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CỘNG HOÀ XÃ HỘI CHỦ NGHĨA VIỆT NAM  
TẠI LIÊN HỢP QUỐC

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**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Le Luong Minh  
Permanent Representative of Viet Nam  
at the General Assembly High-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural  
Understanding and Cooperation for Peace  
(Agenda Item 45: Culture of Peace)  
12 November 2008**

Mr. President,

At the outset, on behalf of the Delegation of Viet Nam, I wish to thank you for convening the 2<sup>nd</sup> high-level Dialogue on Interreligious and Intercultural Understanding and Cooperation for Peace. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on the activities carried out by key United Nations entities in implementation of General Assembly Resolution 62/90. My Delegation commends the positive measures undertaken over the past years within the framework of the United Nations in promoting the culture of peace in general and in facilitating interreligious and intercultural dialogue in many parts of the world as a means to achieve this goal in particular. Viet Nam supports the approach pursued by U.N. bodies and mechanisms, especially UNESCO, UNFPA, the Department of Public Information, the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs which advocates long-term measures focusing on *inter alia* further educating the younger generations in the veneration for cultural and religious diversity.

Mr. President,

As we discuss interreligious and intercultural understanding and cooperation for peace, we must be reminded that while peace is the premise for the solution of problems such as hunger, malnutrition, poverty, racial and religious discriminations affecting the lives of hundreds of millions of people in many countries and societies and a whole array of global issues facing mankind such as climate change, environmental degradation, HIV/AIDS, peace can not be sustainable without solution of these burning problems. Interreligious and intercultural understanding and cooperation thus can only be promoted if it is based on the shared desire to contribute to strengthening this organic relationship between peace and development and the solution of problems affecting people of all faiths. We are deeply convinced that UNESCO as well as other U.N. bodies, with their pools of wisdom and expertise,

should play the leading role in coordinating Member States' actions in promoting interreligious and intercultural understanding and cooperation in this direction.

Mr. President,

With a population of nearly 90 million, Viet Nam is home to 54 ethnic groups each endowed with its own unique culture. In Viet Nam, apart from the world's major religions like Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam, indigenous religions like Cao-daism and Hoa-haoism attract approximately 2 million followers each. The many-thousand-year long history of the Vietnamese nation has been one of both constant interreligious and intercultural diversity and unity which have not only well co-existed but also strengthened each other as required by historical contexts of our struggles against alien forces and harsh natural conditions for survival. In most difficult times, Vietnamese have never failed to foster interreligious and intercultural understanding, cooperation and harmony for the preservation of national independence, sovereignty and peace. Interreligious and intercultural hostilities are foreign to our tradition. Over the past years, the country has adopted a series of laws and policies that aim at protecting the nation's diverse cultural values and guaranteeing the people's freedom to religion and belief. Education syllabuses have been developed in 8 minority languages, while a special television channel has been opened to broadcast in 10 minority languages and thousands of programs have been aired by the national radio in 13 minority languages. Great endeavors have been undertaken to help create scripts for many ethnic groups who only had spoken languages for ages. The Vietnamese Constitution provides for freedom of religion and for equality between all religions before the law. Most recently, the United Nations Vesak Day was observed in Viet Nam with some 5,000 Buddhists participating to uphold the philosophy of peace, harmony, compassion, non-violence, tolerance, and no-self. The unprecedented candle-lighting ceremony involving 20,000 people from all religious and non-religious backgrounds at the closing ceremony of the event reaffirms the earnest aspiration of our people for a world of peace and harmony.

Mr. President,

As I mentioned above, interreligious and intercultural hostilities are foreign to the tradition of the Vietnamese nation. Not foreign are the attempts by certain individuals, for their selfish political interests, disguising under the cloak of religion, to carry out activities detrimental to the very fundamental foundation for a culture of peace, which is public order and the guarantee of equality in both rights and obligations of all religions before the law and equality of all citizens in both rights and obligations before the law. For the promotion of interreligious and intercultural understanding and cooperation for peace, it is the duty of all Member States to ensure that such attempts to abuse religious freedom that we all cherish in sabotage of our shared peace is foreign in our cultures.

I thank you, Mr. President!