

Good afternoon. I am pleased to see you again and most honoured that you have invited me to join in your commemoration of the 2009 World AIDS Day. UNAIDS Viet Nam recognises, and is deeply appreciative of, the close relationship we have with the Ministry of Public Security. Without your dedication, Universal Access to HIV services and the protection of the people's rights – both of which are the slogans for this year's National AIDS Action Month – would be impossible. My Vietnamese friends have taught me a very practical saying: 'hearing a thing 100 times is not equivalent to seeing it once. Seeing a thing 100 times is not equivalent to doing it once.' I believe in the work that you do, not because I hear it being spoken of in meetings and on paper, but because I see you doing it. I saw you holding training workshops for the V26 and C17 in prisons, and with the H17 in healthcare. I saw you travelling to distant places like Australia, Thailand, the Netherlands and France to learn from international experience responding to HIV, drug use and sex work. I see you on the streets allowing peer educators to spread awareness and exchange needles and syringes. I see you supporting methadone maintenance therapy for injecting drug users. I see you having compassion for sex workers. I see you taking a stand against stigma and discrimination.

To achieve Universal Access and to protect human rights, we must have the cooperation of all levels and sectors of MOPS. From the minister to the police officers on the street; from investigators and border patrols to those charged with maintaining social order. It is not enough just to watch one division or another supporting harm reduction, it is necessary for each and every division to do and to act itself.

This is because public security is a nation's backbone. You within the Ministry of Public Security have been entrusted to safeguard the peace and sovereignty of the country; you have been entrusted to safeguard the safety and wellbeing of every citizen and resident. You carry the legacy of the many heroes of the people who have gone before you. People like Ngo Quyen, King Quang Trung, the Trung sisters and the masses at Dien Hong.

We in the UN are extremely fortunate to have you as a partner in the expansion of HIV services and harm reduction. Thank you once again for all you are doing to protect the people's rights, the people's health and the people's safety.

We wish you the greatest success in your work and look forward to further strengthening our partnership in the future. Chuc suc khoe.