

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

DIPLOMATIC BLUEBOOK

2020



THẾ GIỚI PUBLISHERS

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BUI THANH SON

Member of the Party Central Committee, Minister of Foreign Affairs

FOREWORD

The year 2020 was an extraordinary year, marked by rapid, complex and unprecedented developments in the economic and political landscape at the regional and global levels. Peace, cooperation, and development remained the prevailing trend, yet they were met with numerous challenges and difficulties. The global economy fell into recession, while the strategic competition among major powers was at its fiercest since the Cold War. There was also fertile ground for the escalation of the ongoing movements of anti-globalization, populism and protectionism. Non-traditional security challenges, particularly the COVID-19 pandemic, left profound and far-reaching impacts on all aspects of international

affairs and relations, which may persist for years to come. The regional landscape witnessed new complications and underlying risks to peace, stability, and development.

For Viet Nam, 2020 was the last year in the implementation of its socio-economic development plan for the 2016-2020 period and in preparation for the 13th National Party Congress.

Against this backdrop, the Vietnamese diplomacy demonstrated flexibility, mettle and innovation in overcoming challenges. Viet Nam had created and seized opportunities, and comprehensively and coherently conducted diplomatic activities. Such endeavors significantly contributed to bolstering the peaceful and stable environment conducive to national

construction and protection, and enhancing Viet Nam's international standing. Notable diplomatic achievements of Viet Nam in 2020 are as follows:

First, Viet Nam's friendship and cooperation with other countries, particularly neighboring countries, major powers, and important partners, continued to be strengthened through a range of diverse activities, held via a flexible combination of virtual and in-person formats. These included exchange of delegations, telephone conversations, celebrations of decennial and quinquennial anniversaries of diplomatic relations, maintaining Intergovernmental Committee meetings, and signing ceremonies of international agreements, among others. Upholding the spirit of international solidarity and cooperation in the fight against COVID-19, Viet Nam provided face masks, medical equipment, and financial aids to 51 countries and international organizations. Viet Nam also successfully called on various countries and international organizations to support its efforts in terms of finance and medical equipment to curb COVID-19 domestically.

Second, 2020 left a deep imprint on the strengthening and elevation of Viet Nam's multilateral diplomacy. Viet Nam took the initiative in building and shaping multilateral arrangements, particularly through the successful fulfillment of multiple international responsibilities at the same time, namely

the 2020 ASEAN Chairmanship, ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) Presidency, and the first year of its non-permanent membership at the United Nations Security Council for the 2020-2021 term. Amid the complex developments of COVID-19, Viet Nam had taken proactive steps in coordinating ASEAN member states' effective response to challenges, particularly the pandemic.

Third, proactive and vigorous efforts were channeled to the pursuit of comprehensive and extensive international integration. International economic integration was at its core, engineering breakthroughs and fostering new drivers for rapid and sustainable economic growth. In addition to effectively implementing the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), Viet Nam ratified the EU-Viet Nam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA), and signed the UK-Viet Nam Free Trade Agreement (UKVFTA) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). By the end of 2020, Viet Nam signed 17 FTAs with countries, whose total GDP accounted for 60% of global GDP. These results played a key role in the nation's major economic achievements. Notably, Viet Nam's GDP grew by 2.91% in 2020, thus placing Viet Nam among countries with the highest growth rate in the world. Total imports and exports reached US\$ 543.9 billion, total FDI amounted to US\$ 28.5

billion, and remittance recorded at US\$ 17.2 billion.

Fourth, border and territorial affairs witnessed encouraging results, contributing to the joint effort with neighboring countries to realize the land border of peace, friendship, cooperation, and development. Viet Nam continued to resolutely and persistently safeguard its sovereignty and sovereign rights in the East Sea. Viet Nam had circulated a note verbal at the United Nations, affirming Viet Nam's position on the East Sea, and took a proactive approach in working with ASEAN members and relevant partners in promoting peace, cooperation, the rule of law and the peaceful settlement of disputes at sea.

Fifth, protection of overseas Vietnamese citizens in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic was a shining beacon of Viet Nam's diplomacy. Viet Nam had organized 290 repatriation flights and safely returned home 79,000 nationals from 59 countries and territories. Overseas Vietnamese-related work was effectively carried out. Cultural diplomacy and external information dissemination had made good use of new media platforms in promoting Viet Nam as an effective model of conducting COVID-19 prevention and control while sustaining socio-economic development.

To raise public awareness of the

abovementioned activities in Viet Nam's foreign affairs, as an annual custom, the Ministry hereby publishes the *Diplomatic Bluebook 2020*. It serves as a concise chronological report of Vietnamese diplomatic activities in 2020. The book begins with an overview of the global landscape, the situation in the Asia-Pacific, and the overarching foreign policy and diplomatic missions of Viet Nam in 2020. It is followed by a review of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, economic diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, border and territorial affairs, overseas Vietnamese-related work, external information dissemination, defense diplomacy, and security diplomacy. A separate chapter is also dedicated to the Party-to-Party, Parliament-to-Parliament and people-to-people's external activities. It is the wish of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to provide domestic and overseas readers with comprehensive information on the diplomatic activities of Viet Nam in 2020, for reference and research.

On this occasion, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs extends its sincere thanks to the Commission for External Relations of the Communist Party of Viet Nam, the National Assembly's Committee for External Relations and the Viet Nam Union of Friendship Organizations for providing the information necessary to complete this book.

The book is proudly presented to you.

BUI THANH SON

Member of the Party Central Committee, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

ADMM	ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting
AIPA	ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEM	Asia - Europe Meeting
COC	Code of Conduct in the South China Sea
CPTPP	Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership
DOC	Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea
EAS	East Asia Summit
EU	European Union
EVFTA	EU - Viet Nam Free Trade Agreement
EVIPA	EU - Viet Nam Investment Protection Agreement
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
G20	Group of Twenty
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
ODA	Official Development Assistance
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
SOM	Senior Officials' Meeting
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UKVFTA	UK - Viet Nam Free Trade Agreement
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1982
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USD	United States Dollar
WTO	World Trade Organization



CHAPTER ONE

THE INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL LANDSCAPE AND THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND STATE OF VIET NAM IN 2020

The global and regional landscape in 2020 witnessed major and unprecedented changes in many decades. The COVID-19 pandemic led to a global health crisis and left severe and multidimensional impacts on all economic, political, security and social aspects, which may persist for years to come. In particular, the pandemic accelerated certain trends and shifts that had been unfolding in recent years. Accordingly, strategic competition among major powers continued to intensify and became a prominent feature in international relations. Globalization and international economic linkages needed to be adjusted for greater sustainability and inclusivity amid the rise of nationalism and populism. While the world economy was plunged into deep contraction, vigorous efforts were made to advance digital transformation and seize the opportunities arising from the Fourth Industrial Revolution, thus ushering

in intertwined chances and challenges. Multilateral mechanisms were under the pressure to reform for greater effectiveness in addressing regional and global challenges, particularly the rising severity of emerging non-traditional security challenges.

I. The global and regional landscape in 2020

1. Global economy

a) Due to the impact of COVID-19, the world economy in 2020 was plunged into the deepest recession since the World War II (-3.5%), with the largest number of economies affected since 1870. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the United States fell by 3.4% and the Eurozone's GDP dropped by 7.2%. The GDP decline was 5.3% for Japan; 8% for India; 3.6% for Russia; and 3.8% for Asian economies. China was the only major economy recording positive growth at 2.3%.

In 2020, a number of measures such as social distancing, lockdown,

¹ “World Economic Outlook”, International Monetary Fund, January 2021.

and travel and trade restrictions, were put in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19, causing disruptions in the global supply chain. Global trade decreased by 9.6%, triggering worldwide stagnation and disruption in most production and economic activities in the world. Global foreign direct investment in 2020 only reached US\$ 859 billion, a year-on-year decrease of 42%². In particular, the dual impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the unprecedented oil price crash, coupled with existing problems in the global economy, had further exacerbated losses. The COVID-19 pandemic also gave rise to a range of social issues, further aggravating poverty and hunger, and affecting the progress towards sustainable development goals in many countries.

b) To address the impacts of the pandemic and adapt to the “new normal”, most countries had to adjust their development strategies and policies with the following directions in mind:

- Attaching greater importance to stimulating domestic demand in spite of high debt ceiling; putting more emphasis on economic security, food security, health security and social security to heighten strategic self-reliance and economic resilience.

- Advancing extensive economic linkages to boost economic recovery and expanding space for development; stepping up the signing of bilateral and multilateral Free Trade Agreements (FTA) to diversify markets and supply chains despite the recent rise in protectionism. In 2020, several mega-FTAs were signed such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement, the Japan - UK FTA, the Australia - Indonesia FTA, and the U.S. - China Phase 1 Trade Deal.

- Bolstering economic transformation for long-term development, harnessing opportunities presented by the Four Industrial Revolution, and promoting digital economy, digital services, cross-border data flows, green growth, and circular economy, among others.

2. Global politics and security

In 2020, global politics and security witnessed rapid and profound changes. Tensions among major powers, nationalism, power politics, territorial disputes, and non-traditional security challenges were on the rise. Meanwhile, multilateral institutions encountered serious challenges, having adverse impacts on peace, stability, and development in the Asia-Pacific and the world.

² “Investment Trend Monitor”, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development– UNCTAD, 24/01/2021.

a) *Major powers focused on addressing the consequences of COVID-19 and domestic issues.* The United States directed most efforts into combating the COVID-19 pandemic, while facing many internal difficulties and social divisions. China prioritized domestic stability and put forward the “dual circulation” strategy which placed greater emphasis on the domestic market’s demands. The EU was forced to put in place measures unprecedented in decades, including lockdown and border control at the internal borders within the bloc. Meanwhile, domestic politics in EU countries experienced complex developments, with populist and far-right forces maintaining their advantage in several Central and Eastern European countries. Russia successfully carried out Constitutional reforms despite socio-economic difficulties. Japan saw the smooth transition of power from Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide, and the maintenance of political stability and policy continuity.

b) *Strategic competition among major powers became fiercest since the Cold War, and rose even more quickly in the context of the pandemic.* Intense U.S. - China competition unfolded in several areas such as politics and diplomacy, economic and trade ties, science and technology, and military. Nonetheless, major powers fundamentally exercised

self-restraint and sought to maintain the framework of their relations. Against this backdrop, the constellation of forces occurred in a flexible and pragmatic manner on the basis of state and national interests, and by field or issue of cooperation. Multilateral cooperation continued to be underscored in addressing common challenges, particularly in fighting the pandemic and fostering economic recovery. However, multilateral organizations and mechanisms were still faced with many difficulties and challenges due to inherent issues and lack of responsible leadership and cooperation from certain major powers.

c) *Traditional and non-traditional security challenges grew in complexity, affecting the security and development in many regions.* Notably, the global outbreak and spread of the COVID-19 pandemic had severe impacts on all aspects of international affairs, with far-reaching influence on the implementation of foreign policies of countries. This gave rise to complex issues in international relations, such as the politicization of COVID-19 origins, vaccine diplomacy, and health diplomacy, thus further intensifying competition among countries and affecting global security. By the end of 2020, the world recorded 83,223,931 confirmed cases and 1,815,519 deaths from COVID-19.³

³ See <https://www.worldmeters.info/coronavirus>.

3. The Asia-Pacific region:

The Asia-Pacific continued to witness dynamic growth and remained a priority in the foreign policy of many countries. Under the enormous impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Asia's GDP in 2020 dropped by 0.7% for the first time since 1962. In spite of the recent rise of protectionism, various bilateral and multilateral FTAs were signed and promoted in the region in 2020, including the RCEP. Noteworthy was the signing of the first agreements in the world in the field of digital economy.⁴

Countries outside the region also placed importance on enhancing relations with those in the Asia-Pacific. ASEAN displayed proactiveness and flexibility in rapidly responding to the new situation, upheld its unity, and reinforced its centrality in the region. During Viet Nam's Chairmanship in 2020, ASEAN adopted a number of important and practical initiatives in COVID-19 response, economic recovery, and promotion of peace, stability, development, and the rule of law. The Mekong sub-region drew increasing attention from major powers, as shown through the upgrade of relations and greater commitment of resources to sub-regional cooperation.

Regional security in 2020 saw

further complicated developments with various hot spots, namely the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula, the Rakhine issue in Myanmar, the Taiwan Strait, and the East China Sea. The situation in the East Sea continued to evolve in a complex manner, while the trend of internationalizing the issue and promoting the rule of law in the East Sea gained further strength. ASEAN maintained its principled position on the East Sea issue, calling on all relevant parties to maintain peace, security, and stability in the East Sea, and resolve disputes and differences via peaceful means in accordance with international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea 1982 (UNCLOS).

II. Foreign Policy Guidelines of the Communist Party and State of Viet Nam in 2020

The global and regional landscape in 2020 witnessed extremely rapid and complicated transformations, notably the COVID-19 pandemic's far-reaching and profound impacts, which presented Viet Nam with intertwined opportunities and challenges. Against this backdrop, the top priority of the Vietnamese diplomacy is to maintain an environment of peace and stability for development and successful

⁴ The Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA) between Singapore, Chile and New Zealand and the Australia-Singapore Digital Economy Agreement (DEA).

implementation of the Resolution of the 12th National Party Congress, make substantial contributions to the national interests of security and development, and enhance Viet Nam's standing.

The key missions were to: (i) consolidate and promote relations with other countries, particularly priority and key partners, while enhancing political trust and intertwined interests; (ii) successfully fulfill the responsibilities as the 2020 ASEAN Chair and a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council for the term of 2020-2021; (iii) promote peace and cooperation in the East Sea, while resolutely safeguarding the sovereignty, sovereign rights, territorial integrity, and legitimate interests of Viet Nam in the East Sea; and maintain an environment of peace, stability, cooperation and friendship at the land border areas; (iv) enhance the effectiveness of international integration, particularly international economic integration; harness the opportunities from the Industry 4.0 and the shift in investment flows, and step up economic diplomacy for sustainable development; (v) conduct citizen protection, external communication, cultural diplomacy, and overseas Vietnamese-related work with greater effectiveness; and (vi) continue to build and complete the foreign policy

guidelines in the documents of the 13th National Party Congress.

Amid the instabilities in the global and regional landscape, Viet Nam actively, innovatively and promptly adapted to new developments, coherently and comprehensively carried out diplomatic activities and achieved important results. The successes of Party and State diplomacy continued to be a highlight in the overall achievements of the whole nation. Such activities contributed to maintaining an environment conducive to national construction and protection, and elevating Viet Nam's standing in the region and the world. Notably, Viet Nam's success in COVID-19 prevention and control further raised the nation's international standing, and played a crucial role in sustaining the momentum of economic development. Here are some of the key achievements:

First, Viet Nam has maintained and bolstered relations with countries, especially with neighboring countries, major powers, and key partners. Bilateral relations were deepened through a number of activities, including 34 telephone conversations and virtual bilateral talks with high-level leaders. In addition, Viet Nam provided assistance to 51 countries and international organizations in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic and

upgraded relations with New Zealand to Strategic Partnership.

Second, Viet Nam successfully fulfilled its responsibilities as the 2020 ASEAN Chair, 2020 ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly Presidency, and the first year of its 2020-2021 tenure as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

Third, international economic integration and diplomacy in service of development yielded outstanding results. This included the conclusion of 3 important FTAs: Viet Nam - EU FTA, Viet Nam - UK FTA, and RCEP. In spite of the severe impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Viet Nam attracted a total foreign direct investment (FDI) of US\$ 28.53 billion, received remittance worth US\$ 17.2 billion⁵ and welcomed 3.8 million international tourist arrivals in 2020.

Fourth, on maritime issues, Viet Nam flexibly combined the measures of cooperation and struggle to resolutely and persistently safeguard its sovereignty, sovereign rights, jurisdiction, lawful and legitimate interests in the East Sea, in accordance

with international law, particularly the UNCLOS. Regarding land border, the two legal documents in recognition of the completed workload (approximately 84%) in land border demarcation and marker planting between Viet Nam and Cambodia came into force on 22 December 2020.

