

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

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JOINT STATEMENT BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND THE  
SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

President George W. Bush welcomed Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung to the United States of America and to the White House yesterday for the fourth bilateral meeting between leaders of our two countries in as many years. The President and the Prime Minister discussed the progress made since they last met in Vietnam in 2006 and committed to specific efforts to carry this increasingly robust bilateral relationship forward. The two leaders agreed the relationship is based on a positive, growing friendship, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to pursuing constructive and multifaceted cooperation on a wide range of issues that will contribute to the development of the depth of the relationship, which is in the long-term interests of both countries. They also shared their vision and goals for a stable, secure, democratic, and peaceful Asia-Pacific region and discussed future U.S.-Vietnam contributions to that end.

The leaders welcomed the deepening economic ties, noting that two-way bilateral trade topped \$12 billion in 2007 and that the United States is Vietnam's top export market. Prime Minister Dung affirmed Vietnam's resolve to maintain macroeconomic stability and determination to implement its commitments under the World Trade Organization, the Bilateral Trade Agreement, and the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement; improve its legal system; and create conditions favorable for foreign investors and trade growth.

The two leaders agreed that trade and economic ties are significant to the bilateral relationship. They announced that the United States and Vietnam would initiate negotiations toward a Bilateral Investment Treaty, signaling our commitment to open investment regimes and fair, non-discriminatory, and transparent treatment of foreign investment. President Bush affirmed that the United States is seriously reviewing Vietnam's request to be designated as a beneficiary of the Generalized System of Preferences program, and he acknowledged Vietnam's request to be accorded Market Economy Status. They noted the importance of efforts within the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum to promote free and open trade and investment, including the prospect of a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific. President Bush reiterated the United States' general opposition to restrictions on food exports at a time of rising prices. The two leaders called on all countries to join in the effort to solve the world food problem. President Bush

reaffirmed the United States' commitment to pursuing actions to maintain or expand existing assistance levels and to address the underlying conditions contributing to high food prices.

The two leaders discussed expanding and strengthening our senior-level dialogues. They endorsed the creation of new political-military and policy planning talks, which will allow for more frequent and in-depth discussions on security and strategic issues. The two leaders noted the benefit of an open and candid dialogue on issues relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms. President Bush and Prime Minister Dung agreed on the importance of the rule of law in modern societies, and President Bush underscored the importance of promoting improved human rights practices and conditions for religious believers and ethnic minorities. Prime Minister Dung informed President Bush of the policies and efforts made by Vietnam in this area, and President Bush took note of Vietnam's efforts to date and encouraged further progress. On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the two leaders reaffirmed their commitment to promoting and securing fundamental human rights and liberties.

The two leaders were pleased with the successes of Vietnamese Americans and noted their contribution to the promotion of the relationship between the two countries. President Bush welcomed these contributions and reiterated the U.S. government's support for Vietnam's national sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity.

President Bush expressed appreciation for Vietnam's cooperation in our joint humanitarian effort to achieve the fullest possible accounting for Americans who remain missing in action and Vietnam's willingness to carry out additional measures, noting that the Joint Field Activities have allowed for the identification and repatriation of the remains of 629 U.S. soldiers and reaffirmed the U.S. government's continued assistance in obtaining information for Vietnam's own accounting efforts. Prime Minister Dung highlighted the United States' assistance in this area as well. Prime Minister Dung applauded bilateral progress in addressing environmental contamination near former dioxin storage sites in Vietnam, particularly the ongoing implementation of \$3 million in U.S. funding for environmental remediation and health projects.

President Bush congratulated Prime Minister Dung on his country's two-year membership on the United Nations Security Council. The two leaders reaffirmed that the two countries will continue consultations on the pressing issues that will face the Security Council. The Prime Minister informed the President that Vietnam is completing the preparatory process for its effective participation in UN peacekeeping operations. Prime Minister Dung thanked President Bush for the invitation for Vietnam to participate in the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI), through which Vietnam will participate in training courses and other

activities on peacekeeping operations. President Bush noted the ongoing visit of the humanitarian ship the USNS Mercy to Vietnam.

The two leaders expressed their wish to enhancing further U.S. relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and President Bush expressed his appreciation for Vietnam's active role in ASEAN. The two leaders discussed the areas of cooperation with ASEAN, including humanitarian assistance and Cyclone Nargis. President Bush reiterated that the United States is willing to work with ASEAN, the United Nations, and other non-governmental organizations to bring additional, much-needed humanitarian assistance to those affected by the devastating cyclone, and they discussed the need for entry and prompt access to all international aid workers to the disaster area.

The two leaders underscored the importance of cooperation on education and agreed to launch a high-level bilateral Education Task Force that will chart a roadmap and identify effective modalities for enhanced U.S.-Vietnam education cooperation. The two leaders also welcomed the continued success of the Fulbright Program in Vietnam and the growing number of Vietnamese students who choose to study in the United States. President Bush underscored the importance of a future Peace Corps program in Vietnam. Prime Minister Dung agreed in principle to the President's proposal on such a program and that the two sides will continue discussion to finalize related arrangements.

Prime Minister Dung thanked President Bush for assistance under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), noting that many people in Vietnam, including vulnerable children, are now receiving care, support, anti-retroviral treatment.

The President expressed his commitment to continue the development of intercountry adoption cooperation between the United States and Vietnam that ensures the best interests of the child, respects his or her fundamental rights, and prevents the abduction and trafficking of children. The Prime Minister underscored that Vietnam shares these goals and stressed that Vietnam will speed up preparations for an early accession to the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoptions. The Prime Minister also welcomed U.S. technical assistance in facilitating this step.

Prime Minister Dung thanked President Bush for the United States' assistance on Vietnam's Atomic Energy Law as well as for technical information and training on nuclear safety.

Finally, the two leaders discussed cooperation on climate issues. Prime Minister Dung and President Bush welcomed the commencement of the Delta Research and Global Observation Network (DRAGON) project in Vietnam, which will establish an institute at Can Tho University to cooperate on training and research

to produce healthy ecosystems and sustainable deltas. The two leaders also agreed to work together to promote Vietnamese climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts, including the formation of a new subcommittee under the bilateral Science and Technology Agreement to discuss and coordinate joint initiatives.