



Statement by
H.E. MR. HA KIM NGOC, DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM
At the Panel Discussion on Climate Change and the Rights of the Child
(March 2nd, 2017)

Mr. President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For the first time, the Human Rights Council adopted with a broad cosponsorship Resolution 32/33, which brings us to this important panel on addressing the growing adverse impacts of climate change on the rights of children.

Let's review some of the facts revealed by UNICEF: Over half a billion children, 23% of the world's children, live in extremely high flood occurrence zone. Nearly 160 million children live in high or extremely high drought severity zones. In Viet Nam, the flood in the Centre of Viet Nam at the end of last year took the lives of 10 children while drought and salinization caused by the longest El Nino in history affected more than 500,000 children.

These are not just numbers. They are lives with potential. Lives that are being set back and threatened by malnutrition, respiratory and vector-borne diseases, hindered access to education and healthcare. Lives that face the risk of losing their houses, family, and livelihood.

Mr. President,

There are many challenges to combating the negative impacts of climate change on children's rights. For developing countries, the lack of resources, weak infrastructures and forecast capacity, make it harder to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change on vulnerable groups, including children. The bigger challenge, however, lies in raising awareness on how climate change hurts children's rights. Only when adults fully comprehend how climate change can obstruct the growth of children, will we be able to build children-centered climate change adaptation and mitigation policies. Another concern is the insufficient attention to educating children about measures to combat climate change, from being more environmentally conscious in daily actions to thinking about out-of-the-box solutions.

From the experience of my country that is among the top 5 most affected by climate change, we believe that there are three key areas of focus in responding to the adverse effects of climate change on the rights of children.

First, it is essential to develop child-centered policies in adapting to climate change and mitigating its negative impacts. The Government of Viet Nam adopted the 2012-2020 National Strategy on Climate Change and the National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2020, both of which underline the significance of addressing negative impacts on children and provide frameworks for provinces to build their own plans. To ensure their effective implementation in the best interests of the child, these plans include comprehensive childcare and protection measures at all stages: prevention as much as mitigation and remediation. Climate change communication is given equal focus as child protection during disasters or recovery after disasters, which requires active participation of all stakeholders. In this connection, we are currently considering building a child-centered Program on Disaster Risk Reduction for 2017 – 2021 period that focuses on improving inter-agency coordination and capacity building in mitigating the impacts of recurring weather risks on children.

Second, more efforts must be devoted to improving public knowledge and awareness on climate change and its impacts on children. We need to build a climate change literate generation through fostering children's education on climate change. Schools, families, community and particularly the media should be all active in this process. In Viet Nam, climate change has been integrated into the curricula of kindergarten to all grade schools. Many initiatives have been undertaken, for instance, the organization of workshops, painting contests, music festivals, television show on climate change, to name a few. We are aware, however, that there remains room for further improvement. Only when both children and adults understand climate change and its impacts on children, can they become active actors of children-centered adaptation and mitigation measures.

Last but not least, enhancing international cooperation on climate change, particularly on addressing its impacts on children, is indispensable. While strengthening cooperation in the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework, we must ensure children's rights are fully mainstreamed into all international initiatives. We believe that the UN should take the lead in promoting international studies on the impact of climate change on children and proposing more coordinated actions in response to this issue. Viet Nam is thankful for the invaluable assistance and support UN agencies and the international community extended to our people and our children to help them recover from El Nino and other severe weather risks last year.

We look forward to continued cooperation and wish to learn from your experience, particularly how you educate children and raise public awareness on climate change.

Thank you.