



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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President of the European Commission

Remarks by President Barroso following the bilateral talks with Prime Minister Dung of Vietnam

Press conference

Hanoi, Vietnam, 25 August 2014

Good afternoon, ladies and gentleman,

I am particularly glad to be in Hanoi today – seven years after my first visit to Vietnam as President of the European Commission.

And it is a pleasure to meet again Prime Minister Dung giving sequence to our intense contacts over these last years.

Europe values its special partnership with Vietnam. Vietnam is not just an emerging economy and a promising market, it is also a close partner with strong historical bounds uniting us and a trusted supporter of EU presence in this part of the world.

Today we have extremely dynamic relations grounded in these commonalities and in strong mutual interests.

And I am particularly proud for having contributed for such a close and dynamic relationship over these last years.

In 2007 when I first visited Vietnam, Prime Minister Dung and I opened a new chapter in our partnership as we launched together the negotiations for a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. Three years later, in 2010, we initialled this Agreement together in Brussels and it was signed in 2012.

As expected, this Partnership and Cooperation Agreement represents a qualitative leap in our bilateral partnership.

It now allows the broadening and deepening of relations beyond the traditional areas of trade and development.

It includes areas such as human rights, environment and climate change, science and technology, transport, tourism, energy, education and culture, peace and security relationship. The list is long, but by no means complete.

The strengthening of our relations is also visible in the deepening of economic ties and the rapid development of two-way trade and investment.

Today the EU is Vietnam's largest export market and second largest trade partner. Our trade relations come today to 27 billion euro (USD 36 billion) a year. And Europe's foreign direct investment in Vietnam amounted to € 656 million in 2013 (around USD 880 million).

But we can and must do more.

This is why in 2012 we have launched talks for a Free Trade Agreement. This will be the second pillar in which our Partnership will stand.

This Free Trade Agreement will offer important new business opportunities and promote growth and employment in Vietnam and in Europe.

It will benefit our companies and our citizens. And it will also help the process of reform and modernisation of Vietnam. There has been a good progress in negotiations and I look at this Agreement with great optimism.

Let it be no doubts. The EU stands firmly on Vietnam's side on its path towards an industrialised country by 2020. We will continue to support Vietnam in its reform process including through our development assistance.

The EU is today Vietnam's largest grant donor and I can confirm that we decided this month to significantly increase our assistance to Vietnam for the period 2014-2020 to 400 million euro.

This assistance will target in particular the areas of "governance and rule of law" and "sustainable energy", in line with the Government's development priorities.

Because as we discussed today, good governance, human rights, the rule of law and adherence to the international rules based system are driving forces for development. I have also stressed to PM Dung that free media and free internet have an important role to play in a thriving civil society.

Last but not least, today we also exchanged views on the situation in the South China Sea/East Sea. We shared our concerns about developments in the area.

In fact, the EU has high stakes in the region: trade and strategic interests, as well as energy and security dimensions. I have assured to Prime Minister Dung that the EU is following developments in the South China Sea with particular attention.

We do not take a position on individual territorial claims, but we strongly encourage all parties to seek peaceful solutions in accordance with international law, in particular with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. All sides should refrain from unilateral actions which could cause tension or unintended accidents.

Regional cooperation and international cooperation is essential to address the challenges with which we are faced with.

This is why ASEAN integration is very important and we strongly support it. It is time to set up a Strategic Partnership between the EU and ASEAN.

Prime Minister Dung,

I believe in the great potential of our bilateral relations. We have much to gain from working more closely with each other on bilateral and international issues such as the fight against climate change, stimulating global growth and securing peace and stability.

I have to thank you for your enthusiasm and support in bringing our bilateral relationship to a higher level.

I look back with great satisfaction on what we have achieved together in the last years.

And I look forward with great expectation for what will come next.

Thank you for your attention.