

## **Speech by Ms. Ann Måwe, Ambassador of Sweden to Viet Nam**

at the National consultation workshop on  
advancing responsible business practice in viet nam

*Mr Phan Chi Hieu, Vice Minister at the Ministry of Justice of Vietnam*

*Ms Caitlin Wiesen, Resident Representative of UNDP to Vietnam,*

*Representatives from Government, private sector, business associations, development partners, UN agencies, NGOs, research and academic institutions, ladies and gentlemen.*

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I would like to start by expressing gratitude to UNDP and MOJ for organizing this consultation workshop. Sweden supports the promotion of sustainable business in Vietnam through our Asia Programme with UNDP on Business and Human Rights and we are very proud to be a partner in this very important work.

I am happy to see participants from so many different organizations here today. I am sure your participation will contribute to a rich content and a successful outcome of this workshop.

Today's consultation workshop marks the first step towards developing a national action plan on advancing responsible business practices in Viet Nam.

It's an occasion to increase awareness on **how responsible business practice correlates with sustainable development and international competitiveness.**

It is also an opportunity to learn the strategic advantages in adopting a national action plan on responsible business, and to hear forerunners share their stories on how to best make a clear and practical guidance.

My opening remarks will focus on the responsible business story in Sweden. I will share the development of our national action plan for business and human rights and how we work with ensuring its implementation.

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In 2011, when the UN adopted the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the Swedish Government recognized its content as a new global standard. Shortly thereafter, the European Commission requested all EU Member States to draw up national action plans to translate the principles into practical actions at national level. In 2015, as the sixth country in the world, Sweden fulfilled this obligation.

The Swedish action plan for business and human rights was developed by the Government Offices in consultation with various stakeholders. The draft was both published for public comments online and subject to four public consultation meetings. The UN Guiding Principles on

Business and Human Rights are based on three pillars, and so is the Swedish Action Plan. The state duty, the corporate responsibility, and the access to remedy.

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Our purpose of adopting a national action plan was to send a clear message about the Swedish Government's expectations of modern business. Both to our domestic entrepreneurs but also to all foreign investors who are interested in the Swedish market. Why?

In Sweden we are convinced that successful and competitive business of the future are those who makes human rights and corporate social responsibility part of their core business. We have also seen the important role of multinational companies in promoting responsible business practice in their supply chains and how they can influence to improved standards. IKEA is a great example of this and later in this event you will hear them share their examples of good corporate practice in Vietnam.

By placing high demands on Swedish workplaces, we try to create the best conditions for our companies to become world leaders. We believe that good working conditions are necessary to enable innovation and leads to higher workplace efficiency.

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To set a good standard in our workplaces, we have general laws on employment protection and work environment. However, to a large extent the relationship between employees and the employer is determined through collective bargaining. Sweden is highly unionized, and most companies are covered by a collective agreement.

A strong and independent legal system is a last resort to resolve issues.

We also rely on journalists, strong civil society organizations and watchdog organizations to signal when and where malpractice is happening.

But one should not underestimate the power of good and the value of a brand. Today's consumers are highly demanding. Companies that do not adhere to best practice will soon face challenges in retaining customers.

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A national action plan on business and human rights marks the start of a country's effort in implementing the UN Guiding principles and signals a genuine dedication to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Indeed, Vietnam is now showing its determination to follow this direction as it has now ratified nearly all of ILO's core conventions. By next year Vietnam will also have a new Labour Code in force. Sweden has a long tradition of supporting Vietnam in the area of

labour rights. We will continue to stand ready to partner with Vietnam and share our experience in this field.

Corporate social responsibility is now also part of Vietnam's obligation towards the EU following the ratification to the EVFTA. With this obligation comes a golden opportunity for Vietnam to decide which kind of foreign investors it wants to attract. Moreover, Vietnam is in the world spotlight for its great achievement in dealing with the Corona pandemic. New foreign traders are looking at Vietnam for their investments. Now is the time to impact what kind of characteristics Vietnamese business wants to be associated with. We see the forming of Domestic Advisory Groups as crucial to ensuring a positive implementation of the EVFTA. The Swedish Embassy, together with EU partners, will lend our support and closely follow the development.

A Vietnamese action plan on responsible business, well anchored in society by inclusive consultation, will clarify and strengthen Vietnam's trade profile. It will also reinforce Vietnam as a brand and support further economic development.

Thank you/Xin cam on rat nhieu!