

(As prepared)

Statement by
H.E. Ambassador Nguyen Phuong Nga,
Permanent Representative of Viet Nam to the United Nations
at the Multi-stakeholder Forum on
“Challenges and opportunities in achieving gender equality and the
empowerment of rural women and girls”

Panel 2: "Empowering rural women and girls through quality education and access to information and communications technologies (ICT)"

At the outset, allow me to express my appreciation to UN Women for convening this very meaningful event and giving me an opportunity to share our viewpoints and experiences on this important topic.

1. Economic growth and the reduction of poverty in the past three decades have transformed Viet Nam from an agriculture-based economy to a diversified and fastest emerging economy. Together with economic development, education has always been our top policy. In 2000, we achieved universal primary education, 15 years ahead of the timeline set in MDGs. Currently, all provinces and cities has completed universal primary and lower-secondary education. The school network is evenly developed nationwide, basically meeting the learning needs of a growing population.

2. Viet Nam has also made great efforts in advancing gender equality and empowering women. (*women's labour force participation is one of the highest in the region at 73.2% in 2013*).

3. However, we still have to overcome significant inequalities by gender in rural areas, including in access to education. Besides persistent challenges of poor infrastructure, limited facilities and resources, ethnic minority girls and young women living in mountainous regions are likely to miss educational opportunities because the parents are unable to afford the costs of sending their daughters to school. In some remote areas, parents have to request bathroom construction for girls; otherwise, they will not allow their children to go to school. Another difficulty is the language barrier. Many girls drop out of school because they can not understand the lessons in Vietnamese, the official language in schools across Viet Nam.

4. As a famous saying: “Educate a girl, empower a nation”, we fully realize that education is one of the most powerful tools to empower women and girls, to lead change for a better quality of life. Therefore, our Government has collaborated with businesses and social organizations to provide opportunities for the girl’s participation at schools.

- The teaching conducted by minority languages is being implemented in 20 provinces. The Ministry of Education and Training works in cooperation

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with UNICEF to implement a pilot bilingual education program based on mother tongue.

- To open up learning opportunities in rural areas, community learning centers have been put in place and proved to be effective. Viet Nam Association for Learning Promotion with its network of branches across the country organizes literacy and life-skills classes, vocational training courses. In 2017, nearly 900.000 classes of these kinds have been conducted across the country, which enable them to learn life skills, knowledge, gain the ability to cope with natural disasters, tackle diseases, etc. These efforts greatly contribute to poverty reduction, increased labour productivity, job-creation and economic restructuring in rural areas.

- Media plays a very important role in soliciting attention and support to women and girls in rural areas. Viet Nam's Television has broadcast nationwide a documentary on children in a remote village, who have to swim across river to schools. Following the media report of the children's plight, the village has received support and assistance not only from the government, but also volunteers, organisations, philanthropy to build bridges for children.

5. The empowering use of ICTs is closely connected to socio-economic development and everyone should have access.

ICT shows a fast expansion in Viet Nam. In particularly the number of mobile phone and internet users have increased at a very high speed irrespective of location, gender, and profession. 55% of Viet Nam's population (which is now more than 93 million) is frequent internet users. There is more than 130 million mobile phone subscription.)

Last September, as the host country of APEC, we organized 2017 APEC Women and the Economy Forum on a theme: **"ENHANCING WOMEN'S ECONOMIC INCLUSION AND EMPOWERMENT IN THE CHANGING WORLD"**.

The Forum has sent a very strong message that governments, the private sector and civil society must work collaboratively to strengthen women's and girl's access to quality education, training, and skills development environments and bridge the digital gender divide to improve women and girls' digital literacy.

We should take advantage of new opportunities presented by the Digital Age, including online learning.

The outcome we expect from the incoming CSW is that we could have innovative approaches to the empowerment of rural women and girls. In this regard, I am pleased to inform that Viet Nam, together with Malta, RASIT, Costa Rica and Hungary, will co-organise the Women in Science Forum on 8-9 February as our constructive contribution to the promotion of equality and

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parity in science.

6. Our Government is now working closely with other stakeholders and development partners, including UN Women, to try our best to make inclusive growth work for women, to realize the full economic and social rights and overall potential of women, especially those living in rural areas.