interprovincial coastal expressway connecting Ha Noi and HCMC, (b) a speed railway, and (c) two international airports and deep seaports. As well, it is working to ensure that provinces will be rewarded major infrastructure investments only when they find ways to attract efficient private investment of sufficient quantities to warrant the demanded infrastructure. It hopes that this will help align provincial and national interests, as infrastructure is the biggest drag on Vietnam’s national competitiveness and is the top constraint for companies operating in Vietnam.

With international cooperation and action, the delegation of Vietnam believes it can find a way to develop infrastructure that is beneficial to all. The delegation of Vietnam believes that the following policies will promote economic growth: (1) Create a formal body similar to the ASEAN that can coordinate infrastructure policies to attract private capital, (2) enhance accountability and transparency within government and create independent anti-corruption commissions to investigate government corruption, (3) create a smaller number of stronger public-private partnerships that can more effectively synthesize local and international agency advice, (4) reduce restrictions on the mobility of people between and within ASEAN nations, (5) close the digital divide currently separating populated and rural remote areas by funding projects to extend fibre optic connectivity and communication infrastructure (telephone and internet), (6) create a PAIF as recommended by the ADB to finance development projects and coordinate regional plans, (7) close the infrastructure gap between ASEAN member nations by facilitating the cross subsidization of projects by richer members, (8) accelerate development of an efficient and competitive logistics sector, (9) provide substantial support to organizations that facilitate trade within the region, (10) strengthen institutional capacity in lagging areas in the region, (11) coordinate and harmonize policies, programs and projects across regional borders, (12) develop pan-Asian

infrastructure networks that: (i) connect regional and global markets; (ii) are economically viable and supported by strong political leadership; (iii) are the result of national, bilateral, and subregional programs; and (iv) are informed and supported by regional programs that have been properly developed and financed, and (13) harnessing common energy sources by connecting national electricity grids and gas pipelines, to boost energy trade, increase diversity of supply and benefit the environment.

Ultimately, by working to develop better infrastructure, Vietnam can contribute in creating a more 'Seamless Asia,' with a new level of efficiency and productivity that helps to reduce the infrastructure gap for this region.

2. Future of Food

Like many Asian countries, Vietnam's economy is heavily dependent on agriculture. In fact, agriculture contributed 20% of Vietnam's GDP in 2015, and provided livelihood to an estimated 70% of the population. This heavy dependence on agriculture has left the country very vulnerable with about 3.2 million children malnourished. With Vietnam having the second highest population density for South East Asia, a strong action plan that is effective at the rural, national and regional level is needed. Although a reduction in child malnutrition rates has been achieved since the mid 1980's, it still remains a public health priority, especially in mountainous agricultural regions where maternal mortality, child mortality and child malnutrition rates are high among poor and disadvantaged groups. This issue is also relevant to Vietnam, as it has one of the highest number of farms in Asia with 10 million farms, which has led the government to realizing that agricultural income growth is effective in reducing poverty. Vietnam's many smallhold farmers are particularly exposed to the vagaries of climate change which in turn renders the country susceptible to food insecurity. At the 13th Conference of Parties to the UNFCCC held in 2007, Vietnam was recognised as one of the five countries "likely to be most affected by the impacts of climate change". The Mekong Delta in Vietnam is, in fact, one of the world's three most vulnerable deltas to experience sea level rise.

Moreover, Vietnam has widely adopted climate smart agriculture (CSA) practices, which is evident in the innovative methods used in raising black tiger shrimp and mud crabs, cassava-based integrated crop systems, cassava and tree plantations, fish farming, integrated landscape, climate-smart systems in paddy fields, cassava-grass forage strips, cut-and-carry forage systems, rice conversion to vegetables plots, macadamia-fruit tree-forages intercropping, and tea-coffee-fruit tree and forage integrated cropping systems. This has led to sustainable agriculture for many individuals but there is still much work to be done.

