

**Reply of Viet Nam to the Joint Communication concerning
the human rights of victims of trafficking in scam centers and scam
compounds in South East Asia (Viet Nam)**

Ref. AL VNM 1/2025 (dated 10 March 2025)

1. Management of Vietnamese Workers Abroad

With respect to allegations concerning victims of human trafficking, fraud, labor and sexual exploitation at numerous scam centers in Southeast Asia: the victims were often deceived through online recruitment schemes promising “high salaries” and “good benefits.” In reality, they were held in prison-like conditions, forced to work long hours daily in extremely harsh environments, and coerced to participate in persuading and defrauding additional victims.

Most of these victims went abroad through illegal channels, having been deceived by criminal groups exploiting trust, referrals, or online scams. They did not travel under any of the lawful forms stipulated in the *Law on Vietnamese Guest Workers under Contract*, which makes it very difficult to manage such cases in accordance with regulations governing contracted Vietnamese workers abroad.

Sending Vietnamese workers abroad under contract is a conditional business activity. Service enterprises must meet requirements regarding capital, deposit funds, legal representatives, professional staff, physical facilities, and must maintain an official website to provide pre-departure orientation for workers (as stipulated in Article 10 of the Law No. 69/2020/QH14, dated 13 November 2020).

The Department of Overseas Labor Management (Ministry of Home Affairs) is responsible for supervising enterprises throughout the entire process: preparing labor sources, registering contracts, selecting workers, providing training and orientation, and managing workers abroad until their return and contract termination. If workers are mistreated by employers or if contracts are breached, service enterprises are obliged to resolve issues, protect workers’ legal rights, and support job placement upon their return.

Workers who go abroad under contract sign an agreement with a licensed service enterprise or organization, and also a labor contract with the employer, specifying job details, workplace, employer, service fees, rights, and obligations. Workers are entitled to full information, policy guidance, consultation, and support to exercise their rights and benefits under their labor contract. They are entitled to

wages, overtime pay, healthcare, social insurance, and legal protection under both Vietnamese and host country laws. In particular, workers have the right to unilaterally terminate their contract if subjected to abuse, forced labor, or if their life, health, or dignity is directly threatened, including sexual harassment abroad.

In major labor markets such as Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Malaysia, UAE, and Saudi Arabia, Labor Management Boards operate under Vietnamese overseas diplomatic missions to assist in supervising and protecting workers' rights. Service enterprises must also appoint representatives to cooperate with local partners to promptly address issues faced by workers abroad. Officials of the Vietnamese Labor Management Boards and enterprise representatives actively coordinate to handle incidents and safeguard workers' rights and interests.

When workers encounter problems abroad, they can contact their service enterprise or the Department of Overseas Labor Management via hotlines listed on official websites and pre-departure training materials, as well as seek support from the Labor Management Boards. This ensures protection of their rights.

Therefore, there are no cases of contracted workers sent abroad legally being subjected to exploitation, threats, violence, torture, sexual coercion, prostitution, punishment, or beatings in retaliation for attempting to escape.

2. Situation of Human Trafficking and the Use of High Technology and Cyberspace for Criminal Activities in the Region

In recent years, human trafficking activities and crimes involving the abuse of high technology and cyberspace, both globally and regionally, have become increasingly complex in nature, methods, and tactics.

In the Asia–Pacific region and particularly in countries of the Mekong subregion, including Viet Nam, human trafficking has become more sophisticated, with close collusion between domestic and foreign perpetrators. Offenders make extensive use of modern technologies and applications to commit crimes, operating anonymously and leaving little trace. Most of these crimes are organized, but connections and communications are maintained solely through cyberspace without direct, face-to-face contact in real life.

Of particular concern are cases of fraud and asset appropriation conducted through text messages, phone calls, and social media platforms. These scams are highly complex, employ constantly changing methods, and are designed to evade detection by competent authorities. For example, when Viet Nam's authorities

implemented the policy of standardizing mobile subscriber information to eliminate the use of “junk SIM cards” or unregistered SIMs in order to limit telecom-related fraud, criminals exploited this policy by impersonating government officials, telecom staff, or bank employees to call citizens and request personal information. With this information, they could seize victims’ SIM cards, bank accounts, e-wallets, and social media accounts to commit asset appropriation. This demonstrates the highly sophisticated nature of such crimes, making detection and handling extremely difficult.

