

**AMBASSADOR NGUYEN QUOC CUONG'S REMARK
AT THE VIETNAM FORUM ON EDUCATION COOPERATION**

Washington DC, April 26th, 2013

Ladies and Gentlemen, colleagues and friends
Good morning,

It is a great pleasure to see such a large number of people gathering here today. It shows the high level of interests on the topic of higher education cooperation between Vietnam and the United States. I would like to thank Assistant Secretary of State Susan Stevenson representing the US Administration here. I also thank Dr. Nguyen Xuan Vang, Director General of the International Education Development Department representing Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training, and leaders of Ho Chi Minh International University, Dong A University and University of Technology, who have traveled such a long way to Washington D.C to participate in this Forum. A warm welcome to representatives from 2 dozen American universities, many companies and foundations from across the United States. My thanks also go to Dr. Lynn McNamara and the Vietnam Education Fund for their active role. We are equally delighted to have some students, both Vietnamese and American, in our forum to provide their own perspectives. Welcome all to the Vietnam House.

Higher education is one of the most important areas of cooperation between our two countries. The modern Vietnam has showed its interest in developing education cooperation with the United States since our independence in 1945. Worthy of note is the fact that only two months after Vietnam gained independence, President Ho Chi Minh, who was also the first Foreign Minister of modern Vietnam, sent a letter to US Secretary of State James Byrnes, in which he proposed sending a group of fifty Vietnamese youths to the US for study.

Since the normalization of diplomatic relations between our two countries in 1995, education is one of the fastest growing areas of cooperation. The numbers speak for themselves. In 1995, there were only 800 Vietnamese students studying in the US, in 2012, the number has increased to 16,000. That makes Vietnam rank number one among ASEAN countries and number 8th among all the countries which have students in the US. I just want to show you some of the pictures that I took with Vietnamese students in many of the universities in the U.S. Frankly speaking, this is the most rewarding part of my many travels to about 30 states in the US in the last two years. And I am so proud of the bright, intelligent, very energetic and self-confident Vietnamese students. They truly represent the future of my nation. So no wonder that higher education cooperation is one of my highest priorities as Ambassador to the U.S.

As you are well aware of, many Vietnamese students come to study in US higher education institutions under different programs. Most are self-financed, but many are sponsored by either Vietnamese/US Government or by private entities and the universities themselves. Just to name a few examples: to date, we have as many as 400 Fulbright scholars, 500 VEF-funded students, 250 Ford Foundation-sponsored students and since 2000, 600 students have been funded by the Vietnamese Government under Project 322. On a personal note, I want to let you know that I have been blessed to have had three opportunities to come to the U.S for study and visits under the Fulbright scholarship and the Ford Foundation programs in the 1990s. I also wish to express high appreciation of the visionary leadership by the then Senator and now Secretary of State, the Honorable John Kerry, who not only helped "create" these two most prestigious scholarship programs in Vietnam but has also taken a great care for the development of higher education cooperation in the broader context of the growing bilateral relationship between Vietnam and the United States.

In addition, the Fulbright Economic Training Program in Ho Chi Minh City is another vivid example of the effective cooperation between the Ministry of Training and Education of Vietnam and the US State Department, which has provided training for thousands of Vietnamese students as well as government officials. On the part of the universities, of the 35 excellence programs carried out by 23 Vietnamese universities, 32 programs involved cooperation with the US counterparts.

There has been positive engagement of private sector in Private Public Partnership to promote education cooperation. The most notable example of such a partnership is the Higher Engineering Education Alliance Program (HEEAP). The HEEAP, which kicked off in 2010 has brought together United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Intel Vietnam, Arizona State University (ASU) and eight top Vietnamese engineering and technical vocational universities to modernize Vietnamese public higher education in engineering.

These are just some examples of higher education cooperation. That is not to mention American students who come to study in Vietnam. The demand for cooperation in this area is still enormous. As Vietnam is entering a new phase of reform, we need much more highly-qualified human resources. HRD has been identified as one of the three "breakthroughs" that Vietnam needs to focus on our development strategy 2011-2020. There are really great potentialities for our further cooperation in higher education.

As I recall, Vietnam Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung's visit to Washington DC in 2008, the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam and

the United States' Department of State reached an MOU which led to the setting up of working groups on such areas as Establishing an American University in Vietnam; Accreditation and Testing; English Language Acquisition; Post-Graduation Training and Fostering Stronger Linkage between Business and Academia. These are the areas that the two countries have been working in order to promote educational cooperation. I believe that participants to this Forum will share the best practices. But I also encourage the participants to focus on identifying the obstacles as well as the opportunities for us to work together to materialize the agenda for cooperation that the two countries have agreed upon.

It is my hope that our forum will come up with specific measures to enhance cooperation in higher education. Please rest assured that what we discuss today, especially the policy recommendations, will be shared with relevant agencies and officials in our two governments as well as other stake-holders in both countries so that our forum today will contribute in a significant way to further promoting more robust bilateral higher education cooperation between Vietnam and the United States.

Thank you for your attention.