

Speech at the workshop on socialism and democracy

*By Ms. Ban Thi Ba – Vietnam**

*Ladies and Gentlemen,
Distinguished guests and friends,*

The Viet Nam Women's Union (VWU) is a mass organization representing women of all strata in Vietnam. Since its foundation, VWU has united women in the country, encourage them to promote national patriotic tradition, contributing to the country's construction for people's happiness and for the cause of women's emancipation. At the aims of protecting women's legitimate rights and interests and creating favorable conditions for women to enjoy equality and advancement, VWU has also actively participated in activities for peace, international solidarity and friendship.

President Ho Chi Minh, when he was alive, always highly appreciated the role of Vietnamese women to the national history and development as well as their great contribution to production, race maintenance, family and children caring, national identity preservation and creation, and struggle for national defense and construction. From this points, the Communist Party and the Government of Vietnam have provided best conditions for women so that they were able to participate in all fields of the society and to better their self-assertion.

Together with women throughout the country, women in Ha Giang province actively participated and carried out activities organized by the Women's union. Their role and contribution had been admitted and recognized by the Party, local authorities and the whole society.

Ha Giang is a mountainous province in the North of Viet Nam, sharing the borderline of 274 km with Van Nam province from China. As the terrain of Ha Giang is unfavorable with numerous high mountains and deep abysses. The territory is divided into 3 areas: high land with rocky mountains in the north, high land with earthy mountains in the west and low earthy mountainous area in the south. The province has the mixture of temperate and tropical climate. There are 22 ethnic groups living in Ha Giang, in which 31% is Mong ethnic group, 28% is Tay ethnic, 15% is Dao ethnic and the rest includes some other ethnies. Due to unfavorable natural conditions and unequal educational level of people, Ha Giang's economy is still underdeveloped.

In spite of such difficulties, in recent years, with the leadership of provincial Party's Committee and authority, local people have been striving for hunger elimination and poverty alleviation, cultural and socio-economic development, social security preservation and national borders sovereignty.

After 20 years of renovation, Ha Giang's socio-economy has changed dramatically. People life and welfare has been remarkably improved: center areas of all communes have access to electricity, having good traffic and inter-hamlet routes system, and also well-constructed medical stations and schools. Farmers among them are women in rural areas benefit a lot from agricultural expansion program such as good irrigation system. They are also supported by the government with high-yield varieties of breeding animals and plants. Poor families are supported to upgrade their houses and provided loans to develop their production. To obtain provincial socio-economic development goal and to ensure community's benefits, all the activities are discussed among the authorities at all levels and people with the basis "For every issue, people are informed for discussing, implementing and monitoring", which means participatory democracy for people is ensured.

*Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear friends,*

In this occasion, I also would like to share with you about the participation of women's union in particular and women in general to community and social activities in Ha Giang province. Accounting for 50 % of province's total population, Ha Giang's women have vital contribution to cultural and socio-economic development of the province. Being aware of women's role, provincial authorities at all levels have paid adequate attention, concerns and support to women. About provincial WU's structure, it is a member of the Fatherland Front and organized along 3 levels: provincial level, district level and communal level, which is mandated to unite and encourage women of different ethnic groups in the province to implement the Party's guidelines and the State's Laws and Policies; to make recommendation about the formulation and implementation of laws and policies relating to women and children. Furthermore, Women's Union at all levels in my province also have representatives taking part in People's Council, Law communication and education Committee, Military Duty Council, Emulation and Commendation Committee, etc. In any activities of the Party and authority, representatives of women's union are involved and take part in recommendation and decision making. Particularly, women at the grassroots are also participating actively in all activities of the community such as implementing local socio-economic

programs, formulating and supervising the implementation of laws and policies... These are also activities and contents in the meetings of women's groups. I can take an example: recently, the government has approved the gender equality law. During its formulation, the drafts have been sent many times to people as well as women at the grassroots for their comments and inputs. The final step, Central WU, which is assigned to prepare the law will sum-up all comments, then submit to the National Assembly. The participatory approach is also applied in the organization of all activities of women's groups, for example in selecting and deciding for beneficiaries of any project or national programs supporting them on job creation and income generation, hunger elimination... and more important, they will support and help each other for best results of these activities...

In recent years, besides creating favorable conditions for women to participate in social activities, provincial leaders have made great efforts to promote gender equality, the Committees for the advancement of women at all levels have been established to direct activities for the development of Ha Giang's women.

Many women in Ha Giang hold leader and key positions in all agencies, bodies and mass organizations at all levels. Women staff always fulfill their tasks with high results and responsibilities. In production field, women are the pioneers to apply new technologies, the transform of animals and plants varieties to generate income, improve the living standards of their family and partly contribute to the country's prosperity.

In politic area, women in Ha Giang province also have representatives in the National Assembly, People's Council at all levels. In the election of People's Councils for 2004-2009 term, 100% of WU's members went to vote. The percentage of women in National Assembly is 20%.

The rate of women in People's Council:

- At provincial level: 27,27%.
- At district level: 22, 08%
- At communal level: 18,78%

All above mentioned achievements are resulted by the activities of women's union and its plan for women cadres training. To form a group of professional and proficient women staff and leaders, competent and qualified women have been selected and recommended to the positions of leadership. The priorities

are also given to ethnic minorities women. They will be selected and trained, to improve their educational and professional level. Especially, a great concern is paid to the selection and cultivation for successor women cadres with adequate qualifications and stable politic standpoints. WUs at all levels take the initiative and have been proactive in setting up key staff, but the selection of cadres for WU's key positions will consulted from grassroots level where the nominees work for.

From the contributions of women in all ethnic groups to the construction and development of Ha Giang province, it can be concluded that when women are given good conditions and enjoy participatory democracy in all activities, they will be able to promote their capacities and ability in daily tasks and assert themselves in community and social activities.

Wish you good health and thank you very much for your attention. #

**Ban Thi Ba is the vice president of Ha Giang Women's Union in Vietnam.*