Fifth, close coordination was maintained among the pillars of Party diplomacy, State diplomacy, people-to-people diplomacy, and the external relations of ministries, agencies, and localities. External communication, cultural diplomacy, polemics in democracy and human rights, and mobilization of overseas Vietnamese communities, particularly citizen protection in the context of COVID-19, were efficiently implemented.

These accomplishments significantly contributed to the nation's overall achievements in foreign affairs in 2020 and served as an excellent foundation for the implementation of the dual goals of effective prevention and control of COVID-19 while fostering economic development.

⁵ According to the statistics of World Bank, May 2021.



CHAPTER TWO

BILATERAL DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITIES

In 2020, due to the severe consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, people-to-people exchanges between Viet Nam and other countries around the world fundamentally came to a halt. This factor significantly affected Viet Nam's efforts in strengthening its relations with other countries, particularly in exchange of delegations, and in tourism, economic and trade cooperation. In this context, Viet Nam flexibly carried out its foreign affairs activities under various creative formats.

I. Bilateral relations with neighboring and ASEAN countries

1. Lao PDR:

The great friendship, special solidarity and comprehensive cooperation between Viet Nam and Laos have been continuously maintained and consolidated. Both sides worked closely together to effectively organize commemorative activities in each country, regularly exchanged messages of congratulations and sympathy, and promoted information dissemination

campaigns on the Viet Nam - Laos relations.

In 2020, despite the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, both sides maintained the exchange of delegations at all levels. From Viet Nam to Laos, there were the notable visits by Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc for the funeral of former Prime Minister of Laos Sisavath Keobounphanh (May 2020), Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh for the 7th annual Political Consultation (November 2020), and Minister of Public Security To Lam (February 2020). From Laos to Viet Nam, there were the visits by Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith for the 42nd and 43rd Meetings of the Viet Nam - Laos Inter-Governmental Committee (January and December 2020), for work purposes (July 2020) and for the funeral of former General Secretary Le Kha Phieu (August 2020), President of the National Assembly Pany Yathotou (January and February 2020), and Minister of Defense Chansamone Chanyalath for the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM+) in

Hanoi (February 2020). In addition, the two sides frequently arranged telephone conversations between their leaders to discuss issues of bilateral relations, including the calls between the two

General Secretaries and Presidents (August 2020), Prime Ministers (March and November 2020), Presidents of the National Assembly (May 2020), and Ministers of Defense (September 2020).



General Secretary, President Nguyen Phu Trong meeting with Prime Minister of the Lao PDR Thongloun Sisoulith during his visit to Viet Nam (Hanoi, 4-6 December 2020) - The World and Viet Nam Report

Defense and security cooperation was actively promoted via the effective implementation of agreements and annual cooperation plans on defense and security, the sound execution of the Treaty on border regulations, coordinated efforts in carrying out the Agreement on land border and

border gate management regulation, and the Agreement between the two Governments on irregular migration and undocumented marriages at the border areas. From 2019 to 2020, both sides worked together to conduct searches and disinter the remains of 181 fallen Vietnamese volunteer soldiers

and experts in Laos, among whom 168 were returned to their homeland.

Economic, trade and investment cooperation encountered hardships due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The two-way trade turnover between Viet Nam and Laos in 2020 reached US\$ 1.3 billion, a 10% year-over-year increase.⁶ By the end of 2020, there were 413 Viet Nam's FDI projects in Laos totaling US\$ 4.22 billion in registered capital.

Cooperation in education and training continued to receive due attention. In 2020, Viet Nam granted 1,000 scholarships to Lao officials and students to study in Viet Nam, while Laos granted Viet Nam 60 scholarships. The total number of Lao students studying in Viet Nam was 16,664. Collaboration among localities, particularly those sharing the border, was further reinforced, especially in infrastructure development, healthcare, capacity building, and the maintenance of security, safety and order along the border areas. Viet Nam assisted Laos in the fight against COVID-19 with medical equipment and supplies and cash worth US\$ 1.5 million. Viet Nam also provided the province of Savannakhet with 1,000 tons of rice as a gift. A number of Lao localities and organizations donated 30 tons of rice and over US\$ 13,000 to address the

consequences of the flash floods in the Central provinces of Viet Nam.

2. Cambodia:

In 2020, the political trust and comprehensive cooperation between the two countries were maintained and further enhanced amid the increased implementation of COVID-19 prevention measures from both sides. While the scheduled exchanges of delegations were affected, both countries' leaders maintained contacts. These included, most notably, the telephone conversations and videoconferences between General Secretary, President Nguyen Phu Trong and President of the Cambodian People's Party, Prime Minister Hun Sen (July 2020), as well as between Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc and Prime Minister Hun Sen (March and November 2020). Both sides successfully hosted the 18th Meeting of the Viet Nam - Cambodia Joint Committee between the two Deputy Prime Ministers, Ministers of Foreign Affairs via videoconference (December 2020). In addition, there were also the visits from Cambodia to Viet Nam by President of the National Assembly Heng Samrin for the funeral ceremony of former General Secretary Le Kha Phieu (August 2020), Deputy Prime

⁶ Statistics on the bilateral trade turnovers between Viet Nam and countries in this book are cited from Viet Nam's General Statistics Office (www.gso.gov.vn).

Minister, Minister of Interior Samdech Krolahom Sar Kheng (January 2020), and Deputy Prime Minister, Minister

of National Defense Tea Banh for the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (December 2020).



President of the National Assembly Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan meeting and holding talks with the Cambodian delegation led by President of the Cambodian National Assembly Samdech Heng Samrin on the occasion of their trip to Viet Nam for the national mourning of former General Secretary Le Kha Phieu (Hanoi, 15 August 2020) - The World and Viet Nam Report

Cooperation in defense and security between the two countries has gone from strength to strength. Both sides worked together to effectively implement the cooperation plan for 2020, particularly in combating the COVID-19 pandemic, maintained the collaboration between border guard forces, and conducted searches, disinter and return the remains of fallen Vietnamese volunteer soldiers and experts in Cambodia. Both sides completed around 84% of the border demarcation and marker planting work, and exchanged the Document ratifying

the two legal border documents in recognition of this achievement (December 2020).

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, both sides promptly worked together to reach an agreement on mechanisms to ensure the undisrupted trade relations. The two-way trade turnover in 2020 reached US\$ 5.32 billion, a year-over-year growth of 0.84%. By the end of 2020, Viet Nam had 186 FDI projects in effect in Cambodia worth a total of US\$ 2.76 billion in registered capital, and was among the top five investors in Cambodia. To assist Cambodia's

efforts to combat COVID-19, Viet Nam provided Cambodia with medical equipment worth US\$ 100,000 and SARS-CoV-2 test kits worth VND 5 billion (over US\$ 300,000).

3. China:

In general, the Viet Nam - China ties continued to thrive in 2020. Despite the impacts of COVID-19, high-level exchanges were maintained under flexible formats. There were two telephone conversations between General Secretary, President Nguyen Phu Trong and General Secretary, President of China Xi Jinping on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations, and the

Independence Day of each country (January and September 2020). Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister of China Li Keqiang on combating COVID-19 cooperation (April 2020), and delivered his remarks virtually at the Opening Ceremony of the 17th China - ASEAN Expo (November 2020). In addition, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh and Minister of Foreign Affairs of China Wang Yi co-chaired the 12th Meeting of the Viet Nam - China Steering Committee for Bilateral Cooperation via videoconference (July 2020),



General Secretary, President Nguyen Phu Trong having a telephone conversation with General Secretary, President of China Xi Jinping on the occasion of the 2020 Lunar New Year and the 70th anniversary of Viet Nam - China diplomatic relations (16 January 2020) - VNA

and attended the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Land Border and the 10th anniversary of the implementation of the three legal documents on land border in Mong Cai, Quang Ninh (August 2020). Both sides also organized the Strategic Security Dialogue between the two Deputy Ministers of Public Security (November 2020).

The exchanges and cooperation between party organizations, ministries, agencies and localities of both countries were maintained, particularly in organizing activities to commemorate the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations (18 January 1950 - 18 January 2020). Leaders from both sides also conveyed their sympathy in times of hardship caused by natural disasters and the pandemic in the localities of each country. The Vietnamese Government provided China with pandemic prevention goods worth US\$ 500,000 as a gift. The Vietnamese Red Cross donated pandemic prevention supplies worth US\$ 100,000. The Vietnamese Government also donated US\$ 100,000 to China to address the aftermath of the floods and earthquakes in this country. The Chinese Government provided Viet Nam with 320,000 face masks to combat COVID-19, and gifted US\$ 100,000 to Viet Nam to tackle the consequences of the flash floods in its Central provinces.

Regarding economic cooperation,

China continued to be Viet Nam's top import market and 2nd largest export market (behind the U.S.). Viet Nam was the 6th largest trading partner and the 5th largest export market of China. In 2020, the bilateral trade turnover totaled US\$ 133.1 billion, a year-over-year growth of 12.2%, in which Viet Nam's import was worth US\$ 84.2 billion. In terms of FDI, in 2020, China had 342 new projects worth US\$ 2.46 billion in total registered capital. In total, by the end of 2020, China had 3,123 projects, with a capital of US\$ 18.6 billion, ranking 7th among 139 countries and territories investing in Viet Nam⁷. Regarding tourism, due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were only 871,819 Chinese tourist entries into Viet Nam, an 85% decrease against 2019.

4. Other ASEAN Member States:

Viet Nam continued to reinforce the strategic and comprehensive partnerships with fellow ASEAN members amid the severe impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Brunei: The Comprehensive Partnership with Brunei was flourishing. Minister of Public Security To Lam paid a visit to Brunei (February 2020). From Brunei to Viet Nam, there was the visit by Second Minister of Defense cum Chairman of the National Security Committee Dato Paduka Seri Haji Awang Halbi bin Haji Mohd Yussof (February 2020). The bilateral

⁷ FDI statistics in this book are cited from Viet Nam's General Statistics Office (<https://www.gso.gov.vn>).

trade turnover in 2020 reached US\$ 282 million.

Indonesia: The Strategic Partnership with Indonesia was maintained and further reinforced. Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc had a telephone conversation with President Joko Widodo on ASEAN cooperation in COVID-19 response (February 2020). Both countries' leaders exchanged messages of sympathy for the flash floods in the Central provinces of Viet Nam and the floods and landslides in Jakarta. In celebration of the 65th anniversary of diplomatic relations

(30 December 1955 - 30 December 2020), organizations and localities in both countries held a number of commemorative events, such as seminars and photo exhibitions. Due to the complicated evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic, the bilateral trade turnover in 2020 only reached US\$ 8.21 billion, a decrease of 10% against 2019, in which Viet Nam's import was worth US\$ 5.38 billion.

Malaysia: The ties with Malaysia were continuously strengthened. Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc had a telephone conversation with



Member of the Politburo, Minister of Public Security, General To Lam meeting with His Majesty King Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah of Malaysia at National Palace (Kuala Lumpur, 13 February 2020)- VNA

Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin (June 2020). Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh joined Minister of Foreign Affairs Hishammuddin Hussein in a telephone conversation (October 2020). And Minister of Public Security To Lam paid a visit to Malaysia (February 2020). Malaysia was Viet Nam's 8th largest trading partner, while Viet Nam was Malaysia's 10th largest one. The trade turnover between the two countries in 2020 was US\$ 10 billion, a decrease of 10% in comparison with 2019. In total, by the end of 2020, Malaysia had 644 investment projects in Viet Nam worth US\$ 12.9 billion in registered capital, ranking 8th out of 139 countries and territories with investment in Viet Nam. Viet Nam had 20 investment projects in Malaysia, worth a total of US\$ 830 million in registered capital.

Myanmar: The ties with Myanmar were thriving. Both sides organized the 9th Political Consultation between the two Deputy Foreign Ministers via videoconference in December 2020. Amid the complicated evolution of COVID-19 in Myanmar, Viet Nam sent messages of sympathy to this country, and made two donations of 325,000 medical face-masks worth US\$ 20,000 and US\$ 50,000 in cash. The Viet Nam - Myanmar Friendship Association gifted Myanmar around US\$ 217,000 and a number of medical supplies. Myanmar also sent messages of sympathy to Viet Nam for the flash floods in its Central provinces.

The Philippines: Viet Nam continued to enjoy sound relations with the Philippines. Both sides maintained exchanges via virtual platforms. Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc had a telephone conversation with President Rodrigo Duterte (May 2020). And Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh had a telephone conversation with Secretary of Foreign Affairs Teodoro Lopez Locsin (March 2020). The bilateral trade turnover in 2020 reached US\$ 5.3 billion, similar to that of 2019. The Philippines was the leading rice importer of Viet Nam, accounting for 33.9% of Viet Nam's total rice export volume.

Singapore: The Strategic Partnership with Singapore in 2020 witnessed encouraging signs. Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (May 2020). And Chairman of the Party Central Internal Affairs Commission Phan Dinh Trac paid a visit to Singapore (February 2020). Both sides organized the 13th Political Consultation between the two Deputy Foreign Ministers via videoconference. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Temasek Foundation (Singapore) gifted Viet Nam a number of medical equipment worth US\$ 160,550, while the Vietnamese Government donated medical supplies worth US\$ 50,000 to Singapore. The Vietnamese National Assembly provided Singapore with 30,000 face masks, and Vingroup gifted Singapore 200 ventilators. In 2020,

both countries worked together to organize 16 flights, repatriating over 4,300 citizens from both countries. The Vietnamese community in Singapore had around 13,000 people, including 7,000 students. The bilateral trade turnover in 2020 reached US\$ 6.72 billion, a decrease of 8.4% compared to that of 2019. In 2020, Singapore's FDI in Viet Nam was around US\$ 9 billion in total capital - the highest among the countries and territories investing in Viet Nam. This accounted for 31.5% of the total FDI in Viet Nam. In total, by the end of 2020, Singapore had 2,629 investment projects worth US\$ 56.55 billion, ranking 3rd among 139 countries and territories, after the Republic of Korea and Japan.

Thailand: The relations with Thailand were maintained despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister of Thailand Prayut Chan-o-cha (November 2020). The Deputy Prime Ministers, Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the two countries also held virtual talks (September 2020). Both sides organized the 7th Political Consultation between the two Deputy Foreign Ministers (January 2020) to discuss measures to implement the Strategic Partnership between the two countries for the 2020-2025 period. However, a number of major diplomatic activities were delayed due to the impacts of COVID-19. Most notably, the bilateral trade turnover in 2020 was US\$ 15.88 billion, a 7% decrease against 2019.

Accordingly, Viet Nam's import volume was worth around US\$ 11 billion. In the same year, Thailand had 40 FDI projects in Viet Nam worth US\$ 1.87 billion in total capital. By 2020, Thailand had 592 FDI projects in Viet Nam worth US\$ 12.87 billion in investment capital, ranking 9th among 139 countries and territories investing in Viet Nam. The Thai Government gifted Viet Nam 10,000 test kits, while Thai organizations donated 1,000 face masks and nearly US\$ 300,000 to Viet Nam. Viet Nam also provided Thailand with medical supplies worth US\$ 50,000 as a gift. The two sides worked together to organize special flights to return 1,000 Vietnamese citizens and 600 Thai citizens to their respective homelands.

II. Bilateral relations with other partners:

1. The Asia - Pacific:

- The relations *with Japan* have maintained development momentum across the board. Despite the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the two countries maintained the frequent exchange of high-ranking delegations. From Japan to Viet Nam, there were notable visits by Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide - his first visit abroad following his appointment (October 2020), Minister for Foreign Affairs Motegi Toshimitsu (January 2020), and Secretary General of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). President of the Viet Nam - Japan Parliamentary Friendship Union Nikai Toshiro also led a delegation of over 1,000 people to Viet

Nam (January 2020) to foster cultural, economic and tourism exchange. Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc had three telephone conversations with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (March, May and August 2020). Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh had two telephone conversations with Minister for Foreign Affairs Motegi Toshimitsu (March and June 2020).

