**START-UP CONSULTATION, VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND JOB CREATION CONSULTANCY FOR HANOI-BASED ELDERLY PEOPLE**

**Mr. Nguyen The Toan, Permanent Deputy Head of the Board of Hanoi Association of the Elderly**

*Dear Co-Chairs,*

*Dear colleagues and distinguished guests,*

Over the past few years along with the socio-economic development have come the fast-paced urbanization throughout Vietnam. Urbanization has led to the expansion of administrative areas as well as population growth in urban areas. Particularly, population has certainly boomed, and may even have resulted in the urban overpopulation in Hanoi, the economic, political, and cultural hub of the country with a high population density and a large number of migrant workers from other regions. This has put great pressure on job creation and hindered the state management at all levels.

Hanoi is among the world’s 17 biggest capitals with a population of roughly 8.4 million people (accounting for 10% of the nationwide population), of which the number of elderly people are 1,043,278, occupying 12.27% of the total population (as per the 2023 statistics). According to the United Nations, there should be from 35-40 people on a 1 sq.km area on average to ensure decent living conditions. However, the population density in Hanoi in 2013 already reached 2,087 people/sq.km, which was 8 times as much as the average national density, and more than 50 times as high as the standard density. It is still rising at a rate of 2.1% per annum.

If the number of senior citizen from 60 years old and above in Hanoi in 2010 was 10.4%, then the structure of its population tends to be aging with the share of elderly people hovering at 12.27% of the municipal population. This has come not only as an advantage in the city’s socio-economic development, but also as a big hurdle in creating jobs and enhancing the quality of life of people, including the seniors.

Dear distinguished deputies and guests,

We have all recognised that senior citizens, most of whom were born during the colonial-feudal period, have been playing a crucial role in the family and society. Many of them had joined national defense wars, built the country, and had grown from and been challenged during the resistance wars. (over the years since 1975 in the peacetime, the number of senior citizen has been rising steadily). Having been born and raised in extremely tough conditions, they could not afford to protect their health and accumulate wealth for their old age. Therefore, as the country is transitioning to a market-oriented economy, they have been confronted with numerous challenges in adapting to many changes they have never seen before.

In this context, senior citizen associations at all levels have received close attention and been facilitated by relevant authorities from the central to grassroots levels along with the Vietnam Fatherland Front. This has helped boost the protection, and care while promoting the role of senior citizen; effectively implement 3 central tasks, 3 major working programs, and other tasks assigned by Vietnam Association of the Elderly and the municipal authorities. Particularly, those emulation movements launched by Vietnam Association of the Elderly, such as “Old Age – Bright Role Model”, and “Setting a Good Example on Hunger Eradication, Poverty Alleviation, and Decent Fortune-making” have been actively welcomed and attained high results, positively contributing to the socio-economic development, safeguarding the political security, and maintaining the social order and safety of the capital city.

The senior citizen associations in districts and towns have actively coordinated with agencies and organisations to hold training courses to transfer science and technology in agricultural production, and biotechnology, enhance the economic management knowledge, shift the crop and animal husbandry structure, and open service trading shops. The associations have also actively hosted conferences and seminars, gatherings, experience exchange, and introduced typical examples of senior citizen good at doing business, as well as effective business and production models from which members can learn and apply. Successful seniors, businesses, and well-wishers have been encouraged to assist cash-strapped senior citizen to be able to borrow money for their production and business activities. Thanks to the Party leadership, and the association’s prestige, the seniors could have access to bank loans and credit organisations to purchase initial equipment, seedlings, and breeds for production and animal husbandry.

In the 5-year period alone (2018-2023), the city has 157,962 senior citizen involved in economic activities with a total 5-year revenue (2018-2023) hitting over VND 307,249 billion, creating jobs for 76,803 people, including 9,938 elderly people engaged in agricultural production (of which 9,178 seniors working as farm and business owners); 3,221 seniors in industrial production, small trade and construction; 2,784 seniors in other trade and services who have been directly developing the socio-economy, and striking rich decently. They have somehow lessened the job pressure for society while actively doing charity and humanitarian work, building a new countryside, and civilized urban areas with a total contribution of VND 61.402 billion. As many as 16,040 senior citizen have been praised and rewarded for doing good business activities

The city’s senior citizen have participated in almost all fields of production and business ranging from agricultural production to forestry, industry, handicraft and services; in assorted models, such as family-owned business, farm business, small- and medium-sized enterprises, manufacturing clusters, and business and service shops with a diverse and high-quality product line well-favoured by consumers at home and abroad.

By doing business, many elderly people have escaped poverty and become affluent householders; many association members aged over 70 or 80 are working as business, farm and cooperative owners. They have made a fortune legally while continuing sharing experience, consultancy, and hiring more workers for economic activities.

