

Speech

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Distinguished National Assembly Deputies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Institute of Legislative Studies (ILS) for organizing this briefing and giving us the opportunity to share with Members of the National Assembly the results of the Viet Nam Governance and Public Administration Performance Index (PAPI). I also want to thank the Deputies for finding the time in their busy schedules during an ongoing session to attend this discussion.

At the United Nations we are very proud of the partnership we have established with the Viet Nam Fatherland Front and CECODES to create Viet Nam's largest ever policy monitoring tool on governance and public administration. In 2012 alone, nearly 14,000 citizens participated in the PAPI survey. And since 2010, more than 32,000 voices have been systematically collected and analysed to inform policy makers. Since 2011, PAPI is a nation-wide survey covering all 63 provinces of Viet Nam. We strongly believe PAPI provides members of the National Assembly with a wealth of information and insights on provincial level performance.

PAPI offers an innovative 'bottom-up' approach that collects experiences from citizens in different State management dimensions. The PAPI data complements existing state management monitoring tools. It is built on the premise that citizens are the ultimate beneficiaries of public services and that their opinions as end-users of these services should matter. PAPI follows a robust methodology adhering to rigorous international standards in policy research.

The PAPI findings come from citizen's experiences of interacting with the state. As such, it provides an additional perspective to the National Assembly in its important oversight and assurance role. Specifically, PAPI would be useful to members of the National Assembly for two ongoing discussions:

Firstly, perspectives of Vietnamese citizens on governance and public administration can provide a further insight for the on-going constitutional amendment process, particularly matters concerning local governance. They will also be of direct relevance to the upcoming discussions on the Law on Local Governance.

Secondly, PAPI provides objective evidence that can inform members of the National Assembly about the performance of local governments. This evidence can inform National Assembly delegations and People's Councils at the provincial and local levels in the upcoming July 2013 votes of confidence.

There are three messages coming out of the PAPI 2012 Report.

The first message worth highlighting is that, on average, Vietnamese citizens are experiencing some improvement in the level of local governance and public services in 2012 compared to 2011. Minor positive changes are recorded in the key areas of corruption, transparency, public service delivery and vertical accountability. But still challenges remain to improve performance.

Secondly, PAPI is already having an impact on policy making, policy implementation and policy monitoring. PAPI is providing national and provincial leaders with concrete evidence of the impact of their decisions on citizens. Provinces such as Quang Ngai, Kon Tum and Dak Lak have developed action plans to lift their performance based on PAPI findings. And last week we learned that Thai Nguyen province issued a Resolution that puts PAPI as a benchmark for measuring its Socio-Economic Development Plan.

And thirdly, PAPI is a catalyst for more cooperation among provinces. It identifies good performers and positive lessons to be learned from particular policies, and shares those practices with other provinces to foster improvements country-wide.

Distinguished Deputies:

Viet Nam has done remarkably well in its development path since 1990s, but it now faces new challenges of reform and transition. Sustaining and enlarging the progress requires more nuanced policies backed by quality analysis, research and data. As a middle-income country, Viet Nam is now starting to realize the potential of modern policy monitoring tools. Experiences from other countries that have made the transition to middle-income status, confirm a shift in the relationship between government and citizens, in terms of the way they interact with each other. Wealthier, better-educated citizens demand higher quality, more efficient administrative services from their government. They want less bureaucracy and more accountability from local authorities, and better control of corruption in the public sector.

Since the PAPI 2012 Report was released a month ago a series of policy discussions have taken place, including at provincial levels. The discussions point to an emerging consensus on reliability of the PAPI data that enables provincial leaders to accurately identify areas of strength and weakness. Two common messages from these discussions are the need to bring the data to the attention of senior leadership and to institutionalize it into mainstream State management and reporting systems. But also, and as pointed out by Provincial People's Councils representatives, PAPI provides a vital source of information to call local authorities to account.

In conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the strong partnership of the Swiss Development Cooperation Agency (SDC) on the PAPI initiative. With SDC's support, UNDP is committed to

continue PAPI until at least 2016 to be able to track change over time in the level of provincial performance.

I hope that over time, PAPI will become a useful reference tool for members of the National Assembly in their vital oversight role and help the Executive branch of Government to enhance governance and public administration at central and provincial levels for the ultimate benefit of all Vietnamese.

Once again, thank you for your time and attention. I hope you find this discussion useful and wish you good health and success.

Many thanks.