

Speech

By UN Resident Coordinator a.i., Mr. Youssouf Abdel-Jelil

Date: 11 January 2017
Event: HPG meeting on the draft National SDG Action Plan towards implementation of the health-related targets
Venue: Fortuna Hotel, 6B Lang Ha, Ha Noi

Good Morning, Xin Chao,

Her Excellency Madam Minister of Health, Associate Professor Nguyen Thi Kim Tien,

His Excellency Vice-Minister, Professor Le Quang Cuong,

Colleagues and Partners from the United Nations and Viet Nam Development Partners,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my an honor for me to co-chair alongside Her Excellency Minister Tien this final Health Partners' Group meeting for the Lunar Year.

The National Action Plan for Implementation of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has recently been developed through a coordinated effort led by the Ministry of Planning and Investment. I would like to congratulate the Government of Viet Nam for swiftly undertaking this Action Plan, which is the single most important step in this first year of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 agenda.

Today's meeting is a milestone for two reasons:

- it is the first sectoral-focused SDG discussion following the drafting of the National SDG Action plan; and
- it re-affirms people's centrality in the SDGs and health at the core of human development.

As we move forward, it is important to reflect on the true meaning of the SDGs and I would like to offer some thoughts on this.

1) The SDGs provide us with the opportunity to strengthen our focus towards equity for all.

Leaving no one behind is the ultimate goal of the SDGs. This is a strong reminder for us to ensure that all efforts are made to address the inequities that contribute to poor health and stall the attainment of the highest potential for human development.

Inequities in health need broader actions along the social determinants and the root causes of poor health. For example, significant inequities and disparities persist across geographic regions and between Kinh majority and ethnic minority populations. Maternal mortality ratios are twice as high in rural areas, and three times higher among ethnic minority groups than Kinh. The trend is similar for under-five mortality rate with high rates among ethnic minorities and in rural mountainous and disadvantaged areas.

As we move forward in developing and implementing our operational plans for health, let us ensure that we put the most vulnerable including ethnic minorities, migrants, children, adolescents, LGBT, people living with HIV, people with disabilities at the centre and ensure that every measure or indicator we define will help to reflect how they have been reached or how their lives have been impacted by our interventions.

2) Health as a development agenda.

The SDGs also provide us a platform to position health as a development agenda. Vibrant and well-developed economies depend on a healthy and productive population. The history of well-developed economies including in this larger Asia region reveals that development policies were undertaken alongside strong health reforms that focused on the provision of essential health services at the primary care level as well as efficient health financing policies that support universal health coverage. This is essential in the context of a lower middle-income such as Viet Nam given declining international ODA support.

3) *It will take the whole nation to achieve SDGs and therefore multi-sectoral action isn't optional, it's imperative.*

SDGs are not just indicators to be measured - they are global, regional and national and multi-sectoral efforts to comprehensively respond to the diverse needs of dynamic populations.

The interconnectedness of the SDGs serves as a framework to develop societies and communities that will support the attainment of health and well-being. Approximately 75% of health outcomes are dependent on living and working conditions of the population. The right policies on the environment and climate change, food safety, animal health, transportation and air quality, social protection and economic productivity, among others, will all contribute to good health.

The health sector will need to forge partnerships with other sectors and strengthened policy dialogue between government and its partners (including CSOs and the private sector) will be crucial to ensure we attain the health goals and that health is a positive contributor to achievement of other sectors.

4) *Mutual accountability in the attainment of SDGs is essential.*

The SDGs require governments and all of partners to work together towards their attainment. It is, therefore, important for each of us to carefully consider how our individual agencies' agenda can support the attainment of SDGs in Viet Nam.

Moving forward, we – the government's partners – will all need to reflect on how our development cooperation can contribute to the attainment of Viet Nam's SDGs in the context of its needs and stage of development. This will require careful planning and sustained dialogue among us. We also need to demonstrate our commitment to a shared vision for this country in line with Viet Nam's SDG agenda, and the principles of effective development cooperation enshrined in Viet Nam Health Partnership Document.

We must work towards supporting the SDG National Action Plan to which the United Nations in Viet Nam has contributed and the development of specific strategies to operationalize the Action Plan for sustainable improvements in the health of the population.

The UN in Viet Nam stands alongside the other development partners to support a nationwide approach to attain Viet Nam's SDGs. The UN in Viet Nam houses a wide range of technical and strategic expertise relevant to the different SDGs and we commit to making this expertise available to health and other sectors.

In closing, I would like to thank the Ministry of Health, especially Minister Tien, for the opportunity to co-chair today's meeting on behalf of development partners including UN agencies.

I look forward to a productive meeting today.

Thank You

Xin cam on!