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Joint Statement

Bern

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Joint statement by Switzerland and Vietnam on the occasion of the official visit to Switzerland by President Nguyen Minh Triet

At the invitation of Doris Leuthard, President of the Swiss Confederation, Nguyen Minh Triet, President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, paid his first ever official visit to Switzerland from 16 to 19 May 2010.

The President of Vietnam started his visit yesterday by opening a Swiss-Vietnamese business event organised by the Swiss-Asian Chamber of Commerce in Zurich.

Today, President Nguyen Minh Triet held talks with Federal President Doris Leuthard and Swiss Foreign Minister Micheline Calmy-Rey at Landsitz Lohn in Kehrsatz, the estate for official visitors to Switzerland. The two presidents reviewed the status of bilateral affairs and agreed that relations were strong, comprehensive and excellent. They welcomed the strengthening of relations between Switzerland and Vietnam in a wide range of areas, including politics, economics, trade, investment, development co-operation, as well as education and training. They agreed to enhance multi-faceted co-operation between the two countries in the future, taking into consideration the forthcoming 40th anniversary of bilateral diplomatic relations in 2011.

Federal President Doris Leuthard praised Vietnam's achievements after nearly 25 years of reforms and integration into the global community, and in particular its reduction of poverty and its early achievement of the UN Millennium Development Goals. She referred to the commitment of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) in Vietnam totalling over 330 million Swiss francs, and assured President Nguyen Minh Triet of Switzerland's ongoing support. The Vietnamese president thanked Switzerland for the effectiveness of its official development assistance, which contributed to Vietnam's progress in this area.

Federal President Leuthard went on to confirm that Vietnam is to benefit from an enhanced co-operation programme provided by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). Assistance is to cover priority needs of Vietnam concerning macroeco-

conomic conditions and the financial sector, the promotion and internationalisation of small and medium-sized companies, and trade policy.

The President of the Swiss Confederation commended the Vietnamese government for its continuous implementation of economic reforms in general and the new initiative on public-private partnerships in particular. The Swiss government is confident that this initiative will boost Vietnamese development, especially in the area of major infrastructure projects.

The two heads of state welcomed and praised the dynamic growth of economic, trade and investment relations between their countries. The bilateral trade volume increased by a factor of five between 1998 and 2008 (approximately 600 million Swiss francs), and reached the exceptionally high level of 2.7 billion Swiss francs in 2009. Foreign direct investment amounted to 1.43 billion US dollars in 2009, making Switzerland the 19th largest foreign investor out of 89 countries and territories that have invested in Vietnam. The two presidents discussed ways to enhance trade and investment relations, as well as to encourage and support business between companies in both countries.

The ongoing discussions between the EFTA member states, including Switzerland, and Vietnam have enhanced the understanding of each other's economies and of the opportunities for further economic exchange and co-operation. Both heads of state are very pleased that the Vietnam-EFTA joint study group on the feasibility of a free trade agreement between Vietnam and EFTA is to be officially established tomorrow, 19 May 2010, in Geneva.

Both presidents emphasised the importance of the reform of the education system for sustainable development in Vietnam. They commended the already existing close and fruitful co-operation between various universities and universities of applied sciences in both countries, and welcomed the signing of a memorandum of understanding aimed at fostering co-operation in education and training between higher education institutions in Vietnam and Switzerland.

Both presidents acknowledge that the further development of the country requires that the rule of law be strengthened through clear framework conditions, as well as predictable and transparent legislation. The President of the Swiss Confederation has welcomed the efforts undertaken by Vietnam in this area.

The two presidents also discussed international issues of common interest, particularly climate change – Vietnam is likely to be one of the countries most severely affected by the consequences of global warming – the UN and the Security Council, as well as Vietnam's experiences as a pilot state for the "one UN" reform process, and the universalisation of the International Criminal Court. They also agreed on intensifying co-operation between their governments at the multilateral level.

Federal President Doris Leuthard commended Vietnam's active efforts at the international level through its presidency of ASEAN in 2010, its contributions as a member of the UN Security Council and its ongoing efforts to integrate Vietnam into the global economy following its accession to the WTO in 2007. She congratulated Vietnam on hosting the World Economic Forum (WEF) on East Asia for the first time in Ho Chi Minh City in June 2010.

The Vietnamese President welcomed the accreditation of a Swiss Ambassador to ASEAN in September 2009 and congratulated Switzerland on hosting the 13th Summit of the Francophonie from 22 to 24 October 2010 in Montreux.

Both presidents expressed their satisfaction with the quality of the bilateral dialogue on human rights which was initiated in 1997. The 8th round of talks took place on 22 April 2010 in Switzerland in a fruitful atmosphere. It confirmed the will of both sides to continue their co-operation in the field of human rights in a substantial and trustful way. Federal President Doris Leuthard expressed her great appreciation for Vietnam's decision to support Switzerland's candidacy for a seat on the UN Human Rights Council for the period from 2010 to 2013.

Both heads of state agreed that the results of the presidential visit marked a milestone in relations between Vietnam and Switzerland, and contributed towards the strengthening and development of the traditional friendship and comprehensive co-operation between the two countries. President Nguyen Minh Triet extended an official invitation to the Federal President to pay a visit to Vietnam.

President Nguyen Minh Triet will conclude today's official visit by meeting the President of the Swiss Council of States, Erika Forster-Vannini, the "Friends of Vietnam" parliamentary group, as well as leading figures in the Swiss and Vietnamese business communities.