The two countries actively assisted each other in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Viet Nam gifted Japan with 1,190,000 medical face masks, and facilitated the entry of numerous Japanese experts and

businessmen into Viet Nam. Japan established a Consular Office in Da Nang (January 2020). The economic cooperation between the two countries continued to enjoy positive outcomes. In 2020, the bilateral trade turnover reached US\$39.62 billion, a decrease of only 1.8% against 2019. In terms of FDI, in 2020, Japan had 272 newly licensed projects, worth US\$2.37 billion in total capital, and ranked 4th among 112 countries and territories with investment in Viet Nam. By the end of 2020, Japan had altogether 4,632 FDI projects in effect, worth a total of US\$60.26 billion in registered capital,



General Secretary, President Nguyen Phu Trong meeting with Prime Minister of Japan Suga Yoshihide during his official visit to Viet Nam (Hanoi, 19 October 2020) - The World and Viet Nam Report



Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea Kang Kyung-Wha during her official visit to Viet Nam (Hanoi, 17 September 2020) - VNA

ranking 2nd among 139 countries and territories with investment in Viet Nam. Both sides bolstered cooperation in such fields as energy, the environment, and agriculture. The two countries also organized conferences on labor and tourism promotion, and meetings between their leaders of localities (January 2020). Viet Nam and Japan worked together to organize the “Meet Japan 2020” Conference (February 2020). Regarding tourism, the number of Japanese tourists visiting Viet Nam was 200,346, a 79% decrease in comparison with 2019.

- *The Republic of Korea (ROK):*
The relations between the two

countries were further strengthened, despite the hardships due to the COVID-19 pandemic. From the ROK to Viet Nam, there were visits by Speaker of the National Assembly Park Byeong-Seug (November 2020), and Minister of Foreign Affairs Kang Kyung-Wha (September 2020). Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc sent three messages of sympathy and congratulations to President Moon Jae-in (April 2020); and Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh had two telephone conversations with Minister of Foreign Affairs Kang Kyung-Wha (February and July 2020).

In 2020, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the two-way trade turnover was US\$66 billion, only a 1% decrease compared to the 2019 figure. Viet Nam's import was worth US\$46.9 billion. In terms of FDI, the ROK had 609 newly approved projects in 2020, worth US\$3.95 billion in total capital. By the end of 2020, the ROK had 8,983 projects, worth a total of US\$70.65 billion in registered capital, ranking 1st among 139 countries and territories with investment in Viet Nam. The two sides organized the 18th Session of the Viet Nam - ROK Inter-Governmental Committee on Economic Cooperation (November 2020), and the "Meet Korea 2020" Conference (June 2020). Regarding tourism, the number of Korean tourists visiting Viet Nam reached 840,000, a decrease of 83.5% in comparison with

2019. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, both sides worked closely to repatriate Vietnamese citizens residing in the ROK, and facilitate the entry of the ROK's experts into Viet Nam.

- *India*: The growth momentum of bilateral ties was maintained despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc and Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi co-chaired the Viet Nam - India Virtual Summit, adopted the "Joint Vision Statement for Peace, Prosperity and People" and signed the Plan of Action to implement the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership for 2021-2023 (December 2020). Vice President Dang Thi Ngoc Thinh paid a visit to India (February 2020). Minister of National Defense Ngo Xuan Lich had a telephone conversation with Minister of Defense of India Rajnath Singh, and



Member of the Party Central Committee, Vice President Dang Thi Ngoc Thinh meeting with Vice President of India Venkaiah Naidu during her official visit to India (New Delhi, 12 February 2020) - VNA

witnessed the signing of a bilateral Agreement on Hydrography. Both sides organized the 17th Meeting of the India - Vietnam Joint Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation via videoconference (August 2020). Viet Nam organized the “Meet India 2020” Conference in Hanoi (January 2020) to enhance trade connectivity between the localities and businesses from both countries.

In 2020, the bilateral trade turnover was US\$9.67 billion, a 13.7% decrease in comparison with 2019. In May 2020, Viet Nam adopted the Protocol on approving the use of India’s electronic Certificate of Origin in Viet Nam. In 2020, India’s FDI in Viet Nam was US\$30.8 million in total registered capital across 47 projects. In total, by the end of 2020, India’s investment in Viet Nam was US\$898.7 million across 294 projects, ranking 26th among 139 countries and territories with investment in the country. By the end of 2020, Viet Nam had 9 investment projects in India worth around US\$6.03 million in total registered capital. Both sides also bolstered cooperation and offered mutual support in responding to diseases and natural disasters. The Vietnamese Government gave aid worth US\$70,000 in medical supplies to India, while the Viet Nam - India Friendship Association and the Vietnamese Red Cross provided 200,000 face-masks to the country. India donated US\$300,000 to Vietnamese citizens affected by

the floods in the Central provinces of Viet Nam.

- *Australia:* The Strategic Partnership between the two countries continued to be further enhanced. The two countries maintained bilateral exchanges under flexible and effective formats. Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister of Australia Scott Morrison (April 2020). Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh and Minister for Foreign Affairs Marise Payne had a telephone conversation (April 2020), co-chaired the 2nd Foreign Ministers’ Meeting via videoconference, and signed the Plan of Action to implement the Strategic Partnership for 2020-2023 (November 2020). Both sides successfully organized the Defense Ministers’ Meeting (February 2020), Human Rights Dialogue (July 2020), and Defense Policy Dialogue between the two Deputy Defense Ministers (December 2020).

Australia was Viet Nam’s 7th largest trading partner, while Viet Nam ranked 15th among Australia’s trading partner. The bilateral trade turnover in 2020 reached US\$8.3 billion, increasing 4% against 2019. In total, by the end of 2020, Australia had 479 projects worth US\$1.9 billion in investment capital, and ranked 20th among 138 countries and territories with investment in Viet Nam. Australia continued to provide AU\$78.9 million in official development assistance (ODA) to Viet Nam during the 2020-2021 fiscal year,

AU\$0.7 million more than the previous year. Both sides maintained close cooperation in combating COVID-19. Australia donated AU\$10.5 million to Viet Nam in the fight against the pandemic and US\$2.1 million to address the consequences of floods. Viet Nam also gifted Australia with medical supplies worth US\$50,000.

- *New Zealand*: The year 2020 witnessed important developments when the bilateral relations between the two countries was officially upgraded to Strategic Partnership during the high-level virtual talks between Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc and Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern (July 2020). At the talks, both sides signed 4 documents on cooperation in forestry, aquaculture, education, finance, and labor. President of the National Assembly Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan had

a telephone conversation with Speaker of the House of Representatives Trevor Mallard (July 2020). In economic and trade cooperation, Viet Nam was New Zealand's 16th largest trading partner. The bilateral trade turnover in 2020 reached US\$1.05 billion, a 3.7% year-on-year decrease. Both sides successfully organized the 7th Joint Trade and Economic Commission via videoconference (October 2020). New Zealand maintained steady ODA of NZ\$26.7 million for Viet Nam for 2018 - 2021, and provided Viet Nam with NZ\$170,000 for people suffering from floods in Central Viet Nam.

- *Other Asian countries*: The relations with other Asian countries were further maintained and consolidated. *With Bangladesh*, both sides further strengthened the traditional friendship and multifaceted cooperation. Viet



Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc and Prime Minister of New Zealand Jacinda Ardern co-hosting virtual Summit to officially announce the elevation of the bilateral ties to Strategic Partnership (22 July 2020) - The World and Viet Nam Report

Nam provided Bangladesh with medical equipment worth US\$30,000 in the fight against COVID-19. Regarding investment, in 2020, Bangladesh had 15 FDI projects worth a total of US\$830,000 in registered capital, ranking 101st out of 136 countries and territories with investment in Viet Nam. *With the Maldives*, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh had a telephone conversation with Minister of Foreign Affairs Abdulla Shahid (October 2020). Viet Nam provided the Maldives with US\$20,000 to curb COVID-19. *With Mongolia*, bilateral relations continued to be maintained, as leaders of both countries exchanged messages of congratulations and sympathy. Both sides organized the 9th Deputy Foreign Ministerial-level political consultation (December 2020). *With Pakistan*, both sides maintained excellent relations. The bilateral trade turnover in 2020 amounted to over US\$514 million, a 1% year-over-year decrease. By the end of 2020, Pakistan had 60 investment projects in Viet Nam, worth a total of US\$34 million in investment capital, ranking 65th out of 139 countries and territories with investments in Viet Nam. *With the Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, events commemorating the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations were postponed or cancelled due to COVID-19. Nevertheless, leaders of both countries exchanged messages of congratulations on the occasion of the anniversary of diplomatic relations, the two countries'

respective National Days, the 75th anniversary of the Workers' Party of Korea, and messages of sympathy on the floods in Central Viet Nam. *With Sri Lanka*, the two sides further maintained outstanding relations. Leaders of both sides exchanged letters of congratulations on the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations and the Sri Lankan parliamentary election. Viet Nam provided Sri Lanka with US\$30,000 in the fight against COVID-19.

2. Europe:

- *The Russian Federation*: the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the two countries continued to be maintained and further strengthened. Both sides organized events to celebrate the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations (1950-2020). The two countries maintained exchanges at all levels via telephone conversations and videoconferences. These included the telephone conversations between General Secretary, President Nguyen Phu Trong and President V. Putin (June 2020), between Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc and Prime Minister M. Mishustin (April 2020), and between Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov (May 2020). Minister of National Defence Ngo Xuan Lich also visited Russia (February 2020). The two sides held the 11th Strategic Dialogue on Diplomacy - Security - Defense (March 2020). The bilateral trade turnover in 2020 amounted to



General Secretary, President Nguyen Phu Trong having a telephone conversation with President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin on the occasion of the National Day of the Russian Federation and the 70th anniversary of Viet Nam - Russia diplomatic relations (11 June 2020) - VNA

US\$4.85 billion, a 7.5% year-over-year increase. Viet Nam also sent a team to the Army Games in Russia (August 2020). Within the framework of the Viet Nam - Russia Cross Year, the two sides arranged cultural exchange events such as the Russian Film Week in Viet Nam, youth exchanges, and science seminars. Both countries effectively cooperated in COVID-19 prevention and combat, with various concrete and practical activities.

- *The European Union (EU)*: The comprehensive cooperation between the two sides witnessed important progress. On 12 February 2020, the European Parliament officially ratified the EU - Viet Nam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) and the EU - Viet Nam Investment Protection Agreement (EVIPA) after eight years of intensive negotiations. After it was ratified by

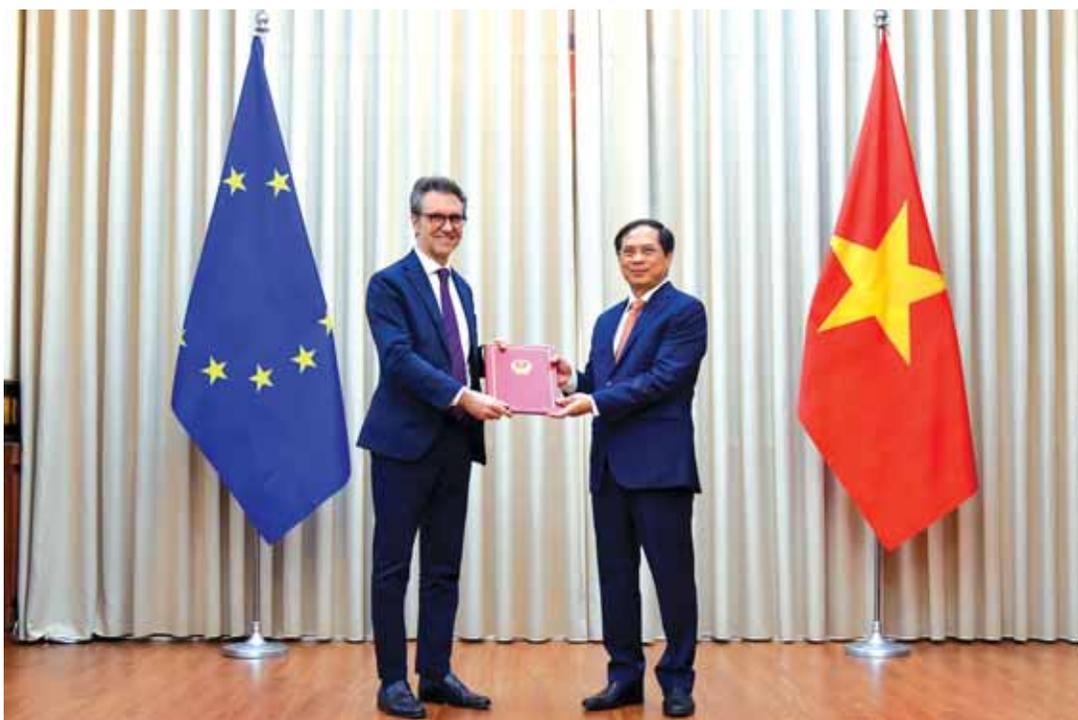
Viet Nam and 6 out of 27 EU members, the EVFTA officially entered into force on 1st August 2020. Before that, the Viet Nam - EU Agreement on Defense Cooperation entered into force on 1st May 2020. Both sides conducted activities to celebrate the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations (1990-2020). Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc had a telephone conversation with President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen (29 July 2020). The two sides successfully held the second meeting of the Viet Nam - EU Joint Committee for the implementation of the Viet Nam - EU Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Partnership and Cooperation (PCA) via videoconference; the second Security - Defense dialogue, and the Dialogue on Sustainable Development in Hanoi.

Regarding economic ties, the bilateral trade turnover was US\$49.79 billion, a 12% year-on-year decrease. Regarding FDI, 25 out of 27 EU countries had investment in Viet Nam, with 2,143 projects and nearly US\$22.19 billion in total registered capital.

- Viet Nam's relations *with other European countries* were further consolidated and promoted.

The *Viet Nam - Germany Strategic Partnership* continued to be strengthened. The year 2020 marked the 45th anniversary of the two countries' diplomatic relations. Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc and Chancellor

Angela Merkel exchanged letters discussing the fight against COVID-19, and had two telephone conversations (March and September 2020); Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh had a telephone conversation with Minister for Foreign Affairs Heiko Maas (September 2020). German delegations visiting Viet Nam included Chair of the German - ASEAN Parliamentary Friendship Group Renate Kunast (February 2020), the Hessian Minister of Higher Education, Research and the Arts (February 2020), and members of the Sachsen-Anhalt parliament (March 2020).

