Vietnam continues with very active role within UN

VietNamNet Bridge – Vietnam continues to play a very active role within the United Nations, Ms Pratibha Mehta, UN Resident Coordinator in Vietnam has said in a recent exclusive interview with the Vietnam News Agency.

UN Resident Coordinator in Vietnam Pratibha Mehta.

The interview occasioned the 67th founding anniversary of the UN and the 35th anniversary of Vietnam-UN partnership.

Talking about the progress of the partnership between Vietnam and the UN over more than three decades, the UN Resident Coordinator said: “The UN has a long history as a key partner in Vietnam’s development, ever since Vietnam became the 149th member state of the UN on September 20, 1977.

In the early years of hardship and post-war reconstruction, UN agencies were on the ground providing assistance to Vietnam’s rebuilding efforts. As the ‘doi moi’ reforms began to take hold, the UN provided a gateway, connecting Vietnam with international expertise, knowledge and technical assistance and supported the country’s development progress – thereby improving the lives of millions of Vietnamese.

In recent years, the role of the UN in Vietnam has evolved. Increasingly, we are focusing on providing policy advice, helping Vietnam attain global standards and meet its commitments to international agreements, and supporting its aspiration to be internationally integrated.

Vietnam continues to play a very active role within the UN. Both the former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, as well as the current Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, have visited the country. Vietnam has also successfully served as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council during the 2008-2009 term, and suggested new ways of working within the Council.

Vietnam also plays a key role in efforts to reform the UN system, including the UN development system.

Selected as one of eight pilot countries in 2006, Vietnam is a leading example of the 'Delivering as One' reform initiative. This initiative aims to make the UN system in Vietnam work more efficiently and effectively together, thereby helping us to deliver better development results for the people of Vietnam. The success of the initiative here is in large part due to the strong commitment and leadership by the Government.
Earlier this year, Vietnam and the UN signed the One Plan for 2012-2016. This plan outlines the three key areas where the UN will provide support to Vietnam and its citizens over the next five years. The three areas are: inclusive, equitable and sustainable growth; access to quality essential services and social protection; and governance and participation. The One Plan focuses on the principles of equity and inclusiveness and aims to make sure that all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are achieved in all parts of Vietnam.

Regarding the country’s implementation of MDGs, the UN official noted, “Vietnam is one of a handful of countries to have made significant progress towards achieving the MDGs. This progress was recognised by the international community at the 2010 Global Summit on the MDGs, where Vietnam ranked sixth in terms of both absolute and relative progress.

Vietnam has made significant achievements in areas such as poverty reduction, education, gender equality and child health.

In the area of poverty reduction, for example, Vietnam has managed to halve the poverty rate from 58.1 percent in 1993 to 28.9 percent in 2002 and then to 12.3 percent in 2008. And between 1990 and 2006, infant mortality and under-five mortality was also halved. These are impressive achievements.”

However, she also pointed the two goals that Vietnam is currently lagging behind, including MDG 6 on HIV/AIDS and MDG 7 on environmental sustainability.

She said “HIV is a concern because barriers to HIV services uptake, including the non-availability of a standardised package of services and stigma and discrimination, are still allowing the virus to spread in silence. In order to further scale up measures to halt and reverse the spread of HIV, Vietnam will need to prioritise funding on HIV prevention for key population groups and ensure the sustainability of the national response to HIV.

In the area of MDG 7 on environmental sustainability, there are still differences in access to clean water and sanitation between regions and among urban and rural areas. For instance, while 93.8 percent of urban dwellers use improved latrines, the figure for the rural population is 71.5 percent.”

Mehta also talked about issues that Vietnam faced even for the MDGs where the country had made good progress.

She said, “The poorest, mountainous communes and districts where many ethnic minority people live lag behind in almost all MDG targets. Approximately half of all ethnic minorities are poor and one-third of them suffer from food poverty. An ethnic minority child is 3.5 times more likely to die before his or her fifth birthday compared to a non-ethnic minority child. This unfinished agenda needs to be addressed.”

To make sure that all the MDGs are achieved in all provinces and communes of Vietnam, reforms are needed to promote more sustainable, inclusive and equitable growth, and growth that ethnic minority communities can actively participate in and benefit from, she said.

“Effective reforms in public investment and state-owned enterprises could increase the fiscal space. This could allow for more resources to be allocated for a comprehensive social protection system, and for more investments to be made in health, education, water and sanitation and poverty reduction.

The Government’s Resolution 80 and the National Target Programme for Sustainable Poverty Reduction, which aim to reduce poverty by 4 percent in the poorest mountainous and ethnic minority communes and districts, are also steps in the right direction.”

Mehta noted that since the MDGs were adopted by all UN member states in 2000 with an aim to achieve these by 2015, they have helped set global and national development priorities and fuel time-bound action on the ground.

Although there are still three years to go, discussions have already started on what the global development agenda beyond 2015 should be. The peoples of the world are looking to the UN for action beyond 2015 to achieve a world of
According to the UN official, for the first time, the UN has launched open and inclusive consultations to hear the voices of people of different income, gender and age groups. Vietnam is one of the 50 countries around the world selected for broad-based national consultations on what a new global development agenda should look like.

“This will provide an excellent opportunity for Vietnam to reflect on its progress on the MDGs and, looking forward, what should be done domestically and globally to ensure all people can enjoy a life of dignity, freedom and prosperity in every village and every city,” the official concluded.