As is true of many countries in southeast Asia, rice is the single most important crop produced in Vietnam with production sufficient to meet both domestic and export demand. As a result, Vietnamese civilians have focused on maintaining rice self-sufficiency as a top priority. This is, however, at risk with the government decision in November of 2016 to rush out soft loans that help farmers withhold sales due to the falling rice prices causing an outcry in Thailand. Nonetheless, Vietnam, the world's third largest rice exporter, has undertaken several steps to assure future food security. In May 2016, the government approved a strategy to

restructure the rice industry by integrating production and developing a national brand, which will be able to command higher prices. The delegate also recognizes the positive effects that will accrue from the planned conversion of about 750,000ha (or 19%) of rice fields to mixed use farming. It will help dampen the exposure of Vietnam's rural households, most of whom are involved in the rice industry, to changes in rice prices and diversify their income. Rice specialist Pham Thi Kim Dung from Vietnam's Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development has said, "Rice brings much lower profitability compared with other agricultural commodities when Vietnamese farmers receive little support from the government. So the plan to reduce the amount of land for rice-planting and... keep the most suitable areas for paddy cultivation is expected to help farmers gain more from less." In regards to sustainable agriculture, Vietnam has policy objectives to ensure national food security and food supply sources, meet nutrition needs, benefit rice farmers, enable people's accessibility to food and increase efficiency of paddy land. Moreover, Vietnam has also signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1992 and ratified it in 1994, signed The Kyoto Protocol in 1998 and ratified in 2002 and signed the Hyogo Framework for Action in 2005. Vietnam's commitment is shown through the Prime Minister issuing a directive on Organising the Implementation of the Kyoto Protocol and approving the Plan for Organising the Implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. More recently, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has said it is "...seeking to create measures to tackle falling exports of major farm products, to assure it reaches its goal of US\$30 billion in export revenues of the agro-forestry-fishery sector for 2016."

In rural areas of Vietnam, about 45% of children and 40% of women are malnourished. Government action has been trying to improve this reduce these figures through a three-year pilot project that, with a contribution of US \$1.8 million from the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), sought to validate a tactic for tackling countryside child malnutrition. Specifically, the project focused on 'home gardening' to provide food, income and nutrition education for the families of malnourished children under five years of age. By working closely with the FAO, this experience is now being applied to other regions, based on its success. Vietnam has also collaborated with the National Institute of Nutrition and the FAO on the Household Food Security for Nutrition Project, which "integrates nutrition education with the transfer of small-scale agricultural technology to food-insecure households with malnourished children". It did this through training sessions, giving small grants to households and establishing simple low-cost homegardens. These incentives led to improved child feeding practices and a lowered rate of malnutrition and a strong sense of enhanced education and entrepreneurship, as set out in Goal 4 and Goal 8 of the Sustainable Development Goals respectively. Seeing as Vietnam's food production is largely made up by small-scale farmers, this focused approach led to 15 out of 40 communes experiencing a positive change in nutritional status, from severe malnutrition to moderate, or from moderate malnutrition to normal. Politics has also played a role in addressing the 'Future of Food,' in regard to climate change, which has most recently been reflected in Article 68 of the Constitution (2013) and the "Communist Party's Resolution on Active Response to Climate Change,

Improvement of Natural Resource Management and Environmental Protection” (2013). The latter includes goals that include a reduction of GHG emissions per unit of GDP from 8% (2010) to 10% (2020).

The delegate of Vietnam recommends that the UNESCAP implements the following solutions for increasing productivity and mitigating any current risks that are faced: (1) establish home gardens, which have seen great success in Vietnam, (2) develop and implement programs for rural communities that link nutrition education with a focus on breastfeeding, weaning foods, hygiene and child care, home gardening and livestock production, in hope of improving child nutrition and household food security, (3) encourage the lowering of food prices and dependence of a region on one specific food by using GMOs and other scientific measures to help agriculture adjust to the climate conditions.

By working with the international community, Vietnam hopes that it can help the South East Asian and Pacific region to prepare for the ‘future of food.’

3. Labour Migration and Illegal Trafficking in the Asia- Pacific

Recently, Vietnam has experienced large migration flows from rural to urban areas, due to its rapid economic development. In the international community, Vietnam - a labour-sending country - has faced challenges with illegal trafficking across borders with 4,500 women and children being trafficked or reported missing between 1998 and 2006. As well, Vietnam is a country where women and children are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation and forced labor, to be sent to China, Cambodia, Thailand, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan and Macau. Moreover, Vietnam's rapid economic development is also fuelling large migration flows from rural to urban and peri-urban areas where employment opportunities are more increasingly available. An estimated 25 to 30% of Vietnam's largest cities actually consist of migrants. Furthermore, with regard to international migration, about three million Vietnamese live abroad with another 450,000 residing abroad as temporary workers. In Vietnam, human trafficking has been closely associated with people seeking better employment opportunities, so the government is placing increasing priority on combating unsafe migration and on counter trafficking.