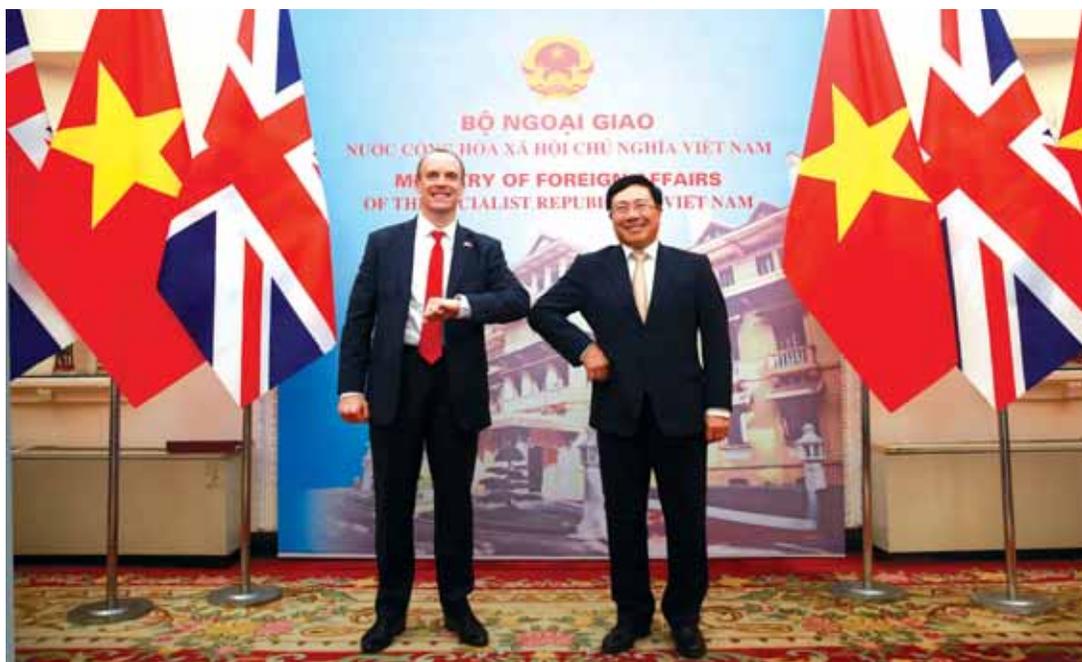


Member of the Party Central Committee, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Bui Thanh Son handing over the diplomatic notes informing Viet Nam's ratification of EVFTA and EVIPA to Ambassador of the Europe Union Delegation to Viet Nam Giorgio Aliberti (Hanoi, 18 June 2020) - The World and Viet Nam Report

The two sides held the virtual Consultation on development cooperation and signed the Trilateral Agreement on the establishment and development of the Vietnamese - German university (September 2020). The bilateral trade turnover in 2020 was nearly US\$10 billion, making Viet Nam Germany's leading trading partner in the Southeast Asia. Regarding FDI, in 2020 Germany had 378 projects in effect worth a total of US\$2.2 billion in registered capital, ranking 3rd among EU countries with investment in Viet Nam. Germany provided assistance to Viet Nam's textile and apparel industry, which was greatly affected by the pandemic, provided medical equipment and water filters

for some Vietnamese localities affected by the floods. Viet Nam also provided 110,000 face masks to Germany in its fight against COVID-19.

The *Viet Nam - United Kingdom (UK)* Strategic Partnership continued to witness positive developments. There were visits to Viet Nam by Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs Dominic Raab (September 2020) and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Heather Wheeler (January 2020). Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh had a telephone conversation with Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and



Member of the Politburo, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh welcoming Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, First Secretary of State of the United Kingdom Dominic Raab during his visit to Viet Nam (Hanoi, 30 September 2020) - The World and Viet Nam Report

Development Affairs Dominic Raab (July 2020). The two sides issued a Joint Declaration on the Viet Nam - UK Strategic Partnership on its 10th anniversary (2010 - 2020). Most remarkably, the two countries signed the Viet Nam - UK Free Trade Agreement (December 2020). The bilateral trade turnover in 2020 was over US\$5.64 billion, a 14.6% year-over-year decrease. By the end of 2020, the UK had 411 FDI projects in Viet Nam with total registered capital of US\$3.84 billion USD, ranking 15th out of 139 countries and territories with investment in Viet Nam.

The *Viet Nam - France* Strategic Partnership was further consolidated and enhanced. Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Edouard Philippe (June 2020) and sent a video message to the 3rd Paris Peace Forum (November 2020). In 2020, the bilateral trade turnover was over US\$4.82 billion, decreasing 10% as compared to 2019. During 2020, France had 52 FDI projects in Viet Nam worth US\$134.4 million in registered capital. By the end of the year, French businesses had 614 investment projects in Viet Nam, with registered capital of over US\$3.61 billion, ranking 16th out of 139 countries and territories with investment in the country. Viet Nam donated 110,000 face masks to France to fight COVID-19. France became ASEAN's development partner in September 2020 under Viet Nam's ASEAN Chairmanship.

In 2020, Viet Nam and several *Eastern and Central European countries* (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia) celebrated the 70th anniversaries of diplomatic relations. On this occasion, both sides organized cultural events and art exhibitions. Viet Nam's Friendship Associations with some of these countries held various friendly meetings with their respective counterparts. Viet Nam's relations with Northern European countries and other countries in Europe were maintained through exchanges at all levels via virtual formats. Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc had telephone conversations with the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic (March 2020) and the Prime Minister of Sweden (April 2020). Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh had telephone conversations with the First Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs and Minister of Economy of Slovakia (March 2020); and with Foreign Ministers of Estonia (April 2020), Spain (April 2020), Italy (May 2020), Ireland (May 2020), Switzerland (June 2020), Finland (December 2020), and Norway (December 2020). Viet Nam also co-hosted political consultations with the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Poland and Kazakhstan (both in November 2020).

3. *The Americas:*

- *The United States (U.S.):* Relations with the U.S. maintained the growth momentum, especially



Member of the Politburo, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh welcoming Secretary of State of the United States Michael R. Pompeo during his visit to Viet Nam (Hanoi, 29-30 October 2020) - The World and Viet Nam Report

both sides held numerous activities to celebrate the 25th anniversary of normalization of diplomatic relations (1995-2020) throughout the year. General Secretary, President Nguyen Phu Trong and Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc sent letters of congratulations to President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris in January 2021. There were notable visits to Viet Nam by Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo (October 2020) and National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien (November 2020), Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for International Markets Mitchell Silk (February 2020), President's

Special Envoy for Arms Control and International Security Affairs Marshall Billingslea (October 2020), U.S. International Development Finance Corporation Adam Boehler (October 2020).

Economic and trade cooperation continued its steady growth. The U.S. is one of Viet Nam's leading trading partners. Despite the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, bilateral trade turnover in 2020 amounted to nearly US\$90.8 billion, a 12.7% year-on-year increase. At the Indo-Pacific Business Forum (October 2020), the two sides signed a contract worth US\$3 billion in the energy industry.

In 2020, the U.S FDI in Viet Nam included 95 projects totaling US\$360 million in capital. By the end of 2020, the U.S. had 1,072 projects worth US\$9.44 billion, ranking 11th out of 139 countries and territories with investment in Viet Nam.

Defense and security cooperation was maintained. Viet Nam welcomed the USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71), which arrived in Da Nang for a port visit (March 2020), and successfully organized the 11th Political - Security - Defense Dialogue (September 2020). The two sides signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the repatriation of citizens deported by the U.S. after nearly 3 years of negotiations; and signed a Memorandum of Intent on assisting Viet Nam in enhancing capacity in the identification of remains. The U.S. provided a US\$20 million grant for the Bien Hoa airport detoxification project, doubling the funding in 2019.

Bilateral education cooperation witnessed positive developments. The two sides signed an Agreement to launch the Peace Corps program (July 2020), enabling American volunteers to teach English in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, and established the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) Academy at the Fulbright University Viet Nam (September 2020). The United States Agency for International Development provided US\$2.34 million in aid to mitigate the consequences of the floods in Central Viet Nam. Cooperation in healthcare was a spotlight in the two countries'

relations in 2020. Viet Nam facilitated the establishment of the Southeast Asian Office of the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The U.S. provided Viet Nam with nearly US\$9.5 million and 100 ventilators in assistance to respond to COVID-19. The Government of Viet Nam sent some medical equipment and 250,000 face masks to the U.S. A number of Vietnamese organizations also sent 470,000 face masks to the American people.

- *Canada*: Bilateral relations were maintained amid the COVID-19 pandemic. High-level leaders of both sides frequently had telephone conversations and sent letters to each other. Governor General Julie Payette sent a letter to General Secretary, President Nguyen Phu Trong (April 2020); Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh had a telephone conversation with Minister of Foreign Affairs Francois-Philippe Champagne (May 2020). Viet Nam and Canada held the virtual 2nd Political Consultation (July 2020). The two sides closely cooperated in experience sharing in dealing with disease, natural disasters and citizen repatriation. Canada provided 120,000 face masks to Viet Nam in the fight against COVID-19 and nearly US\$580,000 to address the effects of natural disasters in Central Viet Nam.

Regarding trade cooperation, despite the negative impacts of the pandemic, bilateral trade turnover in 2020 reached US\$5.09 billion, a 6.3%

year-over-year increase. Regarding investment, in 2020, Canada had 22 projects worth US\$67.5 million. By the end of 2020, Canada had 216 projects worth a total of over US\$5 billion in capital, ranking 14th out of 139 countries and territories with investment in Viet Nam. Canada officially established a Defense Attaché Office in Viet Nam (November 2020).

- *With Cuba*, the friendship and traditional ties between the two countries continued to be strengthened. Particularly, in 2020, the two countries organized various events to celebrate the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations, beginning with the visit to Cuba by Head of the Central Party Committee's Commission for Mass Mobilization Truong Thi Mai (February 2020). Both sides maintained telephone conversations and high-level meetings to discuss measures to promote bilateral relations. General Secretary, President Nguyen Phu Trong had a telephone conversation with First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba Raul Castro (December 2020). Head of the Central Party Committee's Commission for Information Dissemination Vo Van Thuong had a virtual meeting with Head of the Central Party Committee's Commission for Ideology Victor Gaute Lopez (November 2020); Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh had a telephone conversation with Minister of Foreign Affairs Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla (May 2020). Head of the Central Party Committee's Commission for External

Relations Hoang Binh Quan had a virtual meeting with the Acting Head of International Relations Department of the Communist Party of Cuba Ángel Arzuaga (July 2020). Regarding cooperation in combating COVID-19, Viet Nam provided Cuba with 5,000 tons of rice, while Cuba donated 1,000 doses of Interferon Alfa 2B and dispatched 3 doctors to Viet Nam.

Amid the complex developments of the COVID-19 pandemic in the region, Viet Nam's relations *with other Latin American countries* continued to be maintained and strengthened. Viet Nam and Mexico organized events to celebrate the 45th anniversary of diplomatic relations. Viet Nam and Argentina celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Comprehensive Partnership (2010-2020) with exchanges of letters between the two countries' respective Foreign Ministers and Parliaments. Head of the Central Party Committee's Commission for Mass Mobilization Truong Thi Mai paid a working visit to Nicaragua (February 2020). Viet Nam also arranged a series of telephone conversations and virtual political consultations at the Deputy Foreign Ministerial-level with Mexico (July 2020), Venezuela (September 2020), Colombia and Peru (October 2020), Brazil and Panama (November 2020).

Regarding cooperation in COVID-19 response, Viet Nam provided 20,000 face masks to 5 Latin American countries (Argentina, Mexico, Venezuela, Cuba and Brazil).

Colombia provided Viet Nam with US\$50,000 in aid. Regarding trade, by the end of October 2020, trade volume between Viet Nam and Latin American countries amounted to over US\$13 billion, a 2.1% year-over-year decrease. Trade turnover between Viet Nam and its top five Latin American partners were US\$3.95 billion with Argentina, US\$4.73 billion USD with Brazil, US\$3.68 billion with Mexico, over US\$1.28 billion with Chile, and US\$391 million with Peru.

4. Middle East - Africa:

In 2020, Viet Nam's cooperation with countries in the Middle East and Africa overcame difficulties caused

by COVID-19 and achieved further positive outcomes. Viet Nam's political ties with countries in the Middle East and Africa were further strengthened with various flexible formats. During 2020, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh had telephone conversations with Foreign Ministers of Egypt and Kuwait (June 2020), Saudi Arabia (August 2020), Nigeria (October 2020), and Angola (November 2020). Viet Nam's Deputy Foreign Ministers had numerous telephone conversations with their counterparts from Algeria, Angola, Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia. Viet Nam held the 2nd virtual Political



Member of the Politburo, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh having a telephone conversation with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt Sameh Shoukry (8 June 2020) - The World and Viet Nam Report

Consultation with Mozambique (May 2020). Viet Nam signed a Protocol to amend the air transport agreement with Israel. It concluded negotiations and procedures for ratification of the framework agreement on cooperation with Ivory Coast, and established a Ministerial-level cooperation mechanism on environment and climate change with the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Economic, trade and investment ties between Viet Nam and countries in the Middle East and Africa were maintained. In 2020, trade turnover between Viet Nam and these countries was US\$17.5 billion, a 4.4% year-on-year decrease. Cooperation in energy, particularly oil and gas, between Viet Nam and Algeria, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE was further promoted. Viet Nam's telecommunications projects with a number of African countries continued to be effectively implemented.

Viet Nam actively provided medical equipment and face masks worth US\$250,000 for Algeria, Mozambique, Angola, South Africa and Nigeria. Viet Nam shared its experiences on COVID-19 response and promoted healthcare cooperation. Regarding development cooperation, in 2020 the Public Investment Fund of Saudi Arabia signed a US\$20.3 million loan agreement for the transport infrastructure project in Yen Bai province.

Regarding multilateral forums, as the 2020 ASEAN Chair, Viet Nam served as a bridge connecting ASEAN with a number of countries and organizations in the region such as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the African Union (AU), while encouraging South Africa to sign the document of accession to the Treaty and Amity and Cooperation (TAC).



CHAPTER THREE

MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY



*ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat (AMM Retreat) (Nha Trang, 17 January 2020)
- The World and Viet Nam Report*

In 2020, Viet Nam actively advanced its multilateral engagement and became a substantial contributor to multilateral institutions. Most notably, Viet Nam successfully fulfilled the roles of the 2020 ASEAN Chairmanship, 2020 AIPA President Presidency and the non-permanent membership at the United Nations Security Council for the 2020-2021 term.

I. Diplomatic activities at ASEAN

Under the theme of a “Cohesive and Responsive”, Viet Nam successfully completed the 2020 ASEAN Chairmanship and contributed to ASEAN’s accomplishment of its dual goals of responding to COVID-19 while maintaining the momentum for regional cooperation and integration, upholding ASEAN’s centrality and international posture amid a

volatile regional and international environment.

The year 2020 bore the hallmarks of Viet Nam's ASEAN Chairmanship when the key priorities initiated by Viet Nam were basically fulfilled and became the common "assets" of ASEAN. These include: (i) the Mid-term Review of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 Blueprints; (ii) the initial review of the implementation of the ASEAN Charter; (iii) the mainstreaming for the first time of sub-regional development into the official agenda of ASEAN and the broader ASEAN process; (iv) the drive for concrete measures to promote the ASEAN Community identity, namely the flying of the ASEAN flag in the Member States and the use of the ASEAN Anthem in official functions. With regards to cooperation in combating

COVID-19 and fostering recovery, Viet Nam proactively and promptly promoted concerted efforts among the ASEAN Community in responding to the pandemic, through concrete measures outlined in the ASEAN Chair's Statement, the Joint Statement of the Special ASEAN Summit and the ASEAN+3 Summit on COVID-19, and the Joint Statements of the 36th and 37th ASEAN Summits. Viet Nam also contributed to the establishment of the ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC) interdisciplinary Working Group on Public Health Emergencies (ACCWG-PHE), participated in and promoted ASEAN cooperation with its partners in pandemic response.

Viet Nam proposed and advanced many important initiatives in response to COVID-19 and fostering recovery,



Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc delivering his remarks at the Opening Ceremony of the 36th ASEAN Summit in virtual platform (Hanoi, 26 June 2020) - VNA

such as the ASEAN Regional Reserve of Medical Supplies for Public Health Emergencies, the ASEAN Strategic Framework on Public Health Emergencies and the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework, and co-founded the COVID-19 Response Fund. These initiatives demonstrated ASEAN's agility and timely response, and made practical contributions to the mitigation of the negative impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic on the people and businesses, and helped enhance intra-ASEAN cooperation on this issue.

In political-security cooperation, Viet Nam continued to uphold the role of common principles and norms of conduct, aiming towards building a rules-based order. Viet Nam advocated the expansion of the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia (TAC) to include more external partners, and championed the development of the 2020-2025 Ha Noi Plan of Action II under the framework of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Viet Nam also pushed forward the adoption of the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting (ADMM) Three-year Work Program 2020-2022 and the Joint Statement by the ADMM-Plus Defence Ministers on Strategic Security Vision of the ADMM-Plus. Viet Nam also successfully organized an online tabletop exercise on COVID-19 response among the military medicine corps of the ASEAN countries. In addition, Viet Nam fostered cooperation in the prevention and combat of transnational

crimes, proposed the development of a ministerial-level communication channel for timely information exchange and the establishment of an operating procedure to address urgent emerging issues. At the same time, Viet Nam continued to further efforts to combat illicit trafficking of antiquities as a priority area of cooperation. Viet Nam also hosted the 8th Meeting of the Council of ASEAN Chief Justices and the ASEAN Law Forum 2020. Maritime cooperation continued to be strengthened both in substance and institutional development.

