



SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM

Statement by
H.E. AMBASSADOR BUI THE GIANG,
Deputy Permanent Representative of Vietnam,
at the Special Meeting of ECOSOC on food crisis
New York, 20 May 2008

Mr. President,

Let me first of all join previous speakers in thanking you for convening this timely meeting on food crisis, one of the topics most frequently discussed today at both formal and informal forums. Reasons of the crisis have been said to be many, including to an essential extent impacts of the increased global energy price that led to the rise in prices of fertilizer, processing equipment, shipping costs, and ultimately the dramatic spike in agricultural production costs. Speculation has also been mentioned as one of the major reasons. But whatever reasons are, there is an apparent reality that the sharply escalating food prices over the recent months have made basic staples like rice, corn and wheat unaffordable for millions of people in many countries, especially developing ones. And this calls for immediate actions in response.

Mr. President,

An agro-based economy itself, Viet Nam is no exception when we talk about this food crisis. Just a short while ago, within a mere period of two months, Vietnamese consumers 67% of whom living in rural areas suffered a double increase in prices of rice, the most important component of every Vietnamese family's meal. From the Government's perspective, this exerted a multiple pressure on the country's capacity to control inflation and ensure macro-economic stability while posing a formidable threat to the achievement of national social and economic goals.

In face of the situation, the Vietnamese Government has put in place a number of immediate measures, including intensified information and communication activities, more fiscal policy incentives, and accelerated implementation of strategy on farmers, agriculture and rural areas. At the same time, we have further pushed forward the elaboration of a longer-term plan for food security. Thanks to the aggregate efforts, the overall situation has fundamentally come back to normal, with soaring food prices being curbed and the right to food being mainly ensured for the population, particularly the poor. Also for your information, the Mekong Delta, the main rice paddy stock of our country, has just recorded a bumper harvest of some 9.4 - 9.6 million tons. If weather

conditions are favorable, the total rice paddy yield of the Delta for two seasons of this year may reach 16.5 - 17 million tons, equivalent to 8.5 - 9 million tons of rice. These encouraging calculations enable us to fully honor existing rice exporting contracts and consider signing new ones. As an act of gratitude to those who have come to our help in times of need and also a gesture of solidarity with other peoples during these hard times, we are indeed working closely with foreign partners on possible agreements on rice trade, most notably Asian and African countries. We have for the past few days hosted several African leaders coming to our country for this purpose. And we are making intensive preparations for the 4th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) to be held in Yokohama, Japan in a week from now also for that purpose.

Mr. President,

The Vietnamese Government is fully conscious of both the urgency and long-term challenges of food security. Given the complex and multidimensional nature of the current food crisis, we believe that there can be no single solution to it, and no single country can act alone. The designing of a package of comprehensive measures requires extra efforts from all members of the international community. In the immediate time, food relief is needed for people in hunger- and famine-ridden areas of the world. In the long run, it is imperative to once again raise the awareness of policy makers and practitioners and the population at large on the vitality of agriculture and the necessity of investment in agriculture which has been widely perceived during the last few decades as a low profitable sector of the economy. In this connection, developed countries should implement their commitments of financing for development, particularly in the agricultural sector, provide further technical assistance in agricultural capacity building and technology transfer. The continued support of donors for South-South cooperation in agriculture is also needed to make it more effective and beneficial to sustainable agricultural development in agro-based countries.

Mr. President,

We are strongly convinced that in this context the United Nations can and should play the leading role. We therefore support the Secretary-General's initiative to establish a Task Force to deal with the food crisis. We also appreciate the Secretary-General's invitation to leaders of Member States to the Conference in Rome this June. The Vietnamese Government will do its best to contribute to this conference and beyond. May we, at the same time, suggest that the United Nations incorporate the food crisis as an important intertwined topic into other coming conferences on climate change and financing for development.

Thank you, Mr. President.