Another concerning trend is the use of foreign territories to commit crimes. Some foreign nationals have entered Viet Nam to use its territory as a base to defraud citizens of third countries. There are also instances of foreigners entering Viet Nam to engage in theft, robbery, and fraud.

In recent years, human trafficking crimes in particular have become increasingly varied and cunning. Offenders often exploit social media, using deceptive advertisements such as “easy jobs, high pay” to lure victims abroad, where they are coerced into participating in criminal activities. Monitoring the situation of Vietnamese workers abroad who fall victim to forced labor remains very difficult because perpetrators use fake online identities (false names, fake addresses, disposable SIM cards) to lure victims into crossing borders illegally, eventually trafficking them into online gambling establishments or internet-based fraud operations.

3. Vietnamese Law on the Prevention and Combat of Human Trafficking

The competent authorities of Viet Nam have been implementing a wide range of measures to effectively combat human trafficking crimes. These include advising the issuance of, and directly promulgating within their mandates, comprehensive legal and policy documents on anti-trafficking, closely linked with the professional responsibilities of each unit. Efforts also focus on promoting judicial reform, building and improving the legal system on anti-trafficking, and combining judicial reform with administrative reform.

Specifically:

- The Ministry of Public Security has advised the Prime Minister to propose to the XVth National Assembly the adoption of the Law on Prevention and Combat of Human Trafficking (2024). The content of this Law ensures compatibility and alignment with international treaties to which Viet Nam is a party, such as: (i) The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women

and Children (Palermo Protocol); (ii) The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); (iii) The ASEAN Convention Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (ACTIP); (iv) The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

- The Ministry of Public Security is also working with relevant agencies to draft amendments and supplements to certain provisions of the Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedure Code, and is coordinating with ministries, sectors, and localities to strengthen State management over activities in cyberspace.

- Criminal law provisions on human trafficking:

The 2015 Criminal Code, as amended in 2017, provides specific articles: Article 150: Crime of trafficking in persons; Article 151: Crime of trafficking in persons under 16 years of age.

Related provisions include Article 297: Crime of forced labor; Article 154: Crime of trafficking or appropriation of human organs or body parts; Article 187: Crime of organizing commercial surrogacy.

Other relevant legal documents already promulgated:

The Law on Prevention and Combat of Human Trafficking adopted by the XVth National Assembly on 28 November 2024.

The Criminal Procedure Code and the Law on Organization of Criminal Investigation Agencies (2015), which regulate procedures for handling criminal cases and define the powers and responsibilities of investigative bodies, including the Criminal Police.

Decree No. 62/2012/ND-CP (13 August 2012) defining criteria to identify trafficking victims and measures for their protection and safety.

Decree No. 09/2013/ND-CP (11 January 2013) detailing the implementation of several provisions of the Law on Prevention and Combat of Human Trafficking concerning victim support.

Decree No. 56/2017/ND-CP (9 May 2017) detailing certain provisions of the Law on Children, including regulations on children in special circumstances and support policies, as well as interventions for children subjected to violence, exploitation, abandonment, and trafficking.

Decree No. 70/2023/ND-CP (18 September 2023) amending and supplementing certain provisions of Decree No. 152/2020/ND-CP regarding foreign workers in Viet Nam and the recruitment and management of Vietnamese workers employed by foreign organizations and individuals in Viet Nam.

Joint Circular No. 01/2014/TTLT (10 February 2014) issued by the Ministries of Public Security, National Defence, Labour–Invalids and Social Affairs, and Foreign Affairs, providing guidance on procedures and inter-agency coordination in the verification, identification, reception, and repatriation of trafficking victims.

Resolution No. 02/2019/NQ-HDTP (11 November 2019) of the Council of Judges of the Supreme People’s Court, providing guidance on the application of Articles 150 and 151 of the Criminal Code regarding trafficking in persons and trafficking in persons under 16 years old.

Circular No. 02/2024/TT-BLDTBXH (23 February 2024) amending and supplementing certain provisions of Circular No. 21/2021/TT-BLDTBXH, detailing several provisions of the Law on Vietnamese Guest Workers under Contract.

4. Investigation and Combat of Human Trafficking Crimes

Viet Nam consistently recognizes, protects, and guarantees human rights, particularly the rights of women and children. The prevention and suppression of human trafficking, as well as the support for trafficking victims, are identified as key tasks. Across all anti-trafficking programs, Viet Nam has mobilized the participation of the entire political system, ministries, sectors, socio-political organizations, and the people, while also leveraging all social resources to ensure effective implementation.

