

POLITICAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE

Celebrating the 25th anniversary of EU-Vietnam diplomatic relations in 2015, the EU reaffirmed the importance it attaches to its relations with Vietnam and other Asian countries.

The EU's relationship with Vietnam has been furthered by the exchange of high-level visits over the years:

- 2013: visit of the Secretary General of the Communist Party of Vietnam Nguyen Phu Trong to Brussels; visit of Trade Commissioner Karel de Gucht to Vietnam; visit of Vice President cum Commissioner for Industry and Entrepreneurship of the European Commission Antonio Tajani to Vietnam;
- 2014: visit of the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission Catherine Ashton; visit of the President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso to Vietnam;
- 2015: visit of Dimitris Papadimoulis, Vice-President of the European Parliament (for the 132nd Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union); visit of the EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven Mimica to Vietnam; visit of Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung to Brussels, where both sides adopted a **joint statement** and signed a **declaration concluding the negotiations of the EU-VN Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**.
- 2016: visit of the EU Commissioner for Environment and Fisheries Karmenu Vella and of the EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development Phil Hogan to Vietnam.

Since 2012, the introduction of EU-VN Political Consultations at Vice-Ministerial Level have played an important role in their political relations, providing an opportunity to discuss bilateral and multilateral issues of shared concern such as Human Rights, Sustainable Development, Climate Change and International Security.

A major theme in EU-VN relations is the concern for Human Rights, where the EU remains actively committed to support Vietnam's transition towards an open society based on the rule of law. The EU continuously advocates for the respect of political and civil rights such as the freedom of expression, the freedom of religion and belief as well as, the abolition of the death penalty in Vietnam.

The launch of the annual Human Rights Dialogue in 2003 has been an important instrument allowing both sides to engage in constructive dialogue and for the EU to channel its concerns and provide support to the Vietnamese authorities. The Dialogue is rooted in the EU's guidelines on Human Rights and the EU principles on the promotion of Human Rights and Democracy worldwide. In 2012, the Dialogue was up-graded to an enhanced and capital-based Dialogue.

This process has been complemented and reinforced by the EU-Vietnam Sub-Group on Cooperation in areas of institution-building and administrative reform, governance and human rights. The Sub-Group, established under the 1995 Framework Agreement, seeks to identify areas of mutual interest, share experiences and identify suitable areas for cooperation projects and programmers. Relevant cooperation instruments include the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), Non-State Actors (NSA) and Local Authorities (LA).

The EU's commitment to give further momentum to the annual Dialogue, making it more result-oriented with more tangible progress, is notable after the conclusion of the sixth round of the ***EU-Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue held in Brussels in December 2016***. The seventh round will be held in Hanoi in 2017.