



Statement from the European Union Domestic Advisory Group of the EU-Viet Nam Free Trade Agreement

6 June 2024

The EU Domestic Advisory Group (DAG), established under the Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) chapter of the Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam (EVFTA) and composed of representatives of business, workers and NGOs, met on 26 April 2024 in Brussels.

The EU DAG is deeply concerned to learn of a secret national security directive, issued by the country's top leaders, entitled Directive 24. The Directive establishes a policy of preventing the formation of independent political organisations, controlling freedom of expression and dissemination of material criticising the ruling party, denying freedom of assembly, increasing surveillance of citizens, and controlling independent workers unions. The EU DAG considers that the Directive goes against the TSD commitments under the EVFTA, including the implementation of ILO conventions that have already been ratified, and, in particular, Viet Nam's promise to ratify ILO Convention No.87 (Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise). The EU DAG encourages the European Commission to seek for additional information on this matter and share it with the DAG.

The EU DAG reiterates its deep concerns at the ongoing oppression on civil society and arrests of human rights defenders. It condemns the fact that three environmental rights defenders are still serving sentences in Viet Nam on trumped-up charges: Hoang Thi Minh Hong, Dang Dinh Bach and Bach Hung Duong.

The EU DAG is now concerned at two further arrests: in April of Nguyen Van Binh, Head of Legal Affairs at Viet Nam's Ministry of Labour and the EU's main negotiation partner on labour reform (including ratification of ILO Convention No.87), and in May of Vu Minh Tien, Head of Policy and Legal Affairs at the Viet Nam General Confederation of Labour (VGCL) and Director of the Institute for Workers and Trade Unions (IWTU) – the latter organisation being a member of the Viet Nam DAG.

The EU DAG condemns these serious, systematic violations of the EVFTA. In these circumstances, it reiterates its concerns regarding the ability of the Viet Nam DAG to work properly.

We have constantly urged the Commission to raise these concerns at the highest level and to step up its monitoring of Viet Nam. We reiterate this call and urge the Commission to take the necessary measures to ensure that the EVFTA is implemented properly.

The EU DAG is committed to closely monitoring developments in Viet Nam cases brought to the attention of the EU Chief Trade Enforcement Officer regarding Chapter 13.



EU Domestic Advisory Group under
the EU-Vietnam FTA

In addition, the DAG discussed the case of illegal regional trade in cat and dog meat sourced from animals that are not fit for human consumption. This not only raises animal welfare issues, but also poses a serious risk of zoonotic diseases, posing a threat to global human and animal health. The DAG also discussed its implications for public health and occupational safety and health in relation with the upcoming discussion in the 2024 International Labour Conference on biological hazards. We have asked the Commission to assist the authorities with more effective tracing methods.

The EU DAG is also aware that many Vietnamese companies, in particular SMEs and smallholders, are not prepared for the impact of EU legislation on due diligence, forced labour and deforestation. Building on the work already carried out within the DAG on due diligence, we will continue to raise this issue, and that of the dissemination of information, with our Vietnamese counterparts so that the positive trade elements of the EVFTA are not affected and EU-Viet Nam value chains are in line with the international and EU requirements on due diligence.