There are many UN agencies in Vietnam that coordinate counter-trafficking work through the Technical Working Group on Human Trafficking, a subgroup of the Programme Coordination Group on social protection, which is facilitated by The International Organization for Migration (IOM). Other UN agencies in Vietnam working on this issue include ILO, UNESCO, UNICEF and UNODC. The UN's human trafficking work includes policy advice and support for prevention, protection and prosecution activities. As a country, Vietnam has not ratified International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families or conventions by the ILO that have focused on: Freedom of Association, Forced Labour, Equal Treatment, Maternal Protection, Protection of Wages, Migration Employment, Private Employment Agencies, Domestic Workers and Labour Inspection. The delegate for Vietnam looks forward to working with the

international community to identify what changes need to be made to ensure its ratification. IOM has also established Assessment Centre models in border provinces of Vietnam, where “returned trafficked persons are able to stay in a safe and supportive environment and be assessed for reintegration by professional staff.” This has proven to be very helpful.

The Vietnamese government’s effort to reduce the issues surrounding migration can be categorized into 3 main areas: prosecution, protection and prevention. For prosecution, Vietnam recognizes that while there are many efforts to combat trafficking for sexual exploitation, existing laws do not comprehensively cover trafficking in persons, despite the fact that many statutes in the Penal Code allow for all forms to be prosecuted. Penalties given for trafficking both for sexual and labor exploitation are harsh and those for sexual exploitation are equivalent to crimes, such as rape. As well, the majority of traffickers are prosecuted under Articles 119, 120, and 275 of the Penal Code, which deal with trafficking for commercial sexual exploitation. This led to, in 2007, police investigating 369 cases of sex trafficking involving 930 women and children victims, but more still need to be done. There has also been a focus on protection, evident through a number of victim assistance and assessment centers that have been established in specific border areas. With this, sex trafficking victims are encouraged to assist in the investigation and prosecution process, in addition to filing law suits against sex traffickers. Unfortunately, the government still has no formal system of identifying victims of any type of trafficking, but with help from the United Nations, it continues to train the Border Guard Command and local Vietnamese authorities to “identify, process, and treat victims”. Finally, the government has focused on prevention through public awareness. It has been collaborating with international organizations and NGOs to provide training and assistance to various ministry officials and partner with in public awareness campaigns. Specific events include advertisements and radio and television, which have been targeted at schools in high-risk areas. It has also helped to establish a hotline for Vietnamese brides and sponsored a documentary for women planning to marry foreigners that depicted positive and negative outcomes, as this is when the women are often taken advantage of. At this time, there has been little done to reduce demand for commercial sex acts; however, Vietnam is working to improve this. There is a requirement that all tourists staying in hotels must register their passports to assist in keeping child sex tourists away from Vietnam; however, still many ‘short-stay’ hotels (geared towards prostitution) do not typically require registration, which has been an area of concern.

The delegation of Vietnam recommends the following solutions to solving our migration issue: (1) improve Government-to-Government schemes to reduce likelihood of illegal recruitments, (2) implement a subsidy on the migration of workers on a government-to-government basis, (3) increase number of offices that oversee protection of foreign workers, (4) amend the Pacific Island Countries Trade Agreement and PACER Plus to include more detail on executing policy objectives, (5) give workers basic rights, such as regular and fair pay, good conditions, more union rights (this may involve introducing union in some sectors) and reasonable hours, (6) urge member states to sign onto the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, (7) work with the Asian Migrant Centre to

expand into the other 51 members of the 61 members of UNESCAP, (8) have stronger enforcement that prevents the withholding of legal documents for foreign workers, and increasing penalties of employers that do so, (9) screen employment contracts to ensure that they are fair, (10) hold educational sessions in particularly affected communities to educate them on their rights, (11) implement a bottom-up approach, working with individual communities and regions, which focuses on enforcing regulations set in place, (12) create a migration policy group coalition to draft relevant policies applicable to each region, (13) support initial funding for micro business start up, further education and vocational training to immigrants, (14) require migrants to undergo a health assessment prior to travel, and (15) ensure there is escort assistance for medical cases, elderly migrants and unaccompanied minors.

The delegate of Vietnam firmly believes that labour migration and illegal trafficking and important, issues that should be at the forefront of the debate.

Vietnam has been an active member state of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and looks forward to offering its support, advice and experience in hopes of bettering the global community. As an engaged member of United Nations, Vietnam is eager to help determine solutions to issues occurring in Asia and the Pacific and to ensuring that we can better grow our economies and provide adequate social services to our citizens.

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