

Mr. Le Quoc Trung, Standing Vice-Chairman of Viet Nam Journalists Association, Ms. Doan Thi Thuan, Vice Director of the Press and Publication Department under the Central Party Commission on Popularization and Education, journalists, colleagues and friends.

Thank you for inviting me to join you at this important event. Being here with you reminds me of the work I did years ago as the Director of Communications and External Relations for UNAIDS in Geneva. Then, as now, UNAIDS appreciated the power that journalists have to influence and form public opinion and we were driven to build strong partnerships with the media. We were aware that a more just world, without HIV-related stigma and discrimination, is only possible when the public has access to accurate, objective, respectful and creative reporting. Since that time, advocacy and effective communication on HIV have been issues close to my heart. I would like to congratulate the Viet Nam Journalist Association and the Party's Press and Publication Department for having the wisdom and leadership to look back at the media's intensive output over the course of the National AIDS Action Month and to analyse it and search for ways to improve. .

I would also like to recognise the substantial work that has been completed this month: the establishment of the Club of Vietnamese Journalists Involved in the HIV Response, the implementation of HIV and the Media training courses for journalists, and most recently the skilful reporting on discrimination against children living with HIV at the Mai Hoa Centre in Ho Chi Minh City and at other childcare centres around the country.

Looking to the future, I would like to encourage you journalists to push even harder to eliminate stigma and discrimination. This is still one of Viet Nam's biggest barriers to reaching its targets for Universal Access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support services by 2010, to which the Government has committed.

I am very pleased that today we are launching two HIV source books that will help you do just that. Created jointly by UNAIDS, the Viet Nam Journalist Association and the Press and Publication Department, these books provide user-ready guidance and information to help you develop unique stories, educate the public on HIV and counteract stigma and discrimination.

Uncle Ho Chi Minh once said that journalists are also soldiers; pens are their powerful weapons. We hope these source books will help you speak out more effectively against stigma and discrimination and guide public opinion on HIV issues. We look forward to seeing more powerful reports on HIV.

Thank you and chuc suc khoe.