Regarding the East Sea issue, Viet Nam continued to strive for candid and constructive exchanges within ASEAN, and between ASEAN and its partners to consolidate and assert ASEAN's principles and position. There was consensus within ASEAN to add new important items to its agenda. These include the emphasis on the observance of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) as the basis for determining the legitimate rights and interests of the parties and the framework for regulating activities at sea. ASEAN also called for a Code of Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (COC) in accordance with international law and the UNCLOS. Despite the temporary suspension of the COC negotiations due to COVID-19, a number of confidence-building activities between ASEAN and China were actively conducted, including Viet Nam's initiative on cooperation in humane treatment of fishermen in the East Sea.

In economic cooperation, ASEAN fundamentally fulfilled the 13 priority economic deliverables initiated by Viet Nam in 2020, focusing on (i) promoting intra-bloc economy and economic integration; (ii) enhancing ASEAN's engagement with the global community for peace and sustainable development; and (iii) increasing ASEAN's responsiveness and institutional capacity. Particularly, thanks to Viet Nam's active facilitation, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) was signed on the sidelines of the 37th ASEAN Summit in November 2020, showing ASEAN's strong commitment in advancing economic integration, comprehensive recovery and inclusive development.

In socio-cultural cooperation, Viet Nam promoted people-oriented cooperation efforts, aiming toward ensuring social security, addressing the impacts of COVID-19, and prioritizing assistance to vulnerable groups. Some of the achievements include (i) adopting the ASEAN Declaration on Human Resources Development for the Changing World of Work, and the Hanoi Declaration On Strengthening Social Work Towards Cohesive And Responsive ASEAN Community to help workers and those affected by the pandemic overcome difficulties and restore their ordinary lives; (ii) fostering tourism cooperation; (iii) ensuring food security; (iv) promoting the role of youth; (v) bolstering cooperation in the



General Secretary, President Nguyen Phu Trong delivering his remarks at the Opening Ceremony of the 37th ASEAN Summit (Hanoi, 12 November 2020) - The World and Viet Nam Report

prevention of fake news; (vi) adopting the ASEAN Ministerial Declaration on the Strengthening of Adaptation to Drought; and (vii) developing a new ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) Work Programme.

In the relations with external partners, ASEAN centrality continued to be strengthened. Cooperation mechanisms such as ASEAN+1, ASEAN+3, the East Asia Summit (EAS) continued to play an important role in building trust, maintaining dialogue, and upholding the fundamental principles of international relations, namely the rule of law, equality, mutual respect and peaceful settlement of differences on the basis of international law. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh attended the Special ASEAN - China Foreign Ministers' Meeting on COVID-19 response in Vientiane (February 2020). As the ASEAN Chair, Viet Nam effectively reconciled issues emerging from the rivalry and friction among its partners, and strengthened the relationship of ASEAN with its partners. ASEAN officially recognized France and Italy as its development partners.

Regarding cooperation with the United Nations, in its dual role as the ASEAN Chair and a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, Viet Nam made efforts to bridge and promote ASEAN's contribution to the global efforts in maintaining peace, security, stability

and sustainable development, and effectively responding to challenges. For the first time, under Viet Nam's initiative, the United Nations Security Council heard the briefings of the Secretary-General of ASEAN and the Secretary-General of the United Nations on ASEAN - UN Cooperation in maintaining regional and international peace and security. Viet Nam also took part in promoting ASEAN's strong commitment to upholding the role and contribution of women. These efforts were reflected through the organization of (i) the Special Session on Women's Empowerment in the Digital Age as part of the 36th ASEAN Summit; (ii) the ASEAN Ministerial Dialogue on Strengthening Women's role for Sustainable Peace and Security, and (iii) the 1st ASEAN Women Leaders' Summit.

Viet Nam also advanced cooperation between ASEAN and other partners such as the World Health Organization and the World Bank, among others, in COVID-19 response and recovery acceleration. ASEAN was appraised by the United Nations as one of the regions having recorded positive results in COVID-19 prevention and control.

II. Diplomatic activities at the United Nations and other multilateral mechanisms

1. The United Nations (UN)

Starting 1st January 2020, Viet Nam officially assumed the roles of a non-permanent member of the UN Security

Council for the 2020-2021 term, and the President of the Security Council for January 2020. In the first year of the term, Viet Nam successfully fulfilled its mandate, making active contributions to the common work of the Security Council. Through this undertaking, Viet Nam upheld the observance of the UN Charter and international law, and at the same time clearly affirmed its international integration policy, and upheld its efforts and experiences in national reconstruction and development, and international integration.

Viet Nam chaired many diplomatic activities and proposed a number of well-regarded initiatives such as (i) the Security Council's Open Debate

under the theme "Upholding the United Nations Charter to Maintain International Peace and Security" (January 2020); (ii) the Meeting on UN - ASEAN Cooperation (January 2020); (iii) the Meeting between 10 incumbent non-permanent members and 5 newly elected non-permanent members of the Security Council under the theme "Joining Efforts for an Effective United Nations Security Council: Best Practices and Experiences for Elected Members" (November 2020) and (iv) the International Conference on "Strengthening Women's Role in Building and Sustaining Peace: from Commitments to Results" in Hanoi (December 2020).



Member of the Politburo, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh hosting the Ministerial Open Debate of the UN Security Council entitled "Toward the 75th Anniversary of the United Nations: Upholding the UN Charter to maintain international peace and security" (New York - 9 January 2020) - VNA

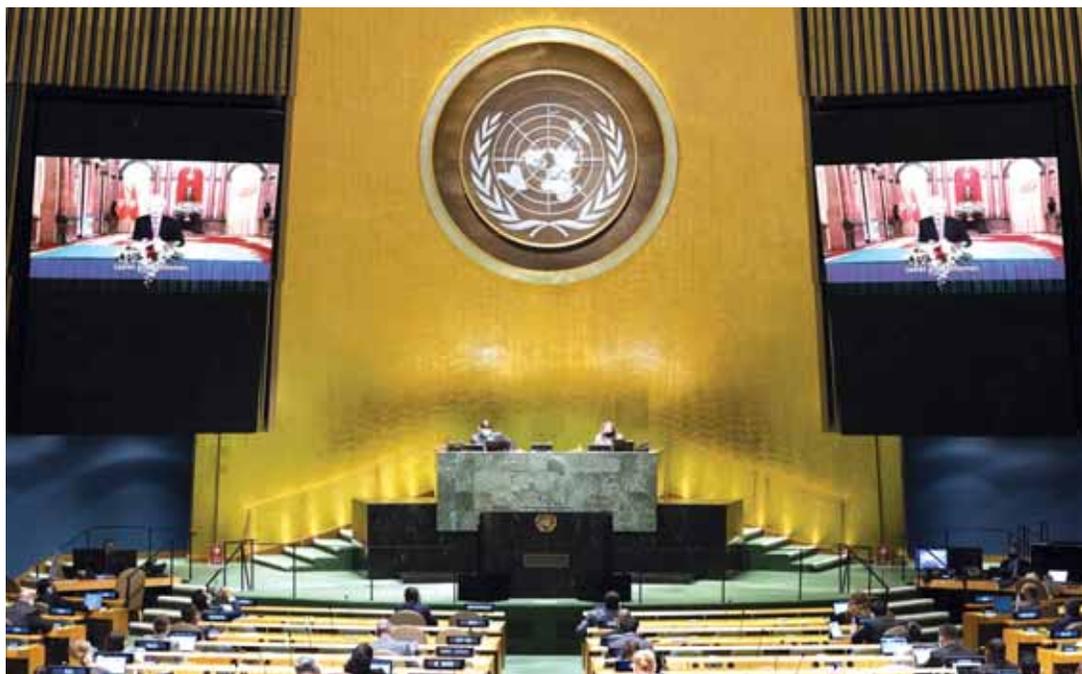
In 2020, Viet Nam also actively participated in other activities at the UN. Notably, for the first time, the top four leaders of the Party and State of Viet Nam participated virtually and delivered remarks at the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly. These included the participation of General Secretary, President Nguyen Phu Trong at the High-Level General Debate (September 2020), Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc at the High-level Meeting to Commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the UN (September 2020), National Assembly President Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan at the High-level Meeting to Celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women (October 2020), and Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh at the High-Level Meeting to Commemorate and Promote International Day for Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons (October 2020). Through these activities, Viet Nam conveyed a strong message of its overarching policy line for peace, security and development, and demonstrated its commitment and willingness to make active and responsible contributions to addressing common international issues.

In development cooperation, given the far-reaching implications of the COVID-19 pandemic across all aspects of the international community, Viet Nam actively shared experience on its achievements in pandemic control at many international forums, namely the Online Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, the World Health

Organization General Assembly, the Alliance for Multilateralism, the High-Level Political Forum of the UN Economic and Social Council, the virtual meeting of the World Health Organization's Health Ministers in the Western Pacific Region, the 3rd Paris Peace Forum, and the Special Session of the General Assembly in response to the COVID-19. Notably, for the first time, Viet Nam's initiative on the Resolution to declare December 27 as the International Day of Epidemic Preparedness was successfully adopted by the UN General Assembly and co-sponsored by 112 Member States.

In addition, Viet Nam strengthened cooperation with the UN, mobilized international resources and policy consultations to serve its socio-economic development. Viet Nam continued to advance the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the reform of the UN development system. Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh attended and delivered his remarks at the Video-Conference High-Level Open Debate of the UN Security Council on "Climate and Security" (July 2020). Deputy Prime Minister Vu Duc Dam co-chaired and delivered remarks at the virtual event on "the COVID-19 crisis, inequality and climate change" within the framework of the Ministerial Week of the High-Level Political Forum.

Viet Nam also worked with the United Nations and other relevant partners to organize a meeting on "Accelerating Inclusive Recovery and



General Secretary, President Nguyen Phu Trong sending message to the High-level General Debate of the 75th session of the United Nations General Assembly (New York, 24 September 2020) - VNA

Strengthening Resilience to Climate-related Risks and Disasters in Viet Nam”, and the “Roundtable Discussion on Viet Nam - UN development cooperation in the new context”. These events aimed to evaluate and seek solutions to improve the effectiveness of the UN contributions to addressing emerging issues in Viet Nam’s development process.

Viet Nam actively participated in the regular sessions of the UN Human Rights Council (in March, June and September 2020), and at platforms for maritime, oceanic affairs and international trade law cooperation, including the UNCLOS institutions and the UN Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL). Viet Nam also attended the Annual Forum

of Developing Country Investment Negotiators (September 2020), the 6th Meeting of the United Nations Open-ended Intergovernmental Expert Group on Cybercrime (July 2020), the 10th Conference of the Parties (COP10) to the Convention on Biological Diversity, and the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) (October 2020).

Viet Nam continued to demonstrate its active role and responsibility as a Member State in contributing to common work of UNESCO while promoting Viet Nam’s interests at this institution. Viet Nam was an active participant at the 209th and 210th Sessions of the UNESCO Executive Board and the UNESCO’s meetings for the Asia-Pacific region, contributed

to Pillar 3 of the UNESCO's Strategic Transformation toward developing the UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy for 2022-2029 and Draft Programme and Budget for 2022-2025. Viet Nam also successfully fulfilled a number of important roles at UNESCO, such as the member of the Consultative Body of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2017-2020), and the Chair of the IOC Sub-Commission for the Western Pacific (WESTPAC) (2017-2021). At the same time, Viet Nam also ran as a candidate for UNESCO's four important governing bodies, including the Executive Board for the 2021-2025 term, the World Heritage Committee for the 2023-2027 term, the Intergovernmental Committee of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage for the 2022-2026 term, and the Intergovernmental Committee of the 2005 Convention for the 2021-2025 term. In addition, Viet Nam advocated for UNESCO recognition of Viet Nam's nominations.

2. Other multilateral institutions

In 2020, Viet Nam continued to attach great importance to and actively engage in advancing inter-regional cooperation and connectivity across various domains. This helped promote Viet Nam's security and development interests and raise its international standing.

Within the World Trade Organization (WTO), Viet Nam continued to actively engage in the WTO reform process and to enhance

the effectiveness of the WTO dispute settlement mechanism. Viet Nam also actively participated in the WTO Director-General selection process, and coordinated and facilitated communication between ASEAN Ambassadors accredited to the WTO and relevant candidates and Heads of delegations. Viet Nam's efforts were held in high regard by fellow ASEAN Member States as well as various WTO members.

Within the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), Viet Nam contributed meaningfully to sustaining the momentum for ASEM cooperation, and worked closely with Cambodia to promote the ASEM Statements on COVID-19. Viet Nam also attended the ASEM Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) of the ASEAN group, and successfully implemented Viet Nam's initiative to promote women's economic empowerment in the context of COVID-19.

Within the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC): As the 2020 ASEAN Chair, Viet Nam proactively coordinated with Malaysia, the 2020 APEC Host, to promote ASEAN's role in forging consensus across various key issues, including the development of APEC post-2020 vision, the upholding of multilateralism and the multilateral trading system, and the advancement of regional economic integration, among others. These inputs by Viet Nam and ASEAN were of great significance, contributing to the adoption of joint statements and declarations, especially the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040.



Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc attending the 27th APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in virtual platform (20 November 2020) - VNA

At the 2020 APEC Leaders' Summit, Viet Nam endorsed the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040 on grounds of mutual respect for independence and sovereignty of all nations, and proposed coordinated actions to control the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Viet Nam also promoted regional economic integration, comprehensive digital transformation and sustainable and inclusive development, with a view to making the Asia-Pacific an engine for economic recovery, and a global hub for innovation and technology.

In November 2020, Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc attended the virtual G20 Summit to strengthen global policy coordination in response to COVID-19 pandemic and promote a sustainable, balanced and inclusive economic recovery. Viet Nam also assumed a proactive role as a member

of the International Organization of the Francophonie (OIF). Viet Nam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs worked with relevant bodies to organize various activities in celebration of the OIF's 50th anniversary, hosted the annual International Forum (Franconomics) under the theme of "From start-ups to smart-up", and successfully held a seminar on promoting communication on the French language and opportunities for collaborations in Hanoi. *In sub-regional cooperation*, Viet Nam worked tirelessly with the member countries of the Mekong River Commission to implement the formal process of prior consultation on Laos' Luang Prabang hydro-power project and Sanakham project. Together with Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia, Viet Nam also worked with many international organizations and

regional cooperation mechanisms to develop various important documents charting the course for water resources cooperation activities in the upcoming years in the Mekong River basin. These helped promote cooperation in the effective and sustainable management and use of the Mekong River. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh attended the 5th Mekong - Lancang Cooperation Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Vientiane, Laos (February 2020).

III. Diplomacy towards the protection and promotion of human rights

The year 2020 witnessed Viet Nam's important achievements in safeguarding human rights. Viet Nam made active contributions to advancing the implementation of international commitments, and enhancing international cooperation

and communication in this domain. Viet Nam organized the "Information Workshop on the National Master Plan for the Implementation of the Third Cycle Universal Periodic Review's Recommendations Accepted by Viet Nam" (September 2020), and the "Workshop on Protecting and Promoting Human Rights in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic".