Viet Nam has been intensifying measures against human trafficking with the close involvement of all ministries, sectors, competent agencies, and local authorities. Over recent years, the implementation of anti-trafficking laws has achieved many positive and important results. Guidance documents have been issued fully and promptly from central to local levels, tailored to each stage; the system of legal normative documents has been largely completed, creating a solid legal basis for anti-trafficking efforts. Legal education, dissemination, and awareness-raising activities have been carried out in a synchronized and decisive manner. Law enforcement agencies have made significant progress in detecting and handling violations, successfully dismantling numerous trafficking rings. Victim reception, identification, and protection have received due attention, ensuring the best possible support conditions. International cooperation has been strengthened

through bilateral and multilateral activities across global and regional forums. State management of anti-trafficking work has become more systematic. The Law on Prevention and Combat of Human Trafficking and its implementing regulations have provided a strong legal framework to curb the growth of trafficking, contributing to social order, safety, and the nation's socio-economic development.

The Ministry of Public Security has been directing its units and local police to strictly implement the Prime Minister's instructions under:

- Directive No. 21/CT-TTg (25 May 2020) on strengthening the prevention and handling of fraud and asset appropriation;
- Official Telegram No. 139/CD-TTg (23 December 2024) on enhancing prevention and handling of high-tech and cyber fraud;
- Official Telegram No. 29/CD-TTg (3 April 2025) on intensifying prevention and handling of cyber-enabled fraud and asset appropriation.

In line with these instructions, the Ministry has increased situational monitoring and adopted a comprehensive range of measures, including social prevention, professional prevention, and suppression of crime. Nationwide special campaigns have been launched to target crimes exploiting cyberspace, along with preventive and punitive actions against high-tech crimes and fraud using telecommunications, the internet, and social media. The Ministry has also coordinated with relevant ministries and agencies to develop rapid coordination mechanisms for financial tracing, temporary account suspension, and asset freezing in connection with fraudulent activities.

The Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of National Defence have implemented plans and measures to prevent and combat human trafficking, transitioning from traditional approaches to the application of modern technologies, while proactively conducting inspections and reviews to detect trafficking crimes. Border patrols have been intensified, particularly in high-risk areas, to detect and prevent human trafficking and illegal border crossings.

The Ministry of Public Security also cooperates with the Supreme People's Procuracy and the Supreme People's Court in investigating, prosecuting, and adjudicating trafficking cases. Together with ministries, sectors, and socio-political organizations, the Ministry has organized campaigns such as the National Day Against Human Trafficking (30 July) to raise awareness and mobilize public participation. Inter-sectoral coordination has been strengthened in receiving,

protecting, and supporting victims, ensuring compliance with the law and adopting a victim-centered approach to safeguard their legitimate rights and interests.

Furthermore, the Ministry has been effectively implementing the Law on Electronic Transactions, government decrees on personal data protection, electronic identification, and verification, as well as promoting Project 06 on the Development of National Digital Identity and Personal Data Applications (2022–2025, vision 2030). This includes using citizens' data to verify mobile subscriptions, eliminate “junk SIM cards,” authenticate bank accounts, and require biometric verification for online transactions, thereby reducing opportunities for fraud and cybercrime. Digitally verified accounts are being promoted for online transactions as part of crime prevention efforts. Specialized training courses on anti-trafficking, investigative techniques, and victim support have also been organized for police officers.

Statistical results:

- From 2018 to 2022: 440 cases / 876 offenders / 1,240 victims of trafficking-related violations were recorded.

- In 2023: authorities handled 160 criminal denunciations, investigated 147 cases / 365 offenders / 311 victims (116 male, 195 female) — an increase of 57 cases compared to 2022. This included 75 cases / 213 offenders involving trafficking of persons under 16. Courts adjudicated 131 cases / 373 defendants, an increase of 54 cases / 171 defendants compared to 2022. Authorities verified 650 cases of suspected trafficking, confirming 311 victims. Hotlines received 1,774 calls (a decrease of 660 compared to 2022).

- In 2024: 163 cases / 455 offenders / 500 victims were detected and prosecuted.

