

## ***INFORMATION***

### **Seminar: Assessment of Vietnam's Renovation Process and Lessons of Experience**

The Seminar was held in Hanoi for the two days of October 14 and 15, 2008 by Northeast of Asia Research Institute, Vietnam Institute of Social Sciences in coordination with the South Korean Institute of International Economic Policies. Attending the Seminar were a great number of researchers from institutes, representatives of ministries, departments, branches on both sides of Vietnam and South Korea, together with numerous reporters, journalists interested in the Seminar. The Seminar was aimed at strengthening the friendship, exchanges and understanding between the two sides of Vietnam and South Korea in general and between the two governing Institutes in particular; promoting the cooperative relations in every area; at the same time, researching, exchanging and assessing Vietnam's experiences during the renovation process. The Seminar was split into four sessions in which eight discourses were presented.

It was clearly pointed out by the Seminar that, since the diplomatic ties between Vietnam and South Korea was established until now, cooperation programs in numerous areas have been

carried out by Vietnam and South Korea, nevertheless, the extent and contents of such cooperation were much limited, and the effectiveness of the cooperation did not correspond to the potentialities of both sides. As each side has its own certain advantages and disadvantages, therefore, the two sides should joint efforts to find out appropriate solutions in order to avail themselves of the advantages, to overcome disadvantages to make full use of the outcome of the cooperation ties for both Vietnam and South Korea. To do so, the two sides have to speed up the traditional cooperation ties, usher in new cooperation orientations in the new areas on the basis of exchanging experiences in implementing renovations, reforms, and economic development; in realizing social equality, reduction of hunger and poverty, especially during the integration process.

At the Seminar, the participants analyzed the external guidelines of the Party and State of Vietnam, the initiative and activeness of Vietnam during international economic integration, particularly after becoming a member of WTO; analyzed on ever aspect of Vietnam's economic renovation policy towards the socialist-oriented market

economy; especially, the participants reviewed the course of renovation of Vietnam in all, from economic, political to cultural, social... respects; generalized the major achievements made, the shortcomings committed, etc. so as to draw a good many valuable lessons.

Futhermore, the participants also dealt with the mechanism for managing in Vietnam, the renewal of the mechanism for managing in the recent time and some experiences, problems of FDI and taxation policy of Vietnam; reviewed the renovation process in the domain of trade of Vietnam as well as the experiences and lessons drawn from it. In addition, the Seminar summarized, evaluated the ties between Vietnam and South Korea, People's Democratic Republic of Korea and the United States, the efficiency and effectiveness achieved from such external relations in the recent years in order to find out appropriate steps to be taken in international diplomatic relations against the context of globalization and integration today.

### **HUỆ NGUYỄN**

#### **International Workshop: Epic Poetry of Vietnam**

As from October 23 – 26, 2008 in Buon Ma Thuot City of Dak Lak Province, the People's Committee of Dak Lak, in combination with Vietnam Institute of Social Sciences held an international workshop on the theme of "Epic Poetry of Vietnam", in order to sum up and

discuss the results of collection and research of Vietnam's epic poetry from the early of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until the present, at the same time, to present to the readers at home and abroad a very rich treasure of epic poetry of Vietnam, including the epic poetry region of the Central Highlands. Attending at the Workshop were representatives of the leadership, managers of culture of relevant sections, branches from Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and provinces in the region of Central Highlands, specialists in folk culture from China, Japan, India, Taiwan, Laos and Thailand.

About 40 discourses were presented at the Workshop, mainly focusing on such themes as defining the position of Vietnam's epic poetry in general and of the Central Highlands' in particular in the epic poetry setting of the world and the region; introducing and comparing epic poetry in North and South of Vietnam; summing up the process of collecting, researching, teaching epic poetry in Vietnam; introducing epic poetry and the outcome of epic poetry collection and research in other countries.

International scientists personally exchanged their views with culturists, ethnologists, researchers of Vietnamese literature together presented and discussed the outcome of the latest researches on epic poetry of the different ethnic groups so as to be more profoundly aware of the diversity and unity of culture among the ethnic groups.