Viet Nam also made substantive contributions to the joint efforts of the international community in promoting the values of human rights across the UN's key forums on human rights. These include the high-level meetings and sessions by the Human Rights Council, the Committee on Social Development (CSOCD), the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, and the 3rd Committee of the UN General Assembly at its 75th Session. Viet Nam co-sponsored the drafting of the resolution



Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc attending virtual G20 Summit (21 November 2020) - VNA



Member of the Party Central Committee, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Le Hoai Trung symbolically handing over US\$ 50,000 as a contribution of the Vietnamese Government and people to the World Health Organization (WHO)'s COVID-19 response fund (Hanoi, 24 April 2020) - The World and Viet Nam Report

on “Human rights and climate change”, which was adopted by consensus by the Human Rights Council at its 44th Session. At these forums, Viet Nam unflinchingly upheld the principles of respect for independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations, non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, non-setting of double standard, and non-politicization of human rights issues. At the same time, Viet Nam also provided information on its achievements in protecting and promoting human rights in general and in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Mechanisms for bilateral human rights dialogues between Viet Nam and its partners continued to be implemented effectively, including the

face-to-face Viet Nam - EU Human Rights Dialogues in Hanoi (February 2020), the 25th Viet Nam - United States Human Rights Dialogue under virtual format (October 2020), and the exchange with the Australian Embassy in Viet Nam (October 2020). For the first time, Viet Nam and the EU issued a joint press release regarding the Human Rights Dialogue with many positive outcomes. The U.S. Department of State also issued a press release following the 25th Human Rights Dialogue with Viet Nam expressing appreciation of its outcomes. At the same time, Viet Nam also proactively conveyed the message of its efforts and successes in the protection of the people under the context of COVID-19 to other countries.



CHAPTER FOUR

DIPLOMACY FOR NATIONAL CONSTRUCTION AND DEFENSE



Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc hosting the virtual Signing Ceremony for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) (Hanoi, 15 November 2020) - The World and Viet Nam Report

I. Economic diplomacy

Despite the adverse impacts of COVID-19 on its external activities, Viet Nam continued to achieve positive outcomes in the implementation of its economic diplomacy in service of national development.

1. Policy research and advise were prioritized and advanced, making substantial contributions to

the Party's economic policy planning and the Government's handling of macroeconomic policies. In preparation for the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Viet Nam, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs actively engaged in the development of the National Strategy for Socio-Economic Development for the 2021-2030 period. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in

coordination with the Ministry of Planning and Investment and the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), launched the “Multi-Dimensional Review of Viet Nam: Towards an Integrated, Transparent and Sustainable Economy.” The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was also an active contributor to the Government’s execution of macroeconomic policies through the submission of periodical reports on the global economy, emerging trends and development models, as well as developments in international and regional trade and economic integration.

2. International economic integration, multilateral diplomacy

and COVID-19 vaccine diplomacy were strengthened and advanced, helping reinforce Viet Nam’s international standing. In 2020, in the capacity of the ASEAN Chair, Viet Nam launched a range of initiatives aimed at both promoting economic cooperation and combating the pandemic. Viet Nam successfully promoted the conclusion of important agreements and legal frameworks to facilitate intra-ASEAN trade and investment as well as ASEAN’s external economic relations. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other relevant ministries and agencies also worked closely together to promote the negotiations, signing and ratification of important free



Vietnamese Ambassador to the UK Tran Ngoc An and British Ambassador to Viet Nam Gareth Ward representing the Governments of the two countries to officially sign the UK and Viet Nam Free Trade Agreement (London, 29 December 2020) - The World and Viet Nam Report

trade agreements (FTA), such as the EU - Viet Nam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA), the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), the UK - Viet Nam Free Trade Agreement (UKVFTA), and continued promoting FTA negotiations with other potential partners. These efforts helped expand and diversify Viet Nam's trade and investment relations. Viet Nam also actively participated in Mekong cooperation mechanisms. Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc attended the 9th Summit of the Ayeyarwady - Chao Phraya - Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) via videoconference (December 2020).

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the channel through which the Government of Viet Nam donated face masks and medical equipment to 49 countries and two international organizations in the fight against COVID-19. At the same time, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs worked to connect and facilitate Vietnamese businesses to export face masks and medical supplies to European and US markets.

3. Economic relations were actively sustained and expanded, and difficulties and bottlenecks in the cooperation with partners were addressed. Given the disruption of face-to-face diplomacy,

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs joined the efforts to maintain and strengthen economic cooperation and address issues emerging in the economic relations with other countries, particularly with key partners through the preparation for high-level visits, the organization of and participation in 54 multilateral video conferences and 68 virtual bilateral talks from the Deputy Prime Minister level.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs actively collaborated with relevant ministries and agencies in organizing and participating in the meetings of the joint commissions and intergovernmental commissions on economic, trade, scientific and technological cooperation between Viet Nam and 22 countries⁸. These events took place both in direct and virtual formats, and offered the opportunities for Viet Nam to review the endorsed and implemented agreements and plans, and propose major solutions to promote economic, trade, scientific and technological cooperation with other countries.

4. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs actively worked to facilitate businesses and local governments in international economic integration. With the motto of placing local governments and businesses at the heart of economic diplomacy in service of national

⁸ The EU, the UK, Italy, Russia, Poland, the Ukraine, Mozambique, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Singapore, India, China, Japan, Mongolia, Canada, Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Brazil, Panama and Peru.



Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc attending the 9th Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) under virtual format (Hanoi, 9 December 2020) - VNA

development, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs co-hosted the Forum on “The General Market Potential of Halal Food and Opportunities for Viet Nam”, the Seminar on Trade and Business Cooperation Promotion between Viet Nam and Bangladesh, the Meeting between Vietnamese and overseas Vietnamese businesses in Southern Laos, Viet Nam - Angola Business Roundtable, Viet Nam - Algeria Business and Investment Promotion Seminar, the Seminar on Connecting Mekong Delta businesses with potential US partners, the Conference on Promoting Trade to the Middle Eastern - African markets, the Conference on the Potential of the Middle Eastern - African Markets, the Roundtable on Investment Opportunities in Viet Nam for Indian Businesses, among others. The

Ministry also worked with relevant ministries and agencies to address issues facing Vietnamese companies in their overseas business ventures, help them reach out to potential business partners, expand export market access, and establish associations for overseas Vietnamese businesses. It also provided assistance to many foreign businesses in times of need during their operation in Viet Nam.

Assisting local governments in their pursuit of external economic policy is always an area of great attention. Leaders of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs paid 99 working visits to 47 out of 63 provinces to gain an understanding of the needs of and difficulties encountered by these localities, and propose solutions to advance their external economic activities. The Ministry of Foreign

Affairs actively assisted a number of localities in signing 148 cooperation agreements with foreign partners. At the same time, the Ministry successfully lobbied a number of foreign partners to continue providing an additional US\$ 600 million in ODA funding to socio-economic development projects in rural and remote areas. It also helped the localities sign up for projects under the Mekong cooperation framework worth US\$ 2 million. In 2020, it organized nine conferences, roundtables and events, which were attended by some 3,000 participants. These include “Meet India” and the Investment Promotion Conference in Tra Vinh Province (both in January 2020), “Meet Korea” (June 2020), meetings between Hung Yen and Ha Nam provinces with Japanese businesses, “Meet Los Angeles” (August and September 2020 respectively), “Meet Japan”, and the virtual conference to connect Mekong Delta businesses with potential business and overseas Vietnamese partners in the United States (November 2020). The Ministry also lent its support for the opening of the Japanese Kyushu Promotion Center in Hanoi in November 2020.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosted and co-hosted 78 training and capacity building courses for international integration for 11,220 civil servants from different ministries, sectors and localities. It provided information to the localities and business communities on the

adjustments of economic, immigration and customs policies in other countries given the COVID-19 outbreak. The Ministry also connected and facilitated nearly 30 localities and numerous Vietnamese businesses in providing the timely assistance of 3.3 million face masks, nearly 30,000 medical gloves and PPEs to some 50 localities in 21 countries. The Law on International Agreements, drafted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was adopted by the National Assembly on 12 November 2020. This contributed to the improvement of the legal framework for the ministries, sectors, localities and businesses to advance cooperation with and make use of the financing from foreign partners.

Vietnamese diplomatic missions in 30 countries flexibly conducted promotion activities, both directly and virtually, to introduce the investment and business environment in Viet Nam and connect Vietnamese businesses with foreign partners. These include a wide range of specialized undertakings to promote cooperation in manufacturing automobile parts, consumer goods, and agricultural and food products, and to advance trade, investment and energy partnerships.

II. Cultural diplomacy and external communication

1. Cultural diplomacy

Cultural diplomacy was conducted in close coordination with other

diplomatic pillars, and recorded various positive outcomes. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs proactively developed roadmaps and plans, and held events to take stock of the ten-year implementation of the “Cultural Diplomacy Strategy until 2020” and the ten-year implementation of the Prime Minister’s Guideline on Viet Nam Days overseas. The Ministry also hosted a Conference to Review the ten-year implementation of the Project “Honoring President Ho Chi Minh, the Hero of National Liberation and Outstanding Man of Culture, overseas” in February 2020. The Ministry also stepped up external communication activities to honor President Ho Chi Minh in diverse forms, including (i) publishing two books in Turkish

language on the history and work of President Ho Chi Minh; (ii) cooperating with Viet Nam Television to air two documentaries: “Ho Chi Minh in the heart of mankind” and “The friendship between President Ho Chi Minh and President Sukarno, and the friendship and solidarity between Viet Nam and Indonesia”; (iii) placing a bronze plaque documenting the life history of President Ho Chi Minh in Argentina, (iv) taking initial steps to sculpture statues of President Ho Chi Minh in Pyongyang (the DPRK), New Delhi (India) and Saint Petersburg (Russia); and (v) placing a commemorative plaque of President Ho Chi Minh in Marseilles, France.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also organized a number of events



Ta Dung National Park located at Dak Nong Geopark was recognized as UNESCO’s global Geopark in July 2020 - Viet Nam Pictorial

with the ASEAN Women's Circle of Hanoi (AWCH Network); co-hosted the ASEAN Marathon 2020 with more than 10,000 participants under the framework of Viet Nam's ASEAN Chairmanship. The Ministry also published a postal stamp set on Viet Nam's world heritages. 2020 also saw the proactive engagement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the creation of materials such as books, photographs and videos through digital technologies to intensify Viet Nam's outreach to its international friends to promote its land, people, culture and cuisine.

During the year, Vietnamese diplomatic missions actively conducted a wide range of cultural diplomacy undertakings, such as mainstreaming the promotion of Viet Nam and its people and culture into diplomatic receptions (during the celebrations of the National Day, Lunar New Year and ASEAN Day). These include (i) participating in local promotional festivals and fairs; (ii) providing information, publications and cultural products about Viet Nam to the local people and organizations and overseas Vietnamese communities; (iii) publishing postage stamps, participating in film festivals and photo exhibitions, and organizing Viet Nam Days in the host countries. A number of noteworthy undertakings included joining the French *La Poste* in publishing a set of postal stamps paying tribute to the illustrious poet

Nguyen Du on the 200th anniversary of his passing, organizing the Kim Van Kieu exhibitions and exhibiting Truyen Kieu translations in Paris, and holding the Viet Nam Day in Saudi Arabia.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized a virtual meeting with UNESCO Office in Viet Nam and the Vietnamese Permanent Mission to UNESCO in Paris to strengthen cooperation in conducting UNESCO-related work (December 2020).

During 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs worked with other agencies and localities on finalizing the dossier for submission to the UNESCO for recognition of the Dak Nong Geopark as a Global Geopark, and for the two cities of Vinh and Sa Dec to become part of UNESCO's Global Network of Learning Cities. By the end of 2020, Viet Nam had a total of 44 titles inscribed by UNESCO and became the ASEAN country with the highest number of world heritages (21 in total).

2. External information and communication

Throughout 2020, Viet Nam's external information and communication were consistently conducted in a proactive and innovative manner, and saw a robust transformation in both format and content on the ground of digital technology.

Information and communication concerning external activities of

the Party and State, major events of Viet Nam, celebrations of decennial and quinquennial anniversaries of diplomatic relations with other countries were held flexibly and effectively under 40 communication plans and projects. Among which, the focus was placed on Viet Nam's non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council, Viet Nam's 2020 ASEAN Chairmanship Year and 2020 ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly Presidency. Notably, communication was focused on Viet Nam's remarkable achievements in the fight against COVID-19. This helped garner acclaim and applause from the international community on Viet Nam as a

phenomenon and a model in the fight against the pandemic in the world. In 2020, external communication also focused on the great achievements and contributions of the diplomatic service to national construction and defense on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the diplomatic service.

Spokesperson work was well-conducted, providing timely information to the press. Throughout 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs held 21 regular press conferences, including five virtual press conferences, provided responses to 450 questions from the press, a record figure since 2017. These press conferences served as a channel for the Ministry to provide



Member of the Politburo, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh meeting with Vietnamese press agencies (Hanoi, 14 January 2020) - The World and Viet Nam Report

timely information on the guidelines and policies of the Party and State, clearly reflecting Viet Nam's viewpoint and stance in foreign affairs issues. They were also used to refute and combat misinformation on Viet Nam's affairs, and provide information on Viet Nam's overseas citizen protection against the backdrop of COVID-19 and issues pertaining to Viet Nam's borders, territory, seas and islands. The Ministry also posted 1,500 bulletins on external activities and 200 press bulletins and travel recommendations for Vietnamese citizens for entry and exit, and during their stay, work and study overseas.

Most notably, information and communication concerning Viet Nam's borders, territory, seas and islands were implemented extensively, with diverse forms and content. In general, these activities met the public demand for information both within and outside Viet Nam, and helped forge social consensus on the defense of national sovereignty over Viet Nam's borders and territory. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs effectively implemented Directive no. 41/CT-TTg issued by the Prime Minister on continuing to step up information and communication regarding the protection of Viet Nam's sovereignty in the East Sea. The Ministry also produced and provided documents, and held 50 briefings on borders, territory, islands and waters issues aimed at press agencies and key

officials of other ministries, services and localities.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs continued to provide considerable support for foreign correspondents working in Viet Nam. It organized on-the-ground visits for reporters and press attachés of foreign representative missions in Viet Nam to four provinces, including Phu Tho, Ha Giang, Quang Tri and Thua Thien Hue, to cover socio-economic development, history, culture and tourism in these localities. During the year, the Ministry issued resident office permits to two foreign press agencies, raising the number of resident press offices in Viet Nam to 39. The Ministry also stepped up digital technology application in external communication, such as (i) creating the official website for ASEAN Viet Nam 2020, (ii) providing live coverage of the main events of the 36th and 37th ASEAN Summits on social media platforms, and (iii) making ten videos, trailers and documentaries on the achievements of the Vietnamese diplomatic service.

III. Overseas Vietnamese-related activities and citizens and legal persons protection

1. The overseas Vietnamese community consists of about 5.3 million people living, working and studying in over 130 countries and territories. In 2020, overseas Vietnamese affairs continued to witness important, comprehensive and

substantive outcomes. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs successfully held the five-year Review of the implementation of Directive no. 45-CT/TW of the Politburo in November 2020 and proposed measures to forge ahead in this respect. In addition, the Ministry also held a number of important conferences, such as the Conference to solicit inputs from the overseas Vietnamese on digital transformation to address impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic for Viet Nam’s economic development (October 2020), and the Conference for overseas Vietnamese to provide feedback on the five-year implementation of Directive no. 45-CT/TW and Viet Nam’s development

in the new context (November 2020). To bolster the great national unity and encourage the overseas community to turn to the homeland, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs successfully organized “Homeland Spring 2020” in January, joined by 1,500 overseas Vietnamese from 30 countries and territories. On that occasion, Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc met and spoke with 400 overseas Vietnamese, thus reflecting the keen attention given to them by the Party and State. This was also an opportunity to hear the views and wishes of the overseas Vietnamese community.

Facing with the worldwide outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic,



Member of the Party Central Committee, Vice President Dang Thi Ngoc Thinh attending “Homeland Spring 2020” Festival (Hanoi, 18 January 2020) - The World and Viet Nam Report

the Ministry of Foreign Affairs made numerous policy recommendations and proposals to assist the overseas Vietnamese. It provided a timely donation of 830,000 face masks and medical equipment, foodstuff and critical supplies to the Vietnamese communities in 20 pandemic-stricken countries. The Ministry and overseas Vietnamese diplomatic missions also called on the overseas Vietnamese community to raise approximately US\$ 3,490,000, and donate supplies and items for the fight against COVID-19 in Viet Nam and flood relief efforts in the Central provinces.

