

Distinguished guests, VEF Fellows and Visiting Scholars, Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I wish all of you a Happy New Year

Welcome to the 5th VEF Fellows and Visiting Scholars Annual Conference. As usual, this year's Conference is organized in cooperation with the National Academies. This year we have chosen the theme: "All the Ways Home (Duong Ve To Quoc)," focusing on the issues related to our Fellows and Visiting Scholars returning to Vietnam

Since the last Conference, VEF has made considerable progress. Indeed, in our exchange program, we have brought a total number of 230 Fellows to the U.S. since VEF operations began five years ago in 2003. A very warm welcome to the new Fellows of cohort 2007 [Cohort 2007 please stand up to be recognized. Please be seated]. In addition, we have for the first time this year 12 Visiting Scholars in the U.S. These are postdoctoral scholars, who spend up to 12 months in top-notch American academic institutions to acquire new knowledge and to implement this knowledge in their home institutions in Vietnam [Visiting Scholars, please stand up to be recognized. Please be seated].

Demonstrating further progress by VEF, we launched recently the U.S. Faculty Scholar grants that will allow U.S. professors to teach in Vietnam either in person or via videoconferencing. This initiative will have an important link to another new initiative that we launched a few weeks ago: the Vietnam OpenCourseware (VOCW). The VOCW allows Vietnamese scholars, researchers, educators, and students to contribute, employ, and share information via the internet that is useful to their studies, teaching, and research. We will hear a presentation about this initiative on Sunday. I am happy to inform you that VEF is proposing its candidacy to host the next International Meeting of the Open Course Ware.

With our determination to deliver high quality products, we are glad to hear from others that VEF is viewed by our peers as a role model for the collaboration

that is occurring between the U.S. and Vietnam in the arena of Vietnamese higher education. Indeed, this year the Ministry of Education and Training is emulating the VEF selection process for the Ministry's Vietnamese Overseas Scholarship Program (also known as the 322 Program).

Besides VOCW and the 322 program, both of which are considered part of our Capacity Building efforts, this year VEF organized a follow-up workshop in August in Vietnam that allowed US professors and scientists work hands in hands with their Vietnamese counterparts to address the recommendations made in the VEF reports, regarding research and teaching in the fields of Electrical Engineering, Computer Science, Physics, and Agricultural Sciences. Finally, this past summer VEF co-organized together with the Ministry of Science and Technology among others, the 2nd International Biomedical Engineering Conference in conjunction with the Second Young Vietnamese Scientists Meeting (YVSM) to give VEF Fellows the chance to present their work in a professional international environment.

Further good news is that VEF now has the right to do fundraising. This means that VEF may be able to do many projects that it cannot do otherwise, if additional funds are acquired, and this also means that VEF will play an important role to link the Vietnamese American community in the U.S. to the development of science and technology as well as the development of higher education in Vietnam. I would like to take this opportunity to announce that this Annual Conference is a kick-off event of a series of events to celebrate the 5th anniversary of VEF activities and to begin our Fundraising campaign.

Another activity in this campaign is our first Alumni Conference that will be held in Vietnam in August. I am happy to report that we created the VEF Alumni Association. As of December 2007, 34 VEF Fellows have graduated. Among those, 19 returned to VN, 14 continued their academic trainings in the U.S. and 2 moved on to the Ph.D. degree study. Among these alumni, 6 obtained the Ph.D. degree. This is an outstanding performance because they have started in 2003 it took them just 4 years to accomplish this highest achievement.

As you know, the mission of VEF is to improve the relationship between the U.S. and Vietnam through educational exchange programs in Science and Technology. The main stakeholders of this mission are the Fellows and Visiting Scholars. Allow me to take a few minutes to address these stakeholders.

My dear Fellows, during the last four years, first as a Board member and then as the Executive Director, I have followed your growth. You have been learning and listening all along. Now some of you have reached a certain maturity just as VEF has reached an important landmark. We would like to see the more senior Fellows work with the more junior Fellows as well as with Visiting Scholars to shape your future. Therefore, we designed the theme of this year's Conference to be specifically for you. Here is your challenge: How can you excel in your expertise and continue to apply the outcomes of your U.S. education when you return to Vietnam? This is an old subject, and yet people continue to debate this topic without giving satisfactory solutions. Why? Because they have thought through matters **for** you rather than **with** you. Now it is time for **you** to think about how to build your own ways home and, most importantly, to develop your own vision. This is a subject with multiple and open-ended solutions. Therefore, be creative, realistic, and practical. We hope that by the end of this Conference you will have pointed to a direction, and paved the ways for improvement and for continuous dynamic dialogue among yourselves and with other people. That's why we organized serious time to discuss this matter and to hear your views on "All the Ways Home." As you know, a panel that includes Vietnamese leaders and guests will reflect on your presentations on the topic. We are delighted to have this discussion presented via a webcast so that not only the present audience but also people at a distance can give you their input to your plans.

Ladies and gentlemen, to enhance the ways for VEF Fellows to return to Vietnam, a special feature of this year's conference is the Academic Job Fair. The purpose of this Job Fair is to help Vietnamese universities to recruit talented and outstanding VEF Fellows to teach and do research at their institutions and to establish relationships with potential collaborators. I am very proud to add that this initiative coincides with the wish of Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung that Vietnam needs talented teachers in Science and Technology and that he is counting

on VEF to help. The Academic Job Fair has attracted more than 20 delegations from different universities and research institutions in Vietnam, who will discuss their organization's current and future employment, visions, strategies, and policies, as well as the potential teaching, research, and working environment. Due to the importance of this event, we are providing many opportunities during the Conference, including the dinner receptions, so that our Fellows and Visiting Scholars have many chances to network with the delegations. I strongly encourage the Fellows and Visiting Scholars to take full advantage of these opportunities. On behalf of the conference organizers, I would like to thank all the Vietnamese Academic Job Fair delegations for their presence. We hope that this is the first step for continuous and fruitful collaboration [I would like to invite the delegation members to stand up to be recognized. Please be seated].

This year's conference is rich with further important activities. This year's keynote presentations will have 3 eminent speakers recommended by our Fellows. Their topics include leadership, emerging technologies, and the relationship between research, education, and entrepreneurship, which are topics of particular importance to VEF. On behalf of the conference organizers, I would like to thank all our guest speakers for their participation [I would like to invite the guest speakers to stand up to be recognized. Please be seated].

Another important event during this year's conference is the VEFFA-HUT Library Launching Ceremony. This is an initiative of the VEF Fellows Association (VEFFA), who collected, and will donate, science and technology books to Hanoi University of Technology (HUT). We would like to commend this new effort of VEFFA and hope that this effort will also involve other Vietnamese universities in the future. Finally, I would like to recommend that our guests participate in the scientific sessions in which our Fellows and Visiting Scholars present their scientific research work and that our guests also participate in all social events that our Fellows have organized, including the Gala dinner.

To conclude, on behalf of VEF and the National Academies, we hope that you will participate fully in the Conference, and enjoy all the events and activities included in our very complete conference agenda. Thank you for your attention.