

**Subject : 20th anniversary of the Government's Decree establishing
the Viet Nam National University**

Welcome Speech by Ambassador Franz Jessen

- H.E.Mr.Nguyen Phu Trong, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam
- H.E.Mr Nguyen Thien Nhan, President of the Vietnam Fatherland Front
- H.E.Mr. Pham Quang Nghi, General Secretary of Hanoi City and Member of Polit-Bureau
- H.E.Mr. Vu Duc Dam, Deputy Prime Minister
- Vice-chairmen of the People's Committee of Hanoi capital and other provinces (Quang Ninh province, Ha Nam province, and others).
- Chairman of Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences and leaders of other agencies and organizations in Hanoi
- Ambassadors and Counsellors of foreign embassies in Hanoi, (including USA, Australia, Ireland, Denmark, Italy, Canada, etc)
- Prof. Dr. Phùng Xuân Nhạ, President of the Viet Nam National University
- Viet Nam National University professors, researchers, staff and students,

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the European Union –and myself- I sincerely thank you for inviting me to this special celebration on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of Decree No. 97 setting up the Viet Nam National University in Hanoi. It is an honour to be part of this event that commemorates the establishment of the first modern university in the country and one of the two national universities.

I read this week in the newspapers, that the PISA – the International Programme for International Student Assessment – 2012 report, had ranked 7 Asian countries –followed by 5 European - as the highest performers in the world in terms of reading comprehension, math and

science. Viet Nam has come on the 17th place, well above countries with considerable higher levels of economic development. The report concluded that Asian societies give great importance to education and that families are willing to devote most of their income to their children's education. This is undoubtedly a clear reflection of the direction this country, together with its academic institutions, is leading towards.

In these 20 years this University, like Viet Nam itself, has undergone remarkable development with impressive results. Through cooperation with other institutions, agencies, localities and the business sector the Viet Nam National University has strived to become a reference point in academia, nationally and regionally, whilst promoting the cultural traditions that set the foundation of the University of Indochina more than 100 years ago.

The European Union has witnessed this process and become an institutional partner and friend to this University.

Through the EU programme "Erasmus mundus", the VNU has been able to cooperate with other regional and European universities in the development of shared curricula and academic staff exchange. More than 600 Vietnamese students, many of them from this institution, have already pursued postgraduate studies in European universities. In addition to this, hundreds of scholarships are offered annually by Member States of the EU.

As regards to research programmes such as the Framework Programme for Research and Development – the largest research programme in the world - more than 30% of applications from Vietnamese researchers are given a favourable consideration, which is actually the highest success rate in the ASEAN region.

In the last 20 years, the Vietnam National University has not only participated in our cooperation programmes; but moreover, it has carried out key research studies for us and collaborated with regional and European universities in many of these academic projects.

Among others, the Vietnam National University has brought closer ASEAN and the EU by repeatedly studying and comparing both regional integration processes and bringing new perspectives to what could be an optimal roadmap to achieve the ASEAN Economic Community.

Furthermore, the VNU has helped us being aware of how the EU is perceived in Vietnam and in the whole of Asia though the study "EU through the eyes of Asia" carried out by the ESiA network - a network of Asian and European Universities that promote European Studies in Asia –

and that was founded by the Asia-Europe Foundation almost a decade ago.

But the European Union ties with this institution are not only academic. Our relationship is founded on respect and appreciation for each other. Indeed, last year's visit of the European Council President Herman Van Rompuy - the highest authority at EU level – set a new milestone in our common history. The visit showed EU's appreciation of the rising role and position of Vietnam in the region and in the world and affirmed the desire to strengthen the multifaceted cooperation with Vietnam.

On this occasion, VNU solemnly conferred the Honorary Doctor Degree to H.E. Mr. Herman Van Rompuy in recognition of his prestige and valuable contributions to the mutual development between Vietnam and EU as well as the cooperation and support that European Council has given to VNU in science-technology and education-training.

During his acceptance speech, President Van Rompuy reflected on the level of interdependence of our economies in Europe and Asia; such indeed, that you could say that our destinies are to some extent intertwined. I share this vision of common challenges, objectives and solutions between both regions that together with our shared values lay the foundation for an ever more strategic and comprehensive partnership.

The EU is one of the leading and important partners of Vietnam in various fields including politics and diplomacy, development cooperation, trade-investment, science-technology, and responses to the global challenges. In the past years, Vietnam-EU cooperation has witnessed far-reaching development with the ratification of the EU-Vietnam Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) and start of the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations in June 2012.

Clearly, the achievements of the partnership between Vietnam and EU in general and between VNU and EU academic organizations in particular will lay a solid foundation for the two sides to promote the intensive, practical and effective cooperation in education, science and technology.

Finally, I take this opportunity to thank the Vietnam National University for inviting me to this meaningful ceremony and to congratulate you once more for the long history of academic excellence and quality training of young Vietnamese.