



Speech

Ms Setsuko Yamazaki, UNDP Country Director

Date: Thursday, 17 September

Event: Launch of UN-REDD programme

Mr Hua Duc Nhi, Vice Minister of MARD;

Your Excellency, Mr Stale Torstein Risa;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Every day, around the world, we see forests being cut down. This is a serious problem because close to 20 percent of the greenhouse gases entering the atmosphere are caused by deforestation. Reducing the loss of trees helps to lower the world's carbon emissions and is a key element in addressing the global climate change challenge. We therefore need to think of new ways and mechanism to protect our forests. An initiative known as Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) aims to do exactly that.

Since the 1990s, Viet Nam has steadily increased its total forested area. Yet, in 2004 over two-thirds of Viet Nam's natural forests were considered poor or regenerating while rich and closed-canopy forest constituted just over nine percent. Economic growth and a reliance on commodity exports have contributed to the forest degradation.

Viet Nam has taken important steps to curb this trend, such as long-standing national programmes focused on increasing forest coverage. Viet Nam was one of the first members of the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, and has also demonstrated leadership in promoting a regional approach to reducing emissions from deforestation in the lower Mekong basin.

It is in this context that Viet Nam first expressed interest to join the UN-REDD programme in November 2008. As you might know UN-REDD is the UN Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries – and is a partnership between FAO, UNDP and UNEP. It is funded generously by the Government of Norway.

Since Viet Nam was approved as a UN-REDD pilot country, it has become one of three countries to submit a comprehensive proposal to the UN-REDD policy board. Last month, Viet Nam became the first country to sign a full UN-REDD programme document and it is now the first pilot country to fully start implementing activities.

It is therefore a great pleasure to be here today to launch this important UN programme. I want to congratulate the Government of Viet Nam for being such a strong player in the fight against deforestation. I hope you continue in your leadership role. I would also like express the UN's strong appreciation for the support received from the Government of Norway.

Let me tell you a little bit about the UN-REDD programme and what it hopes to achieve.

One of the things will be to demonstrate that the costs associated with deforestation outweigh the immediate economic benefits of cutting down trees. The programme aims to tip the economic balance in favour of a more sustainable management of Viet Nam's forests – with global benefits like carbon sequestration. One of the first steps will be to set up a REDD coordination mechanism and to find out how to establish a comprehensive REDD benefit distribution system.

To achieve this, many challenges lie ahead of us.

First of all, we need to make sure that the outcome of the international climate negotiations in Copenhagen in December will include REDD in a form that will ensure a reduction in global greenhouse gas emissions – not just as a mechanism for off-setting the emission reduction

obligations of industrialized countries. Viet Nam should play an active role in the international negotiations to make this happen.

Secondly, it is critical that REDD benefits the poorer forest managers and communities and that these are the main beneficiaries of REDD and the UN programme. An institutional set-up that strengthens community forestry and a transparent financing mechanism are needed to ensure this.

Third, it is important to build up a transparent and reliable system for monitoring forest stocks.

Finally, as tackling deforestation is a complex issue a collaborative and multi-stakeholder effort is required – under the leadership of MARD. Many government agencies will reap the benefits of REDD and their active participation is critical to maximize the environmental and economic benefits that REDD has to offer.

As a pilot country, Viet Nam has been given the opportunity to be one of the first countries to benefit from the UN-REDD programme and showcase the value of its forests. We call for the collective skills and energy present in the room today to be channeled towards the goal of maintaining Viet Nam's burgeoning reputation as a world leader in REDD.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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In accordance with the United Nations Charter and Millennium Declaration, the United Nations advances the principles of equality and social justice, while providing impartial advice, technical expertise, access to global knowledge and local experience to meet Viet Nam's development challenges.