- In the first quarter of 2025: the Ministry of Public Security investigated 59 cases / 186 offenders / 244 victims; initiated prosecution in 8 new cases involving 12 defendants and 30 victims. The Ministry of National Defence handled 6 cases / 6 offenders / 13 victims. Authorities also detected and prosecuted 8 cases / 6 offenders / 38 victims and suspected victims; verified and identified 30 victims and suspected victims. Courts accepted 64 trafficking cases at first-instance level involving 205 defendants, and resolved 35 cases involving 99 defendants. (Source: Ministry of Public Security Portal).

5. Information and Awareness-Raising

The Ministry of Public Security has launched a dedicated section on its official portal specifically for the prevention and combat of human trafficking crimes. This section regularly publishes news and updates related to trafficking cases, thereby helping citizens raise awareness and remain vigilant against the schemes and tactics of traffickers.

The Ministry has also implemented a variety of programs and coordinated plans with media agencies and press outlets to disseminate information through diverse and accessible formats, especially via mass media, community networks, and social media platforms. These campaigns particularly target people of working age, youth, and adolescents in remote areas and ethnic minority communities. Numerous specialized articles and reports have been published, warning the public about the methods, tactics, and harmful consequences of human trafficking, high-tech crimes, and online fraud involving telecommunications, the internet, and social networks. These initiatives enable agencies, organizations, and individuals to be more alert, proactive in prevention, and prompt in reporting crimes.

Information campaigns have been further strengthened on digital platforms and social media, highlighting the techniques commonly used by criminals, especially online fraud schemes conducted via Facebook, Zalo, Viber, WeChat, and similar platforms. These often involve luring victims with false promises of “easy jobs with high pay,” thereby tricking them into traveling abroad for exploitation. The purpose of these campaigns is to improve public awareness, vigilance, and the sense of responsibility of law enforcement agencies, social organizations, and individuals in the fight against trafficking.

In cooperation with other ministries, sectors, and telecommunications enterprises, the Ministry of Public Security has also sent warning messages directly to mobile subscribers, advising citizens on the proper management and use of their mobile numbers to prevent criminals from exploiting them for illegal activities. These messages include alerts about the methods and tactics of fraudsters who appropriate assets through cyberspace and high technology, helping citizens strengthen their awareness and resistance to such crimes.

Additionally, nationwide campaigns have been launched to comprehensively review, inspect, and eliminate “junk SIM cards” and unregistered mobile subscribers in order to reduce opportunities for criminals to use these channels for fraudulent purposes.

6. Support for Victims of Human Trafficking

In Viet Nam's anti-trafficking efforts, the reception and repatriation of victims who were coerced into criminal activities abroad was previously coordinated by the Department of Social Evils Prevention (Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs). This function is now undertaken by the Department of Social Protection (Ministry of Health).

The Department of Social Protection has been carrying out tasks assigned by the Prime Minister, advising the Ministry of Health to promulgate legal documents aimed at enhancing the reception, identification, protection, and assistance of trafficking victims. The overarching objective is to ensure that victims have access to essential social support services, achieve community reintegration, and encourage the participation of organizations and individuals in victim support activities.

In addition, the Department of Social Protection has coordinated the drafting of the Law on Prevention and Combat of Human Trafficking, particularly leading the development of the Victim Assistance Program, and directing pilot projects in provinces such as Lao Cai, Hai Phong, Cao Bang, Ha Tinh, Binh Phuoc, Dong Nai, and Dak Lak. The Department also works with other units within the Ministry of Health to consolidate reports and policy documents on crime prevention, anti-trafficking measures, and victim support.

At the same time, ministries, sectors, mass organizations, and local authorities have actively engaged in victim reception, identification, protection, and timely assistance. All repatriated trafficking victims (100%) have received support tailored to their individual needs, in line with legal provisions, ensuring their safety, stable livelihoods, and sustainable community reintegration.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has directed its advisory units to strengthen training for officials responsible for victim reception and support. This training emphasizes a victim-centered approach, integrating trauma-informed care to ensure timely and effective support. The Ministry has also instructed the unit managing the National Hotline for the Protection of Children and Trafficking Victims to enhance the capacity of operators, ensuring the best quality of counseling services and effective referral of victims to appropriate support services.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Home Affairs has guided provincial Departments of Home Affairs to integrate anti-trafficking and victim support activities into local social assistance programs, including poverty reduction, vocational training, employment generation, gender equality, child protection, and

other socio-economic initiatives. This integration ensures that victims and those at high risk have timely access to State support policies, such as medical care, treatment, initial emergency aid, loans, vocational training, employment, stable living conditions, and sustainable reintegration.

The Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (now under the Ministry of Home Affairs) has also taken the lead in proposing, and coordinating with the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of National Defence, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to sign the Inter-Agency Coordination Regulation No. 2548/QCPH (18 July 2022) on victim reception, protection, and assistance. Based on local realities, relevant provincial and municipal departments have also signed or submitted proposals to issue their own coordination regulations. These regulations strengthen inter-agency cooperation in victim reception, verification, protection, and support — especially for Vietnamese workers returning from Cambodia and Myanmar in recent years.

7. International Cooperation in Combating Human Trafficking

The Ministry of Public Security of Viet Nam continues to prioritize and promote international cooperation in the fight against human trafficking. The objective is to establish effective mechanisms for information sharing, verification, collection of documents and evidence, arrest and transfer of offenders, and recovery of illicitly obtained assets.

Bilateral cooperation has been enhanced, particularly with the law enforcement authorities of Laos, Cambodia, and other relevant countries, through joint investigations into cases involving offenders who exploit foreign territories to conduct fraud and asset appropriation.

In the multilateral framework, the Ministry of Public Security has actively participated in:

- The ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) and its Senior Officials Meeting (SOMTC), including working groups on trafficking in persons.

- From 2021 to 2025, Viet Nam took part in 10 meetings of the ASEAN Heads of Specialist Anti-Trafficking Agencies.

- Cooperation within the ASEAN–ACT Program on counter-trafficking.

- Workshops under the Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative Against Trafficking (COMMIT).

Concrete achievements:

- Since 2023, the Ministry of Public Security of Viet Nam, in cooperation with Chinese authorities, successfully conducted two evacuation operations, repatriating over 1,000 Vietnamese citizens from Myanmar. A hotline has also been established with relevant agencies in Myanmar to facilitate rapid information exchange and coordination. Through this mechanism, 41 cases were verified, involving 75 Vietnamese victims who had been trafficked to Myanmar and forced into illegal labor.

- In 2024, Viet Nam's Ministry of Public Security, together with the Ministry of Interior of Cambodia, dismantled 198 human trafficking and sexual exploitation cases (an increase of 20.73% compared with 2023), arresting 283 suspects, including 28 foreign nationals. Authorities also detected 2,059 foreign nationals violating immigration laws, and deported 5,852 foreign nationals in violation of Vietnamese laws.

- In the first six months of 2025, the competent authorities of both Viet Nam and Cambodia jointly investigated cases involving Vietnamese nationals who had violated laws or committed crimes in Cambodia. During this period, the two countries organized 12 joint handover operations, receiving and repatriating 557 Vietnamese citizens, including victims of unlawful detention and forced labor. They also cooperated in dismantling three major online fraud cases and successfully rescued 12 human trafficking victims.

8. Future Directions and Tasks in Combating Human Trafficking

Viet Nam will continue to effectively implement the directives and resolutions of the Communist Party, the National Assembly, and the Government on anti-trafficking work. This includes conducting a comprehensive review of the 15 years of implementation of Politburo Directive No. 48-CT/TW (22 October 2010) on strengthening the Party's leadership in crime prevention and control in the new context, as well as assessing the implementation of the National Program on Prevention and Combat of Human Trafficking for the 2021–2025 period.

Viet Nam will also intensify activities to commemorate and raise public awareness of the National Day Against Human Trafficking and the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons (30 July) each year. Efforts will focus on victim

reception, verification, rescue, safety protection, and assistance, ensuring a victim-centered approach. Training programs will be expanded to strengthen the capacity of officials, law enforcement officers, and frontline staff in legal knowledge, professional skills, and victim protection practices.

Comprehensive and coordinated measures will be deployed to proactively prevent and effectively combat human trafficking. This includes developing and issuing implementing regulations for the Law on Prevention and Combat of Human Trafficking (2024), as well as consolidating and perfecting mechanisms for inter-sectoral and inter-organizational coordination in anti-trafficking work.

International cooperation will continue to be a key pillar. Viet Nam will deepen partnerships at bilateral, regional, and global levels, and actively mobilize social resources to support anti-trafficking efforts, particularly in grassroots areas.

The overall goal is to curb human trafficking crimes, strengthen the legal and institutional framework, enhance law enforcement effectiveness, protect victims' legitimate rights and interests, and ensure that the fight against human trafficking contributes to national security, social order, and sustainable socio-economic development./.