2. As a recognition of inventions and scientific undertakings by Vietnamese overseas intellectuals, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs nominated eight outstanding international award-winning scientific studies in 2019 for inclusion in the Gold Book of Vietnamese Innovation 2020, and two of which were inscribed. Concerning the preservation of the Vietnamese cultural identity, Vietnamese diplomatic missions organized a wide range of cultural activities for the overseas Vietnamese community. These included meetings during the Lunar New Year and on the National Day, and cultural and culinary events for the Vietnamese communities in the Czech Republic, Germany, Poland and Japan. Assistance to the overseas community in preserving the Vietnamese cultural identity and language was given due attention,

including the provision of textbooks and support for Vietnamese-language teachers in a number of countries.

The increasingly open and enabling policies of the Party and State have encouraged the overseas Vietnamese community to make continued contributions to the national construction effort. As of October 2020, the overseas Vietnamese from 27 countries and territories directly invested in 362 projects in Viet Nam worth US\$ 1.6 billion in registered capital. In spite of the hardships caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, remittance to Viet Nam sent by overseas Vietnamese in 2020 was still remarkably high at US\$ 17.2 billion, ranking 3rd among the top remittance recipient countries in the East Asia-Pacific region.

2. In 2020, due to the global COVID-19 outbreak, citizen protection became a central task, with emerging and highly complex issues. Against this backdrop, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs worked actively alongside relevant ministries and agencies to proactively conduct citizen protection work, and achieved numerous remarkable outcomes.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs joined in the efforts to organize more than 290 repatriation flights, bringing home more than 79,000 citizens from 59 countries and territories. Implementing the Prime Minister's instruction of "leaving no one behind," Vietnamese representative missions



The flight repatriating 219 Vietnamese citizens from Equatorial Guinea (of whom 129 were COVID-19 positive) landing at Noi Bai Airport (Hanoi, 29 July 2020) - The World and Viet Nam Report

abroad followed with keen attention the local situation and that of the Vietnamese community, provided support and recommendations to Vietnamese nationals in fully observing disease prevention measures, and called on the host countries to assist Vietnamese nationals to return home. The total number of citizens receiving citizen protection service in times of need or distress in foreign countries, or during cases of legal needs, or were otherwise issued administrative documents was 21,381, increasing by 58% against 2019. The Citizen Protection hotline received 17,244 calls, an increase of 196% compared to that of the previous year.

With regards to the protection of Vietnamese fishermen and fishing vessels, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Vietnamese diplomatic missions handled 57 cases of citizen protection involving 115 vessels and 969 fishermen in line with international and Vietnamese law against the backdrop of numerous complex developments in the East Sea - a decrease of nearly 50% compared to 2019. Having been confronted with 13 storms in the East Sea during the year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs actively collaborated with other ministries, agencies and localities in responding to natural disasters and undertaking search and rescue efforts, and requested relevant

countries to provide assistance to 4 fishing vessels and 14 fishermen to seek shelter in safe havens.

IV. Diplomacy contributing to the protection of national territory, sovereignty over seas and islands, and the defense of national security

1. In 2020, sovereignty disputes in the East Sea continued to unfold in a complex manner. Among these complications, acts that violated international law and unilateral interpretation of international law contrary to universally accepted standards remained a source of ongoing challenges to the security and

development environment of Viet Nam. As such, Viet Nam remained resolute and unflagging in safeguarding its national independence, sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and national boundaries, ensuring national security and social order and safety, and preserving an environment of peace and stability for national development.

- *Land border*: In general, the management of land borders between Viet Nam and its three neighbors of China, Laos and Cambodia remained stable. This considerably contributed to the building of the land border of peace, friendship, cooperation and development with these three countries. Viet Nam coordinated



Member of the Politburo, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh and Minister of Foreign Affairs of China Wang Yi co-chairing a ceremony marked the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Viet Nam - China Border Treaty and the 10th anniversary of the implementation of the legal document on land border (Mong Cai, 23 August 2020) - The World and Viet Nam Report

with other relevant countries to manage the borderline in accordance with the signed legal instruments. Controlling the spread of COVID-19 and measures to combat the pandemic were generally well-maintained while still ensuring the smooth flow of economic and trade activities.

With China, the two sides actively worked together and effectively implemented measures to manage the land border in accordance with bilateral legal instruments. The Joint Commission continued to prove its effectiveness. The two sides also successfully held a commemorative event to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Border Treaty and the 10th anniversary of the three legal instruments on land border. The event, held in August 2020, was attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Pham Binh Minh, and Member of the State Council and Minister of Foreign Affairs of China Wang Yi.

In addition to cross-border cooperation in combating the pandemic, the competent authorities of the two countries made use of various flexible channels, such as virtual conferences, letters and phone calls to timely address emerging issues so as to ensure that the borderline and marker system was well-maintained. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs worked together with relevant ministries,

agencies and localities to (i) upgrade the border gate pair of Ma Lu Thang (Viet Nam) - Jinshuihe (China) to International Border Gate; (ii) finalize procedures to extend the temporary clearance period for the special-purpose cross-border regional goods clearance within the border gate of Huu Nghi (Viet Nam) - Youyiguan (China) until 31 May 2021; (iii) officially open the Bac Luan II (Bolun II) bridge at the Mong Cai (Viet Nam) - Dongxing (China) International Border Gate from 1 July 2020; and (iv) restore the clearance of goods across the border gate of Soc Giang (Viet Nam) - Pingmang (China).

Additionally, the two countries also actively exchanged measures to address issues facing businesses and the people in cross-border interactions and trade through border gates while ensuring that disease-control requirements of each countries were met. This helped maintain cooperation for the development of the border areas. The two sides actively discussed and ratified border construction projects according to procedures for these projects, and urged their respective relevant localities to implement the projects in strict observance of the ratified designs.

With Laos, the border administration bodies of the two sides maintained regular contact, situation update and discussions to together address border-related issues in accordance with the

two legal documents on the borderline signed in 2016⁹. Most notably, the two sides successfully held the 30th annual meeting of the Viet Nam - Laos border delegations in Vientiane (November 2020). Facing with the complex developments of COVID-19, the two sides agreed to temporarily close the borders and restrict entry and exit, maintain strict control over the borderline, and address bottlenecks encountered in cross-border trade in goods. In accordance with the development of the pandemic, the two countries arrived at flexible measures to facilitate cross-border travel and exchange of goods for the businesses and local people on both sides. The two sides also coordinated to conduct survey and exchange on the “single window inspection, single stop inspection” model.

With Cambodia, the legal document on land border¹⁰ recognizing the outcomes of border demarcation and marker planting between the two countries (accounting for 84% of the total workload) came into effect at the Ceremony on the exchange of ratified document co-chaired by the two sides’ Deputy Prime Ministers, Ministers of Foreign Affairs (December 2020).

This was a significant event in the 30-year course of negotiations to settle land border between Viet Nam and Cambodia, living up to the aspirations of the two Governments and peoples. The two sides held a Ceremony for the exchange of the 1:25,000 topographical map of the border area between Viet Nam and Cambodia at the Moc Bai border gate, Tay Ninh province (August 2020). The competent authorities of both sides effectively collaborated with each other to address issues arising in the management of the borderline in observance of relevant agreements and maintain security and order in the border area. Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 outbreak, the two sides coordinated well in the border control and cross-border movement of goods in accordance with the developments of the pandemic. Vietnamese and Cambodian competent authorities also cooperated in assessing the state of the land border gate system between the two countries with a view to further strengthening border management.

- *At sea*: Viet Nam resolutely and perseveringly strived to defend national sovereignty and its legitimate rights and interests in the East Sea, In 2020, Viet Nam circulated three Note Verbales at the United Nations to express its legal

⁹ The Protocol on National Border and Border Marker (dated 2 March 2016) and the Agreement on Arrangements for Land Border and Border Checkpoint Management (signed on 16 March 2016).

¹⁰ The Treaty Supplementing the 1985 National Border Demarcation Treaty and the 2005 Supplementary Treaty between Viet Nam and Cambodia; (ii) the Protocol on Land Border Demarcation and Marker Planting between Viet Nam and Cambodia.

position on the disputes in the East Sea in accordance with international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Through these actions, Viet Nam staunchly demonstrated its resolve and efforts in the defense of its national sovereignty and territorial integrity and in upholding international law - especially the role of the 1982 UNCLOS - in the settlement of disputes and maintenance of peace, stability, cooperation and development in the East Sea. Against the complex backdrop of COVID-19, Viet Nam stepped up coordination with countries within and beyond the region to maintain peace, stability, freedom of navigation and overflight in the East Sea via different formats (virtual conferences, phone calls and letters, among others). Viet Nam continued to maintain channels for negotiation and dialogue with countries concerned to address disputes and promote maritime cooperation. In addition, Viet Nam sustained its efforts alongside ASEAN and China to maintain meetings on the Code of Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (COC) and effectively observe the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) through flexible formats. This was a considerable contribution to the maintenance of peace, security and stability in the East Sea.

2. In 2020, defense and security cooperation as part of the overall

State diplomacy was able to gain synergy. Viet Nam made proactive and innovative efforts to maintain defense and security relations with other countries. Such endeavors resulted in positive outcomes with substantial contributions to the cause of national construction and defense.

Despite the negative impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, defense and security cooperation with other countries continued to be maintained. Minister of National Defense Ngo Xuan Lich paid a visit to the Russian Federation and signed the Viet Nam - Russia Joint Vision Statement on Defense Cooperation for 2020-2025 (February 2020). He also had telephone conversations with the Defense Ministers of Laos, Cambodia, India and Japan. Inbound foreign visits included those by the Second Minister of Defense and Chairman of the National Security Council of Brunei Darussalam, and the Minister of Defense of Lao PDR (both in February 2020). Minister of Public Security To Lam also paid a visit to Lao PDR and signed the 2020 Plan of Action for Cooperation between the two Ministries of Public Security (February 2020), and the two sides also signed the Agreement on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons (January 2020). Minister To Lam also paid visits to Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia (both in February 2020) to promote security cooperation, especially in combating terrorism and transnational crime.



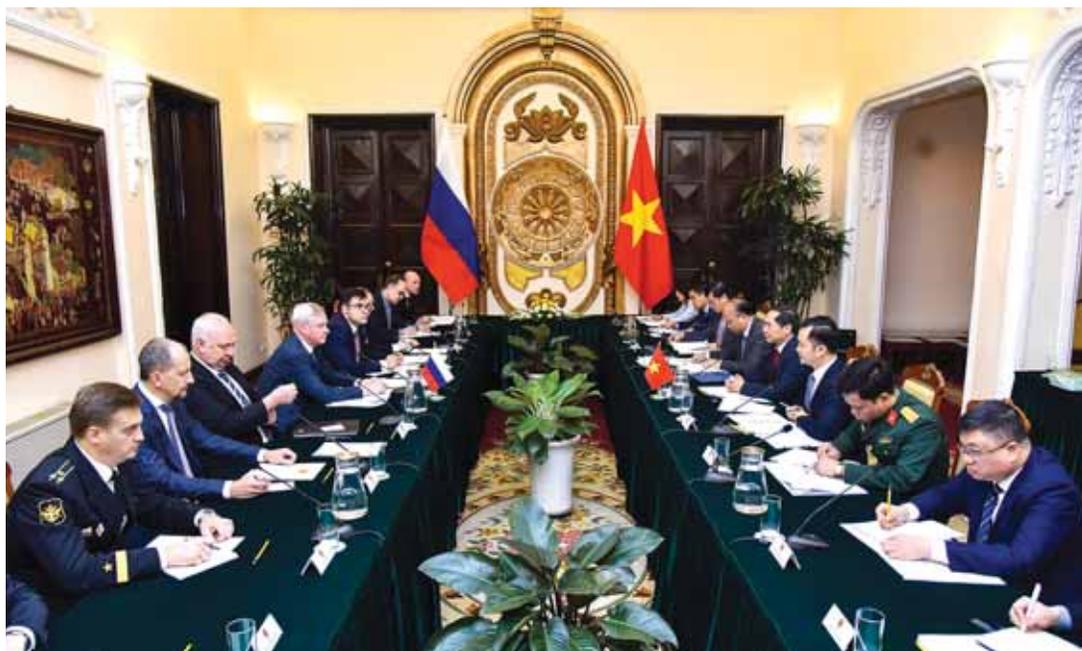
Member of the Politburo, Minister of National Defence, General Ngo Xuan Lich hosting the Opening Ceremony of the 7th ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM+) under virtual format (10 December 2020) - VNA

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior Affairs of Cambodia visited Viet Nam and signed the 2020 Plan of Action for Cooperation with the Vietnamese Ministry of Public Security (January 2020).

In addition, Viet Nam also held the 11th Strategic Diplomatic - Security - Defense Dialogue with Russia (March 2020), and the 11th Political - Security - Defense Dialogue with the United States (September 2020). Defense policy dialogues were held virtually with Singapore, the UK and Australia at the Deputy Defense Ministerial level, and the Security Dialogue was held with China at the Deputy Security Ministerial level (November 2020).

During the year, the UK Royal Navy's ship HMS Enterprise and US Navy aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71) paid port calls to Viet Nam, thereby enhancing mutual understanding between the Vietnamese navy and their U.S. and UK counterparts. In November, Canada officially opened its Defense Attaché Office in Viet Nam, marking a new milestone in the bilateral defense relations.

With regard to multilateral defense cooperation, Viet Nam successfully held the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) and the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM+) involving ten ASEAN



Member of the Party Central Committee, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Bui Thanh Son hosting the 11th Strategic Dialogue on Diplomacy, Security and Defence with Russia (Hanoi, 6 March 2020) - The World and Viet Nam Report

Member States, eight ASEAN partners, and five guest countries. For the first time since 2013, the ADMM+ arrived at a Joint Declaration. This was a solid demonstration of Viet Nam's standing and prestige within the cooperation mechanism between ASEAN and its dialogue partners. Viet Nam was an active participant at the World Army Games 2020 and the International Military-Technical Forum 2020 (ARMY-2020) - held in Russia and attended by 32 countries and territories - and won impressive achievements.

Viet Nam's contributions to the UN peacekeeping operations continued to be a highlight, underscoring Viet Nam's prestige in the international

arena, particularly during its non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council. By the end of the year, 50 Vietnamese officers had been dispatched to UN peacekeeping missions in the Central African Republic and South Sudan, and 126 officers, staff members, medical workers and doctors were sent to the two level-2 field hospitals in South Sudan. The ratio of women serving these missions was 17%, the highest of all countries in the world. Additionally, 2020 marked the first time that two Vietnamese officers were recruited to the UN Department of Peace Operations based at the UN Headquarters in New York.



CHAPTER V

PARTY-TO-PARTY, PARLIAMENT-TO-PARLIAMENT AND PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

I. Party-to-Party External Activities

In 2020, the external relations of the Communist Party of Viet Nam continued to be strengthened thanks to its proactive and creative approach, as well as its flexibility and adaptability to changes given the COVID-19 pandemic. These efforts contributed to consolidating the political foundation for the bilateral relations between Viet Nam and other countries.

1. Relations with the ruling parties in the socialist countries and neighboring countries were reinforced with enhanced political trust, playing an important role in setting strategic orientations for the relations between Viet Nam and these countries.

