

Opening speech
Ms. Nguyen Thi Kim Thoa, Director, Department of Ministry of Justice.

My respect to:

- Ms. Margaret Akullo, Project Coordinator, UNODC representative
- Ms. Annethe Ahlenius, INTERPOL representative
- Ms. Amber Parker, AusAID representative
- Representative from World Vision Viet Nam
- All distinguished guests, representatives from ministries, institutions and organizations,

On behalf of the Ministry of Justice and on my own behalf, I am extremely glad and honored to attend the opening session of the consultation workshop “A Legal Framework for combating Child Sex Tourism” today.

I would like to express my warm welcome to ladies and gentlemen from various ministries, institutions, organizations who arranged 3 days to go far away from Ha Noi to attend this workshop.

Today’s workshop aims are:

- To inform key officials and policymakers of the Vietnamese Government of the new regional initiative, Project Childhood, and the project’s relevance to the fight against child sex tourism, with a view to further collaboration.
- To present key findings of the legal analysis review undertaken by UNODC and solicit a view from participants on strengthening the criminal justice system in combatting child sex tourism.
- To invite participants to provide feedback on the implementation plan that is geared towards strengthening the legislative framework.
- To invite key officials and policymakers of the Ministry of Justice to collaborate with the implementing team of Project Childhood (Protection Pillar) after the project has been endorsed by the Vietnamese Government.
- To invite Ministry of Justice to nominate a legal focal point to review the legal framework analysis report with a view to taking forward the recommendations to strengthen the country’s legislation in addressing child sex tourism.
- To network with law enforcement officials in Hai Phong, which is a potential location for Project Childhood activities

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen!

The tourism industry has been a key contributor to national revenue and has generated a lot of employment opportunities for local businesses, community members and poor people in Viet Nam. The number of national and international tourists has been increasing constantly, especially in the past few years.

Despite the fact that tourism contributes to the national economy, increases employment for people and revenues from tour services, the growth from tourism industry creates a number of economic and social problems in the country. One of these problems is child sex tourism.

Viet Nam was the first country in the Asia and the second country in the world to ratify the Child Rights Convention and has participated in other international treaties relating child protection. Through it, Viet Nam Government expresses its strong commitment for child protection issues.

Viet Nam Government has promulgated many programs and policies on child protection and on prevention and combating crimes, especially child abuse, including child sex tourism.

On 22 February 2011, the Prime Minister of Viet Nam has promulgated Decision No. 267/QĐ-TTg which approved the Child Protection Program from 2011-2015. The Program aims to create a safe and healthy environment where all children are protected, to prevent and eliminate risks of harms for children and mitigate number of children falling in special circumstances, abuse and violence; to support and recover promptly those who have fallen in special circumstances and suffered from abuse and violence and create opportunity for them to enjoy re-integration and equal development.

On 31 July 1998 the Prime Minister of Viet Nam has promulgated Decision No. 138/1998/QĐ-TTg to approve a National Program on prevention and combating crimes¹. The Program aimed to make significant changes on social safety and order, to reduce the incidence of crime including child abuse crimes, and to raise awareness about respecting the law.

In March 2011 National Assembly has passed the Law on anti human trafficking, which came into effect on 1 January 2012. In August 2011 the Prime Minister of Viet Nam approved Action Program on prevention and combating human trafficking offences period 2011-2015². The Program aims to raise awareness in combating human trafficking offences and to increase the effectiveness of investigation and prosecution of human trafficking cases. A National Steering Committee (Steering Committee 130/CP) was established with a Deputy Prime Minister acting as the Committee President and representatives of relevant government agencies acting as members.

Viet Nam has various legal instruments stipulating child sexual abuse acts such as the Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code, Law on Child Protection and Care, Law on anti-human trafficking, Ordinance on anti- Prostitution. In order to effectively combat child abuse offences, there is a need to review over the whole relevant legal framework and policy on child protection and strengthening the system to ensure full compliance with the Child Rights Convention, and other international standards and consistent with each other, aiming to identify weaknesses and gaps which could be addressed by a new law and amendment of the law..

Ladies and Gentlemen!

I, therefore, hope today's consultation workshop "A Legal Framework for Combating Child Sex Tourism" will receive good recommendations from all of you regarding improvement of the current legal framework in Viet Nam to protect children from traveling child sex offenders and implementation plan for the Project Childhood (Protection Pillar) for the next 3 years.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for co-organizing this workshop, to AusAID for financial support for the workshop and I would also like to extend my thankfulness to World Vision, INTERPOL and government counterparts, international organizations for attending this workshop.

I hereby declare the consultation workshop "A Legal Framework for Combating Child Sex Tourism" now open.

Thank you!

And I would like to give the floor to Ms. Margaret Akullo, Project Coordinator, representative from UNODC Regional Centre to give her welcome remarks to the workshop's participants.

¹ http://vbqpppl.moj.gov.vn/vbpcq/Lists/Vn%20bn%20php%20lut/View_Detail.aspx?ItemID=7606 (in Vietnamese)

² [http://www.molisa.gov.vn/docs/VBPL/detailVBPL/tabid/213/DocID/7676/TabModuleSettingsId/450/language/vi-VN/Default.aspx\(in Vietnamese\)](http://www.molisa.gov.vn/docs/VBPL/detailVBPL/tabid/213/DocID/7676/TabModuleSettingsId/450/language/vi-VN/Default.aspx(in Vietnamese))