It can be said that senior citizens in Hanoi who are successful businessmen have significantly contributed to the process of agricultural restructuring, hunger elimination and poverty reduction, and the improvement in the quality of life for seniors; to the environmental protection, building a new countryside and civilized urban areas; while strengthening the motto of the emulation movement “Setting a Bright Example on Hunger Eradication, Poverty Reduction, and Decent Fortune-making”. Based on which, the role and status of the senior citizen associations have been increasingly clearly defined, furthering enriching the effectiveness of the movement “Old Age – Bright Role Model”

Dear distinguished deputies and guests,

The city government has not taken a subjective approach to the above-mentioned results given the current situation of its aging population and pressing issues in the senior citizen work; to continue executing the National Action Programme on Senior citizen in Vietnam in the 2021-2030 period, the Resolution of the 6th Congress of Vietnam Association of the Elderly, the Plan No. 30/KH-UBND dated Jan 26, 2022 by Hanoi city People’s Committee on carrying out the National Action Programme on Senior citizen until 2030 in the city. Accordingly, the municipal administration has given top priority to “Maximizing the role and experience of senior citizens in cultural, social, educational, occupational, economic, and political activities of the country in line with the aspiration, demand, and capability; fully take into account the interests and obligations of the elderly.

* In the short-term 2022-2025 period: at least 50% of senior citizen with a job demand and working ability will find a job, be given vocational orientation assistance, and training in job change at vocational training facilities and job centers; those households with senior citizen who make a demand and satisfy certain criteria could take out bank loans to start their own business, and expand production and business at a preferential interest rate.
* In the 2026-2030 period: At least 70% of elderly people with a job demand and working ability will find a job, be given vocational orientation assistance, and training in job change at vocational training facilities and job centers; those households with senior citizen who make a demand and satisfy certain criteria could take out bank loans to start their own business, and expand production and business at a preferential interest rate.

To materialize the foregoing targets, the Board member of the city’s Senior citizen Association has set out a couple of key solutions and measures as follows:

1. Actively consulting the municipal Party Committee and People’s Committee in the leadership and direction of the emulation movement “Setting a Bright Example on Hunger Eradication, Poverty Reduction, and Decent Fortune Making”, effectively implement the Project on Senior citizen in the 2021-2030 period, take full advantage of all resources to actively support senior citizen to do business and production activities, effectively contributing to the socio-economic development of the locality and the city.
2. Making extensive propaganda so that elderly people can fully understand the principles and guidelines of the Party, as well as policies and laws of the State and the city in relation to the economic development, especially those related to the agricultural and countryside development to create a consensus among senior members. Propagandizing effectively in various forms and diverse contents in order to alter the mindset of seniors in production and business, appreciating the quantity while ensuring to enhance the quality and value of highly profitable products. Highly regarding the sense of community; manufacturing associated with the environmental protection and standards for food safety and hygiene for farm produce.
3. Encouraging the elderly to shift the crop and livestock structure and apply science and technology to production. Paying attention to guiding senior members to maintain and develop traditional handicrafts, and side jobs to generate jobs, increase income, and improve the living standard, particularly holding training courses in transferring science and technology, management, information about the production, business and service market, and field trips to exchange experience from each other.
4. Boosting the education and training of senior members of the association to acquire knowledge, skills, and methods in the production, business and economic management. Motivating successful senior businessmen to share with the local community about the approaches and experience in doing effective business to be able to make decent fortune.
5. Timely evaluating, summarizing, rewarding, and extolling individuals with excellent performance in doing business, popularizing the new typical role models, drawing lessons to give massive support to seniors in starting up, vocational education, employment, and job creation for the city.

*Some proposals and recommendations:*

1. Based on the fact that senior citizen have engaged themselves in economic activities and job creation in the city over the past years, we suppose that the State should formulate policies to lure, stimulate, and support elderly people who can keep working, particularly those with a high expertise, solid experience, and good health to generate income and develop the country. Educational projects should be undertaken to encourage and enhance the knowledge and skills of the elderly as well as establish suitable job centers for seniors. This is a rational solution to offset the still-missing highly-qualified workforce of the working-age demographics.
2. Concerning the Vietnam Association of the Elderly: Adjustments should be made to allow localities to set criteria for typical senior citizen who are successful businessmen in line with the reality. This will motivate senior cadres and members at all levels in the successful doing-business senior movement, contributing to the socio-economic development of the capital city and the nation.

3. A concrete policy should be made for seniors to borrow funds to expand production aligned with their capacity.

*Dear the workshop’s hosts,*

*Dear distinguished guests and deputies,*

Being able to listen to and share matters of mutual concern at the workshop, I am highly unanimous and can learn valuable experience from discussions of the workshop attendees as well as from the achievements of localities. Hopefully, through this seminar, due attention will be paid to the vocational training work in the coming time to facilitate the elderly to access advanced production and business knowledge and skills well-suited to the demands of the global economic integration and to help seniors expand business more efficiently; contributing to increasing income, eradicating hunger and reducing poverty, and ameliorating the material and spiritual life of the elderly so that they can lead a happy, healthy and positive life in the family and society.

Thank you for your attention.