

# **JOINT STATEMENT**

## **of a group of foreign NGOs operating in Vietnam**

Recent escalation of tensions has led to confrontations between China and Vietnam in waters claimed by both China and Vietnam, which raised deep concerns of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and other development organisations in Vietnam.

On 4 May 2014, just days after China's largest state oil company, China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), stationed its oil rig 130 nautical miles (240 kilometres) off the east coast of Vietnam, two Vietnamese ships were rammed and sailors injured by Chinese vessels with air support. This was reported by local and international media, including Reuters and the New York Times.

A number of international organizations, which believe in and operate following a rights-based approach to development, are highly concerned about the growing dispute between China and its neighbouring countries. This is a question of sovereign rights and jurisdiction affecting several countries in the region, which requires careful discussion, sensitivity, and utmost concern for the welfare of the citizens of each affected country. In any conflict, this kind of situation is most harmful to the lives and livelihoods of millions of poor and vulnerable people in each affected country, including Vietnam, where the Government has made great efforts to end poverty and create new opportunities for people who have suffered through too many years of war and its consequences.

The international non-governmental organizations, signed below, express their deep concerns over any possibility of conflict by one country against another. We condemn such conflicts because they always damage lives, livelihoods, safety, and security of the people – particularly women and children. Conflict goes against the ideals and commitments of all nations, which have suffered war and therefore know the value of peace, and the need to build a world in which people may live securely, in prosperity and happiness.

Therefore, we call upon the related parties to:

- Immediately cease hostilities in the East Sea / South China Sea and agree to an international / UN brokered dispute settlement mechanism to resolve issues within a reasonable timeframe. Employ diplomacy and peaceful means rather than military hostilities and confrontation in the disputed waters.
- Based on the legal documents validated by the international dispute settlement mechanism, agree on the maritime border lines for all countries involved.

We call upon the ASEAN Secretariat and the UN to:

- Issue communiqués to demand cessation of hostilities in the East Sea / South China Sea before they escalate into a full fledged war

- Dispatch verification teams to find facts and suggest measures to their parent organizations to settle the disputes

We call upon the people of Vietnam, China, and ASEAN, members of civil society organisations, locally and internationally to:

- Provide factual information to people of the region about the disputed area and related issues
- Organize and mobilize people to claim and defend their universal rights to live in peace, opportunity and happiness.

The organizations listed below express their solidarity with the people of Vietnam, China, and ASEAN, and people all over the world who seek an end to violence and conflicts, and we pledge to take appropriate actions to help end injustice, oppression and poverty.

Endorsed by:

Animals Asia Foundation  
 Brot für die Welt - VEST Vietnam - Laos  
 Catholic Relief Services Vietnam  
 Church World Service  
 Enfants&Développement  
 Environment and Development Action Vietnam  
 Football for All in Vietnam  
 Foundation for International Development / Relief  
 Glocal Ventures, Inc.  
 Hannah's Promise International Aid  
 HealthBridge Foundation of Canada  
 Holt International Children's Services  
 Kenan Institute Asia  
 Madison Quakers, Inc.  
 Norwegian People's Aid Vietnam  
 Norwegian Church Aid in Vietnam  
 Peaceworkers (San Francisco)  
 Room to Read in Vietnam  
 Swiss Association for International Cooperation Helvetas  
 The College at Brockport Vietnam  
 The Danang / Quang Nam Fund, Inc.  
 Veterans for Peace Chapter 160  
 Vets With A Mission  
 Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation – The International Center  
 Vredeseilanden (VECO) Vietnam