



EU Domestic Advisory Group under  
the EU-Vietnam FTA

## **Statement by the EU DAG on the occasion of the 2nd meeting of the Vietnam-European Union Committee on Trade and Sustainable Development**

19 October 2022

Representatives of the two Domestic Advisory Groups (DAG) from the EU and Vietnam, established under Chapter 13 on Trade and Sustainable Development (TSD) of the Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, held their second meeting on 18 October 2022 in Hanoi.

The EUDAG welcomes this first in-person meeting, which allowed us to build a good basis for common cooperation. Civil society plays a key role in the framework of the EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA), and it is essential to give civil society organisations time and space for cooperation and dialogue. The Parties to the EVFTA should recognise and use the experience on the ground that the two DAGs can bring to officials and politicians in charge of the EVFTA to improve its implementation.

With the ongoing war on the European continent, and its considerable impact on economic operators, workers and citizens, it is more important than ever for governments and civil society in partner countries to work together to ensure sustainable, resilient and diversified supply chains. In this respect, the EVFTA provides mutual benefits and stability in times of major geopolitical shifts, and we must work together to realise the full potential of the EVFTA in a way that helps achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the just transition towards a low-carbon, digital and inclusive economy.

In light of the discussions on possible future areas of work in the Committee on Trade and Sustainable Development, the implementation of the TSD Chapter remains central to the EU DAG, but should also take into account the recent European Commission communication on the implementation and enforcement of TSD chapters in the EU's trade agreements, the European Parliament resolutions and Council conclusions, and ensure consistency with upcoming EU initiatives, namely on forced labour, due diligence and deforestation-free products. In this regard, it was agreed in the DAG-to-DAG meeting that a joint working group would be established to deepen mutual understanding on the topic of EU-Vietnam supply chains and due diligence.

The EUDAG welcomes the broad discussion in the TSD Committee on the implementation of the Work Plan on Labour Rights produced by the Vietnamese government ahead of the European Parliament's ratification of the EVFTA, and the return to the initial timetable for the ratification of remaining ILO fundamental conventions. The EU DAG reiterates that it is a step in the right direction and that effective monitoring of the enforcement of fundamental labour rights should be pursued through the DAGs with the support of the ILO Office in Vietnam. This Roadmap should be updated to reflect the recognition of two new fundamental ILO conventions on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), namely Conventions C155 and C187, and the efforts of EU Member States to ensure their swift ratification should be addressed.

Learning from the experience of the Labour rights roadmap as an entry point for meaningful monitoring, and recalling one of the priorities of the TSD communication on the need to develop roadmaps with time-bound indicators to address common priorities, we call on the Parties to develop, in an inclusive and transparent process, a roadmap to address climate and environmental commitments under Chapter 13 of the agreement, including the expertise of relevant UN organisations.

A fundamental concern for the EU DAG, as we set out in our [statement](#) on 29 September 2022 following our 5th EU DAG meeting, remains the shrinking of the space for civil society in Vietnam. TSD chapters in trade agreements can only live up to their promise if civil society is able to transparently monitor and scrutinise their implementation.

Furthermore, human rights are an essential element of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between the EU and Vietnam, and consequently apply in an overarching way to the entire EVFTA. The EU DAG recalls the [recent decision](#) in July 2022 by the EU Ombudsman in this respect. Furthermore, universal human rights - signed by every EU Member State and Vietnam - are a common commitment.

The EU DAG reminds the EU and Vietnamese authorities that civil society organisations must be able to prepare properly to engage in joint meetings and therefore, extremely short notice of meetings and lack of information on agendas and topics to be addressed endangers civil society scrutiny. For all the reasons laid out above, this is a particularly sensitive matter in the case of the EVFTA. Therefore, EU DAG members insist on greater involvement in the preparation of meetings in the future and longer notice of proposed dates (at least six weeks ahead of joint meetings). Civil society forums must be organised in an inclusive and transparent manner to ensure active participation and dialogue.

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