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APPEAL
Of the Second International
Conference of Victims of Agent Orange/dioxin

Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, 9th August, 2011

The Second International Conference of Victims of Agent Orange/dioxin, held in Hanoi from August 8th to 9th, 2011, included participants from around the world: Agent Orange victims, victims of other toxic chemicals, scientists, lawyers and social activists. The conference is a significant and important historic event, marking the 50th anniversary of the first spraying of the toxic chemical Agent Orange (1961-1971) by the U.S. forces in Vietnam and Indochina.

The delegates to the Conference agree that:

During the Vietnam War, from 1961 to 1971, U.S. forces through Operation Ranch Hand sprayed nearly 80 million litres of herbicides over South Vietnam, of which 61% was Agent Orange containing at least 366kg of dioxin, the most toxic substance known to science.

Since the First International Conference of Victims of Agent Orange in 2006, there has been greater public understanding and awareness of the dangers of Agent Orange/dioxin to humans and to the environment. More diseases have been officially recognized as being due to exposure to Agent Orange. Along with the Vietnamese people, many others around the world have become victims of this toxic weapon of mass destruction. Soldiers in the U.S., South Korea, Australia and New Zealand were exposed during the time they fought in Vietnam, and now their children and grandchildren are suffering as well. People in the U.S., Canada, South Korea, Puerto Rico, Australia, New Zealand and other areas were exposed because they lived near or worked in areas where the U.S. forces stored, buried, manufactured, tested or experimented with Agent Orange as part of their war in Vietnam.

Because of dioxin related damage to their endocrine, immune and reproductive systems, victims of Agent Orange suffer from multiple health conditions, some of which are quickly lethal and others which doom people to a life of horrific misery. Due to these diseases, many have been denied the most basic of human rights – especially the right to life, and the pursuit of happiness. Because of their inability to work and bearing the costs of

medical treatment, most victims of Agent Orange everywhere are very poor. However, because Agent Orange was intentionally directed against the Vietnamese people, they are subject to the most onerous conditions. 4.8 million Vietnamese people directly sprayed repeatedly over extended periods of time were subject to multiple sources of exposure. The proportion of old people, women and children, who are especially susceptible to dioxin, is particularly high in Vietnam. In Vietnam, an enormous number of children continue to be born with Agent Orange-related birth defects. Now, a fourth generation of Agent Orange victims is being born. Because of this danger, in effect many women have been denied the human right to bear children. Agent Orange not only harmed human beings and devastated the environment of Vietnam during the war but also continued its devastation after the war. Dioxin dumped in the soil continues to damage the environment and sicken the people in and around several "hot spots". Causing deforestation of nearly 3 million hectares of land, during the war, especially in coastal areas, Agent Orange has damaged not only the environment in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia but also the regional environment. It has and continues to have severe consequences for people in many areas of the world.

The use of Agent Orange in the war in Vietnam is a war crime and a crime against humanity. Its consequences are passed from generation to generation. It challenges us to end, once and for all, the use of chemical weapons and any weapons of mass destruction anywhere today.

Humanity's concern about the affects of chemical warfare, the threat of accidents at chemical manufacturing plants and the looming environmental disaster due to biochemical engineering is increasing. The agony of those exposed to Agent Orange is central to this consciousness and international solidarity with Agent Orange victims' struggle for justice is growing.

CALL TO ACTION

Therefore, the Delegates to the Conference hereby call upon:

1) Solidarity

All victims of Agent Orange, whatever their nationality or circumstances of exposure, should unite more closely and earnestly to act for our common interests. Further, to demonstrate our solidarity with victims of other weapons of mass destruction such as the atomic bomb and depleted uranium, all the victims and their supporters should work together in unity and coordinate actions. Only together, can we be effective, powerful and successful in achieving justice!

2) Organize

We ask all of humanity, all governments, organizations and individuals, whatever their social or political position, to take immediate action to support all victims of Agent Orange, with particular emphasis on those in Vietnam. In every country, and in every region, we should set up organizations and develop specific programs for mobilizing material resources in whatever form and for making our voices heard in all available forums in support of the struggle of the Vietnamese Agent Orange victims for justice.

3) Study and Remediate

Scientists, public health and environmental experts, especially from the United States, should focus on studying the specific health and environmental dangers of Agent Orange/dioxin and possibilities for remediation. This is very urgent in order to help victims whose time is running out, and in order to avoid similar disasters for future generations.

4) UN Ban on Weapons and War Crimes

The world community in general, the United Nations and each government in particular should rapidly promulgate new measures to more effectively prevent all acts in violation of international laws prohibiting war crimes and crimes against humanity.

5) US Government and Chemical Manufacturers To Accept Responsibility

The U.S. Government and chemical manufacturers of Agent Orange, particularly Monsanto and Dow Chemical should accept their responsibility and engage in greater and fuller efforts to work with the Vietnamese people and government to clean up the existing “hot spots”, and to provide comprehensive and meaningful assistance to the victims of Agent Orange and their families in Vietnam in a more practical and effective manner. Because little of the monies appropriated by the U.S. Congress has actually reached the victims, funds intended for the victims should be given to Vietnamese NGOs like VAVA so that they actually go to those who need assistance most. The need for hospitals, clinics and respite homes for the victims and their parents, is overwhelming – many of the victims require 24 hour care and their elderly parents who are doing the caring also need help.

6) Disclose Locations of Agent Orange Sites

The U.S. Government and all governments that have allowed the use of Agent Orange for any purpose during the Vietnam war years, should publicly disclose all the locations where Agent Orange was used, buried or dumped.

7) Partner with VAVA

The Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/dioxin is the legal and moral representative of Vietnam’s Agent Orange victims and acts as a non-governmental organization representing the interests of these victims throughout Vietnam. To hear their voices and to help Vietnamese victims effectively and specifically, people of good will and compassion should partner with VAVA and assist it programmatically and materially, contacting VAVA through its website www.vava.org.vn.

NOW, fifty years since the first use of Agent Orange in Vietnam, the delegates of the conference declare again that the needs of the victims are urgent, requiring immediate action! Half a century is too long to wait for justice!

We pledge to work together to make sure that justice delayed will no longer be justice denied!