

CSO Forum on Social Forestry in ASEAN Opening Remark by Dr. Le Cong Luong

Ladies and gentlemen's from ASEAN Member States;
Friends and colleagues;
Honorable guests.

On behalf of Vietnam Union of Science and Technology Associations (VUSTA), I warmly welcome you to attend the Civil Society Forum on Social Forestry in ASEAN.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Vietnam has more than 14 million hectares of forests, including 10 million hectares of natural forests and more than 4 million hectares of plantation forests. About one third of our population, or around 30 million people, are living upon forest resources. However, contribution from the forestry sector to the national economy is still modest. Forest dependent communities are still facing difficulties. For the last 10 years, Vietnam government has made tremendous efforts to develop forestry sector, restore forests, decrease greenhouse emission, protect the environment and adapt to climate change. Vietnam has joined the Voluntary Partnership Agreement on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (VPA-FLEGT). In 2017, Vietnam National Assembly passed the Forestry Law to replace the 2004 Forest Protection and Development Law. This legislation contributes to promoting and enabling forest protection and development work in Vietnam. Along with government's efforts, social organizations working in forestry in Vietnam also have carried out many practical and effective activities in forest protection and development.

VUSTA is the umbrella for more than 500 non-state science and technology organizations, including those working in forestry sector. We have signed an Action Plan with the Vietnam Administration of Forestry of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. VUSTA and social organizations have organized various activities such as consulting, reviewing and advocating to contribute to the policy development process. We evaluated different aspects of the 2004 Forest Protection and Development Law and organized conferences, workshops to review, assess and consult the Government's Drafting Committee and the National Assembly. Currently, we are working to contribute to the development of the Decree on Detailing the Implementation of the 2017 Forestry Law, which will be enforced on January 1st 2019.

In addition to policy activities, social organizations have actively involved in other fields such as wildlife conservation, forestry policy monitoring and evaluation, and science and technology application in forestry sector. All these activities contribute to a greener and cleaner Vietnam, more economic benefits and better welfare for our people, especially for ethnic minority communities.

Ladies and gentlemen! The CSO forum on Forestry in ASEAN is a good initiative. Through this year theme "Sustaining Collaborative and Innovative People-centred Actions and Contributions in NDCs and the Sustainable Development Goals", we hope that all delegates can share and exchange meaningful experiences and valuable lessons on social/community forestry to enhance the effectiveness of forest protection and

development work in ASEAN and in the world, creating sustainable livelihoods, eradicating hunger and reducing poverty in different communities especially in ethnic minority and remote communities.

On behalf of social organizations in Vietnam, and as the host country, I wish this forum a success to contribute to protect and develop forests, improve welfare for our people and our green earth. I wish you all good health. During the time here, I hope you all have time to relax and enjoy Da Nang - a young and dynamic city with romantic beaches and great oceanic views. I hereby declare that the 7th Annual Meeting of CSO Forum on Forestry in ASEAN is now opening.

Thank you!