

## ISG STEERING BOARD – CORE DONOR GROUP

May 11, 2004

### BRIEFING NOTE

#### **A. Foreword**

Following the Eight Meeting of ISG Steering Board on March 30, 2004, an “Informal Core Donor Group” met several times to provide MARD with some consolidated suggestions regarding the preparation of Policy Advisory Briefings to be addressed for the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development.

This Briefing Note summarize the discussions which were held on March 23, March 26 and April 7, 2004, and attended by representatives of ADB, UNDP, Embassies of Australia, the Netherlands, Denmark, and WB.

The Informal Core Donor Group strongly support the proposed Strategic Work Plan for ISG and in particular the key area of activity “Facilitation of Policy Dialogue within MARD and between MARD and the Donor Community”. We consider that the preparation of Policy Advisory Briefings is a critical element to support this dialogue and that the Thematic Ad-hoc Groups (TAG) as well as the working group established by ICARD and the various partnership should be empowered to prepare these briefings.

#### **B. Key Policy Areas**

As expressed during the ISG Steering Board Meeting advisory functions are very important and should be linked to on-going key policy discussions within MARD, such as preparation for the WTO membership of Vietnam, preparation of the Forest Protection and Development Law, finalization of the Natural Disaster Mitigation Strategy and Action Plan and Implementation of the Water Strategy, well as cross-cutting discussions involving MARD, such as the integration of CPRGS in MARD strategy and the preparation of a Medium-term expenditure framework (MTEF) for which MARD is one of the four pilot Ministries.

However, it is also essential to prioritize policy discussions and to synchronize them with the overall policy agenda for Vietnam. We therefore suggest the following key policies areas, assuming that the Policy Advisory Briefings would be Quarterly:

#### **June 1, 2004 – Preparation of the CG Meeting**

Streamlining CPRGS into MARD rural development strategy:

Taking stock of the progress in implementing the CPRGS in the rural sector and preparing the next 5-years Plan 2006-2010. TAG 3 will contribute to the Briefing Note preparation process; it will provide inputs, as well as comments and suggestions on drafted ISG Briefing Notes.

### **September 30, 2004 – Preparing for the WTO membership of Vietnam**

Status of Negotiations and what are implication of WTO accession for Vietnam agriculture. TAG 1 will contribute to the Briefing Note preparation process; it will provide inputs, as well as comments and suggestions on drafted ISG Briefing Notes.

### **December 31, 2004 – Forest Protection and Development Law**

Status of the Preparation of the Draft Law and on-going issues in particular for the recognition of community right to forestry land.

The Forest Sector Support Program (FSSP) could be empowered to prepare this Briefing.

### **March 31, 2005 – Implementing the Water Strategy and Operationalizing Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM)**

In particular improving the performance of Vietnam’s Public Managed Irrigation and Drainage systems as well as supporting the PIM Strategy which is fully in line with the Government’s Grassroots Democratization and Decentralization Concepts are critical areas which would benefit from a broad discussion.

TAG 2 will contribute to the Briefing Note preparation process; it will provide inputs, as well as comments and suggestions on drafted ISG Briefing Notes.

In addition, “Preparing for the WTO Membership of Vietnam” and “Implementing the Water Strategy” are considered priority themes which could also be subject of discussion at the September 2004 and March 2005 Steering Board meetings respectively.

### **C. Other Areas of Discussion**

The above list is not exhaustive and during our meetings we have identified other areas of possible joint discussions including: (a) State-owned enterprises reform; (b) Rural Water and Sanitation Review; (c) Public Administration Reform in MARD; (d) Professionalization of the Agriculture Sector and Human Resources Development.

We trust that you will find these suggestions useful and are ready to support MARD in developing its reform agenda.