Relations with *the Lao People's Revolutionary Party* were increasingly deepened with greater trust, substance and effectiveness, playing a pivotal role in guiding the overall trajectory of the bilateral cooperation between the two countries. It also significantly contributed to fostering the ever-growing great friendship, special solidarity and comprehensive cooperation between Viet Nam and

Laos, as well as maintaining political stability, social security and order in each country. Mechanisms for contact and exchange at all levels were maintained, bringing into full play the effectiveness of the cooperation across a wide range of areas. These include the telephone conversations between the two Party General Secretaries, State Presidents and between the Chairmen of the two Party External Relations Commissions. The two sides worked well together in organizing commemorative activities to celebrate important events of the two countries, intensifying information and communication on the Viet Nam - Laos relationship on significant occasions such as the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of Viet Nam, the 130th birthday of President Ho Chi Minh, the 65th anniversary of the establishment of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, the 45th anniversary of the National Day of Laos, the 100th birthday of President Kaysone Phomvihane.

Relations with *the Communist Party of China* continued the momentum of stable development. Party-to-Party cooperation, particularly exchanges

and telephone conversations between the highest-level leaderships of two Parties made essential contributions to setting orientations for the overall relationship. These include the telephone conversations between the Party General Secretaries, State Presidents of both countries on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations and the National Day of each respective country.

Relations with *the Cambodian People's Party* continued to be strengthened, helping foster the good neighborly relations, time-tested friendship, and the comprehensive, enduring and long-lasting cooperation between Viet Nam and Cambodia. Mechanisms for contact and exchange at all levels were maintained, including the telephone conversation between General

Secretary, President Nguyen Phu Trong and President of the Cambodian People's Party, Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen. The two sides also coordinated in communication work and organization of grand celebrations of major events and historical milestones in the bilateral relations.

The special friendship and close bond and great solidarity with *the Communist Party of Cuba* were increasingly consolidated and deepened during the year of the 60th anniversary of bilateral diplomatic relations. The two sides worked closely with each other in organizing numerous commemorative activities, most notably the telephone conversation between General Secretary, President Nguyen Phu Trong and First Secretary of the Central Committee of the



General Secretary, President Nguyen Phu Trong holding virtual talks with First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba Raul Castro on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations (02 December 2020) - VNA

Communist Party of Cuba Raul Castro. The two sides also stepped up the communication work on the relations between the two Parties and peoples on the occasion of major events of each country. The Communist Party of Viet Nam continued to demonstrate its solidarity and faithfulness with and support for Cuba.

Party-to-Party relations with *the Workers' Party of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea* were maintained. On the occasions of the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Viet Nam and the DPRK, the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of Viet Nam and 75th anniversary of the establishment of the Workers' Party of the DPRK, the high-level leaderships of two Parties and States exchanged letters and messages of congratulations, hence contributing to strengthening the traditional friendship between the Communist Party of Viet Nam and the Workers' Party of the DPRK.

2. Relations with the ruling parties, political parties and high-profile parties in major countries and important partners, regional countries and traditional friendly countries continued to play an important part in laying the political foundation for the overall bilateral relations

Despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Party's external activities were carried out in flexible forms, specifically through many telephone conversations and exchange of letters and messages. Such endeavors contributed to maintaining

the cooperation momentum between the Communist Party of Viet Nam and other political parties. The Communist Party of Viet Nam conducted virtual talks with the United Russia Party, the Workers' Party (PT) of Mexico, the Argentine Solidarity Party (PSOL), the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), the Dominican Republic's United Left Movement Party (MIU), and the Communist Party of Japan. Online dialogues were also conducted with the Inter-Party Parliamentary Group interested in Viet Nam (APPG) of the UK Parliament and with the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD).

3. The Communist Party of Viet Nam continued to actively engage in virtual multilateral activities for political parties. The Communist Party of Viet Nam actively and proactively promoted its role in leading mechanisms at multilateral forums such as the International Conference of Asian Political Parties (ICAPP), and the International Meeting of Communist Parties and Workers' Parties (IMCWP). The Communist Party of Viet Nam also attended the International Inter-Party Forum of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the virtual International Roundtable of Political Parties under the theme "Security Cooperation during the COVID-19 Pandemic", and the 24th Annual International Seminar on "Political Parties and New Society."

4. The Communist Party of Viet Nam played an active role in the cooperation to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, thus contributing to increasing political

trust, strengthening and expanding cooperation with other parties, countries and peoples. The Chairman of the Central Party Commission for External Relations sent letters and messages of sympathy, and shared Viet Nam's experiences in pandemic prevention and control with 189 political parties in 87 countries. He also sent a message to more than 300 political parties participating in the International Meeting of Communist and Workers' Parties. The Communist Party of Viet Nam presented medical face masks to a number of political parties, shared experiences and proposed measures for cooperation on pandemic prevention and control with many political parties at various multilateral political party forums. The proactive and timely measures advocated by the Communist Party of Viet Nam strongly demonstrated the spirit of international solidarity, cooperation, sharing and mutual support in dealing with global challenges. These efforts also showcased Viet Nam as a country standing for unity and humanism, and an active and responsible member of the international community.

II. Parliament-to-Parliament External Activities

Amid the complicated developments of the COVID-19 pandemic, the external activities of the National Assembly continued to be implemented with new formats in accordance with the actual situation, and recorded remarkable outcomes. This contributed to the overall success

of the Party and State diplomacy. The external activities undertaken by the National Assembly within bilateral and multilateral frameworks contributed to promoting parliamentary diplomacy, and mobilizing support from parliaments and parliamentarians of other countries for Viet Nam.

1. Bilateral external activities

In 2020, despite the adverse impact of COVID-19 on the work plan, the National Assembly of Viet Nam was able to maintain cooperation with parliaments of other countries. The National Assembly exchanged letters and messages, and received five parliamentary delegations to Viet Nam.

With Laos, the cooperation between the two National Assemblies continued to be strengthened and enhanced with diversified cooperation activities, including the exchange of delegations at all levels. The two sides joined efforts in supervising agreements between the two countries, especially through the official visit to Viet Nam by President of the Lao National Assembly Pany Yathotou (January 2020). During the visit, the President of the Lao National Assembly awarded orders and medals of the Lao People's Democratic Republic to 12 collective bodies and 52 individuals of the National Assembly of Viet Nam with outstanding merits in strengthening and expanding the friendship between the two countries and the two National Assemblies. President of the National Assembly Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan also had a telephone conversation with President of the Lao National Assembly Pany Yathotou to discuss



President of the National Assembly Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan welcoming Speaker of the National Assembly of the ROK Park Byeong-Seug during his visit to Viet Nam (Hanoi, 2 November 2020) - VNA

issues in the bilateral relations (May 2020). *With Cambodia*, President of the National Assembly Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan met with President of the Cambodian National Assembly Heng Samrin during his visit to Viet Nam to attend the funeral of former Party General Secretary Le Kha Phieu (August 2020). *With Japan*, President of the National Assembly Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan had a productive and substantive meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Suga Yoshihide during his official visit to Viet Nam (October 2020) and donated 20,000 medical face masks to Japan. Secretary General of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Chairman

of the Japan - Viet Nam Friendship Alliance Nikai Toshihiro visited Viet Nam and met with Mr. Pham Minh Chinh, Chairman of the Organizational Commission of the Party Central Committee, President of the Viet Nam-Japan Friendship Group (January 2020).

The relations *with the Republic of Korea* in general and between the two National Assemblies in particular were sustained and strengthened with the visit to Viet Nam by the Speaker of the ROK National Assembly Park Byeong-Seug (November 2020).

With the United States of America, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic

relations between the two countries, a delegation of the Armed Services Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives visited Viet Nam. This visit contributed to the further promotion of relations between the National Assembly of Viet Nam and the U.S. House of Representatives (January 2020).

With other Parliaments, President of the National Assembly Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan and Vice Presidents of the National Assembly received President of Germany's Hessen State Parliament, Chairman of the Germany - ASEAN Parliamentary Friendship Group of the German Parliament, and had telephone conversation with Speaker of the New Zealand's House of Representatives Trevor Mallard (July 2020).

In addition, President of the National Assembly Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan and the National Assembly of Viet Nam donated more than one million medical face masks to 40 Parliaments and international inter-parliamentary organizations (May 2020). The National Assembly's bodies also held effective online working sessions with specialized bodies of several parliaments such as with the House of Representatives of Indonesia, the parliamentary delegations of the European Parliament, and the National Congress of Argentina.

2. Multilateral external activities

Multilateral activities of the National Assembly of Viet Nam in 2020 continued to be proactively implemented.

Viet Nam successfully accomplished the year 2020 as the Chair of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) as well as successfully organized the 41st AIPA General Assembly. In particular, for the first time in the AIPA history, the 41st AIPA General Assembly was held via virtual format under the theme "*Parliamentary Diplomacy for a Cohesive and Responsive ASEAN Community*." The National Assembly of Viet Nam formulated the draft Agenda and the Program of Activities of the General Assembly which were subsequently fully endorsed by all AIPA member parliaments. The 41st General Assembly of AIPA adopted 26 Resolutions and one Joint Communiqué. Topics for deliberations closely centered on the evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic, promotion of economic recovery and development during and after the pandemic, and upholding the importance of strengthening regional peace, security and cooperation.

In the capacity as the AIPA Chair, Viet Nam presided over online dialogue sessions between the ASEAN Leaders and AIPA, and the 3rd AIPA Advisory Council on Drug Prevention and Control. At the same time, under the initiative put forth by the National Assembly of Viet Nam, the AIPA Parliamentary Partnership Conference on Education and Culture Cooperation for Sustainable Development (AIPA - ECC) was held for the first time. Another initiative of the National Assembly of Viet Nam adopted and highly appreciated by the 41st AIPA



President of the National Assembly, President of the 41st General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary (AIPA) Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan hosting and delivering her remarks at the Opening Ceremony of the 41st AIPA in virtual platform (Hanoi, 8 September 2020)- VNA

General Assembly was the Informal Meeting of the Young Parliamentarians of AIPA.

Additionally, the National Assembly of Viet Nam also took part in many other important multilateral activities, such as the 28th Asia-Pacific Parliamentary Forum (APPF) in Australia, the 13th World Summit of Women Speakers of Parliaments in Austria, the online Session of the Executive Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), and the 5th World Conference of Speakers of Parliaments held virtually. Most notably, during the virtual High-Level Meeting commemorating the 25th anniversary of the 4th World Conference

on Women (October 2020), President of the National Assembly Nguyen Thi Kim Ngan sent an important message to the Meeting, highlighting the achievements of gender equality in Viet Nam. At the same time, the National Assembly of Viet Nam actively promoted its role in the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

External information and communication work of the National Assembly also received due attention. Strong emphasis was placed on activities pertaining to AIPA 2020, the National Assembly's ratification of Viet Nam's accession to important international treaties, for instance the

Convention 105 of the International Labor Organization (ILO), the Viet Nam - EU Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA), the Viet Nam - EU Investment Protection Agreement (EVIPA) during the 9th session of the 14th National Assembly. The information and communication work also focused on international cooperation, experience-sharing among countries in combating the COVID-19 pandemic, and measures to foster post-pandemic economic recovery.

III. People-to people External Activities

In 2020, the people-to people external activities was carried out in an active, proactive and effective manner. Under the motto of “proactiveness, flexibility, creativity and effectiveness”, the Viet Nam Fatherland Front, and mass organizations and associations proactively and flexibly adjusted their operation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. They also continued to actively support the Party and State external activities, hence making significant contribution to the common achievements of the country’s foreign affairs.

Given the extremely severe hardships caused by the pandemic, mass organizations and associations swiftly changed the modes of operation. External activities were conducted under direct, or a hybrid of both direct and online formats with their counterparts in the neighboring, regional countries, major powers, key partners and traditional friends.

1. Ongoing efforts to consolidate and strengthen the solidarity, friendship, and cooperation with the peoples around the world, and expand the network of friends and international partners

Mass organizations conducted and took part in many activities to commemorate the establishment of diplomatic relations with other countries, including China (70th anniversary), the Russian Federation (70th anniversary), the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (70th anniversary), Cuba (60th anniversary), the United States (25th anniversary), Sri Lanka (50th anniversary), France (65th anniversary), Germany (45th anniversary), Hungary (70th anniversary), Bulgaria (70th anniversary), Romania (70th anniversary) and Poland (70th anniversary). Celebrations were also held in honor of the founding of Viet Nam’s friendship associations with several countries.

Economic, cultural and educational exchanges, conveyance of messages of congratulations and sympathy to friends and partners in other countries continued to be actively maintained by mass organizations in coordination with localities.

Responding to the call of the Prime Minister and to the movement “All people joining hands in the prevention and control of the COVID-19 pandemic” and “Helping people in the Central Region” launched by the Central Committee of the Viet Nam Fatherland Front, member organizations of the Viet Nam Union of Friendship Organizations at the central and local levels actively raised the fund, medical equipment and face masks

to assist people at home and friends abroad, to overcome the consequences of the pandemic and natural disasters.

2. Proactive international integration and responsible participation in multilateral mechanisms, and contributions to popular movements in the region and the world

Mass organizations in Viet Nam actively and proactively contributed to the success of the ASEAN Chair 2020. This was demonstrated by the successfully organization of the ASEAN People's Forum 2020, the ASEAN Volunteer Youth Forum, the ASEAN Youth Leadership Summit, the 4th ASEAN Students Council, the ASEAN Young Entrepreneurs Carnival, and the ASEAN Business and Investment Summit 2020, among others. At the same time, these mass

organizations actively participated in and made responsible contributions to multilateral organizations and mechanisms to which Viet Nam was member. These included the World Trade Union, the General Assembly of the International Chamber of Commerce, the Economic and Social Council, the World Peace Council, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the Asia-Europe People's Forum, and the International Ship-owners' Association, to name a few. Through the above activities, the position and role of the Vietnamese mass organizations in particular and of Viet Nam in general in multilateral mechanisms were further strengthened and enhanced, thus actively contributing to the external relations of the Party and State.



Welcoming performance at the Meeting commemorating the 60th anniversary of Viet Nam - Cuba diplomatic relations (Hanoi, 01 December 2020) - VNA

3. Joining in efforts to advocate and defend the national sovereignty and interests of Viet Nam, enhance external communication, gather and unite overseas Vietnamese

Viet Nam's mass organizations actively contributed to external communication. This helped raise the posture and prestige of Viet Nam through providing information and online exchanges with friends and international partners regarding experiences in combating the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as policies to support businesses and people. These endeavors aimed to achieve the dual goals of successfully containing the pandemic while fostering socio-economic development.

Through communication channels, social media, partners' networks, people-to-people multilateral activities, conferences, seminars, and mass organizations and associations continued providing updates on the East Sea, Viet Nam's position and views on resolving disputes at sea, and achievements in ensuring human rights in Viet Nam. At the same time, mass organizations also actively participated in the National Master Plan on the implementation of the commitments under the 3rd Cycle Universal Periodical Review Mechanism, and galvanized international support for Agent Orange victims. They also joined efforts in the struggle against misrepresentations, distorted views, and fallacies about the situation of democracy, human rights and religion in Viet Nam.

4. Cooperation via non-governmental channel with foreign partners continued to be substantially promoted

In 2020, the foreign NGOs' aid to Viet Nam reached more than US\$ 220.7 million, 41.3% of which came from Europe, 36.2% from North America and 22.5% from Asia. All the assistance focused on Viet Nam's priority areas such as public health, addressing social issues and socio-economic development.

Particularly, about 115 foreign NGOs continued to give priority to Viet Nam and actively assisted Viet Nam in responding to natural disasters and epidemics. Such assistance was made in the forms of cash transfer, medical supplies, basic necessities, training and on-the-job training program worth more than US\$ 15.5 million.

In addition, the NGOs also published articles, disseminated information to the world about Viet Nam's policies and measures in response to COVID-19, making Viet Nam's achievements in this endeavor known to the outside world. In April 2020, 77 NGOs and non-governmental data centers operating in Viet Nam issued a joint letter expressing their support to and high appreciation of the effectiveness of the COVID-19 prevention and control measures implemented by the Vietnamese Government. As the world, Viet Nam and the NGOs themselves were faced with untold hardships caused by Covid-19, such achievements recorded in 2020 were worthwhile and remarkable.

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