

## Joint Statement of Comments from a number of International Donors on the Second Draft of MARD's 5-Year Plan (2006-2010)

**Mr. Joe Thwaites, Ambassador, Australian Embassy**  
**Mr. Peter Lysholt Hansen, Ambassador, Royal Danish Embassy**  
**Mr. Gerben de Jong, Ambassador, Royal Netherlands Embassy**  
**Mr. Jan-Olov Agrell, Minister for Development Cooperation of the Swedish Embassy**  
**Mr. Klaus Rohland, Country Director, The World Bank**  
**Mr. Bradford Philips, Country Director, Vietnam Resident Mission, Asian Development Bank**  
**Dr. Markus Cornaro, Ambassador, Head of Delegation, European Commission**

We would like to express our appreciation to you, Minister Cao Duc Phat, for the cooperative and open way in which you and your Ministry have engaged with us in considering the Five Year Plan (FYP). It is not an easy task to reform the planning process for such a major and diverse Ministry. We applaud the initiatives that you are taking.

We support your efforts to establish a more strategic, transparent and result-oriented FYP - one based on sub-sectors rather than departments, one that incorporates social and sustainability goals, and one with added emphasis on consultation with stakeholders, including the donors.

We have prepared a report that synthesises our detailed comments on the draft FYP. We would like to present that to you for your consideration and also invite other international partners to put forward their comments at the Consultation Meeting on 18 March 2005.

We believe that the Synthesis Report contains suggestions and comments that will assist MARD and MPI to clarify how this planning reform could be institutionalised in the sector's regular management activities. We believe that renovation of the planning process needs to be sustained throughout the entire planning and management cycle.

There are a number of points that we consider would strengthen the planning process. We would like you to consider these:

- Firstly, the FYP should establish a stronger overall *long-term vision* for the future direction of the agriculture and rural development sector at large. This vision would help anchor other elements of the plan and should be based on genuine and thorough scenario planning and analysis.
- We consider that the FYP should be based on market-oriented growth, sustainable natural resource management and empowerment, and especially include provision for *specific targeting* of priority programmes towards poor people and regions, and outline application of *equitable and participatory approaches*.
- There is also a need to create *better linkages* between, on the one side, the overall objectives and targets and, on the other, priority programmes, resource allocation, definition of institutional delivery mechanisms and indicators for measuring success. These linkages are critical and would allow assessment of real needs at the sub-sectoral level. It is also critical to align public spending and institutional setting. We are confident that the proposed logical framework will help clarify the internal logic of MARD's FYP and its component activities.
- While the overall goals support poverty and sustainability concerns, the FYP in its current form does not provide clear direction as to *how* these goals and concerns are to be addressed in priority programmes. This is a critical missing element.

- In addition, the FYP should define relative priorities between priority programmes. This would greatly enhance the document's potential as a management tool for prioritisation of effort and resources in the implementation phase.
- The FYP has a strong agriculture basis but other sub-sectors need to be covered adequately and cross-sectoral linkages needs to be established. MARD and its departments should promote cross-sector collaboration in the rural space as a whole, consistent with its mandate.
- The FYP should also reflect existing priorities and commitments embedded in current national and MARD-level action plans, strategies, legal frameworks and in international conventions signed by Viet Nam. In this context care needs to be taken that the FYP, the sub-sector strategies (e.g., forestry), and the underlying sub-sectoral work plans, are all internally consistent and reflect agreed priorities and outcomes.
- In addition, the FYP should clarify what services MARD and its network intends to deliver to rural peoples in view of the market-oriented directions and the emphasis on increasing decentralisation.
- Many of us are seeking further information from MARD on the evidence-based planning and prioritisation that it has undertaken, which so far is not evident in the FYP. What is the analytical foundation of the FYP and what are the gaps to be covered in view of dramatic changes in drivers of rural growth?
- We also suggest that implementation capacity should also be considered in greater detail. This will be applicable at all levels. The FYP should include a critical assessment of how this is to be addressed.
- We believe that the FYP will be better based, more comprehensive and of greater relevance if it were based on even more transparency and consultation, particularly at the sub-sectoral and sub-national levels, to allow the full range of stakeholders opportunities to give more substantive contributions. These stakeholders include the private sector, provinces and civil society.

Finally, Minister Phat, we ask that you consider and respond to our suggestions in the spirit in which they are made – to continue the process of renovating the planning process so that the resultant FYP will serve you, and all of us, as a sound and rational tool for planning, managing and investment by your Ministry and by us as donors. We look forward to continuing to work closely with you and to providing support to achieve this outcome.