

**POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
OF ETHNIC MINORITY PEOPLE IN VIETNAM**

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*Mr. Chairman
Ladies and Gentleman,*

Viet Nam is a unified country with 54 ethnic groups living together and the Vietnamese State attaches special importance to the policy of ensuring equal rights of all ethnic groups and considers it as a decisive factor for the country's sustainable development. The policy is implemented in all political, economic, cultural and social areas and incorporated into the law of Viet Nam, namely the 1992 Constitution and other legal documents such as: the Law on Election of the National Assembly deputies, the Law on Citizenship, the Law on Forest Protection and Development, the Law on Education, and the Law on Healthcare for citizens etc. Ethnic minority policies are made concrete with socio-economic development strategies and policies for ethnic minority areas and with specific preferential policies and mechanisms for ethnic minority people.

1. In order to facilitate the exercise of the rights of the ethnic minority people, in Vietnam there are such agencies and organizations as follows: the Ethnic Council of the National Assembly, the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs of the Government, the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Fatherland Front, the Women's Union, the Farmers' Union, operating at central and local levels throughout the country.
2. In Viet Nam, ethnic minority people have been actively exercising their rights to political participation through the exercise of representative democracy and direct democracy. The number of People's Deputies representing ethnic minorities in the National Assembly is growing higher. In the National Assembly in Legislature XII (2007-2011) the figure was 87, accounting for 17.65%, while ethnic minority people account for 13.8% of the total population in the whole country.

In the composition of People's Councils at all levels in the 1999-2003 tenure, the percentage of People's Deputies who were ethnic minority people was 14% at provincial level, 17% at district level, and 19% at commune level. In the 2004-2009 tenure, the figures were 20.53%; 20.18%, and 24.4% respectively.

In Vietnam, more and more ethnic minority hold key positions in State organs from central to local levels, for example: the Vice Chairman of the National Assembly, the

Chairman of the Ethnic Council of the National Assembly, and the Minister – Chairman of the Committee for Ethnic Minority Affairs.

3. However, ethnic minority areas in Vietnam are still facing the following challenges and difficulties:

- Local officials who are ethnic minority people are now inadequate in number and limited in capacity for social management.
- The awareness of a segment of ethnic minority people about human rights remains low, and they do not have adequate understanding of legal stipulations and the State's undertakings and policies.

4. In order to promote further the participation of ethnic minority people, Vietnam has been undertaking the following measures:

- Attach importance to development of human resources in ethnic minority areas. Give priorities to ethnic minority officials in training and development and in use of government employees. Develop mechanisms and policies to encourage political participation of ethnic minority people.
- Increase communication on human rights in ethnic minority areas to raise people's sense of responsibility and actively participate in political affairs.

Thank you very much for your attention.