The contents of the discourses reflected the diversity in ways to access and research epic poetry: there were some general researches (pointing out nature, typical characteristics of the genre, basic attributes of epic poetry; reviewing the process of collecting, researching epic poetry in Vietnam in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century till the present); there were discourses touching upon activities of collecting (field experiences in looking for epic poetry, determining criteria while collecting or way to treat works of epic poetry collected); some authors, otherwise, considered the particular contents that were mentioned in the epic poetry such as political, social settings, cultural elements, lifestyles, the subjects of marriage and war, such images as heroes, heroines, horses, goddesses, the interfering relations of genre in epic poetry, etc.; some other discourses had an insight into the art of epic poetry. The contents as such were all aimed at a common purpose, namely to further and further understand more clearly the treasure of Vietnam's epic poetry in the region and the world' relations and exchanges in respect of genre, art of wording, art of performing, contents of expression as well as its sense in the national culture in general and in the folk literature in particular.

In addition, the participants also discussed forms of epic poetry preservation. It was noted that, at present, the huge treasure of the Central Highlands is being preserved in the forms of recorded tapes, disks,

transcriptions. Nevertheless, in the step of translating and preserving the space of performing and presenting epic poetry in the communities of the Central Highlands, there still remain many difficulties.

Particularly, at the Workshop, the participants discussed a rather fresh issue, i.e. the issue of new creation, new writing of epic poetry on the basis of using epic poetry writing style and folk culture.

In addition to the discourses and opinions presented at the hall, the participants went to minority villages to listen to epic poetry singing and visit some of the famous place names that have been much referred to in epic poetry.

### ***PHẠM VŨ***

#### **Consultative Group (CG) Meeting 2008 for Vietnam**

The two-day Consultative Group (CG) Meeting 2008 for Vietnam ended on December 5, 2008 today, with donors committing over US\$5 billion in aid to further assist Vietnam's development process and ensure equitable and inclusive growth. During the meeting, the Government of Vietnam and the development partners discussed in depth the economic situation, the Government's recent policy response, poverty reduction and health programs, the harmonization and aid effectiveness agenda, the fight against corruption and

institutional reform, and climate change issues.

Attending the first morning of the meeting, Vietnam's Prime Minister H.E. Nguyễn Tấn Dũng reviewed developments of the past year, and informed donors of the Government's main measures to tackle the global financial crisis, stressing that the government will resolutely implement solutions set to ensure stability and economic activity.

The Prime Minister emphasized the need for strong cooperation between donors and the government to overcome the crisis. *"The financial crisis and global economic downturn are affecting economies all over the world. The tasks for Vietnam in 2009 will be very challenging. The Government and people of Vietnam appreciate the support from the international community as it addresses macroeconomic stability while sustaining its reform agenda."*

### ***Socio-Economic Situation and Vietnam's Response***

Development partners recognized Vietnam's impressive recent success at reducing high domestic inflation and containing credit expansion, as well as in addressing the global food and fuel crisis earlier this year. They expressed support for the recent proposals to stimulate growth in response to the international credit crisis, but urged the government to respond flexibly as circumstances change. They also

emphasized the need to continue economic reforms, particularly to address the weaknesses exposed by the macro-economic turbulence of early 2008. They also noted that amidst these crises, special attention should be paid to the poor and vulnerable people to make sure they are not left behind.

*"Despite the economic challenges of this year and a difficult year ahead, the medium term outlook for Vietnam remains favorable, provided that the government sustains the momentum of economic reforms that have brought so much success this decade,"* stated Mr. Shogo Ishii, Assistant Director, Asia Pacific Department of the International Monetary Fund. He added, *"The government needs to be cautious in setting objectives for 2009, especially for growth and investment. It is also equally important to design appropriate economic policies that balance the growth and external risks confronting Vietnam, safeguard institutions, improve data quality and communication, and accelerate structural reforms"*

Mr. Ayumi Konishi, the Country Director of the Asian Development Bank in Vietnam, congratulated the Vietnamese government for effectively managed macro economic difficulties this year. *"But given the global economic downturn, 2009 will not be easier. We hope the Government will closely monitor the situation, and carefully analyze and balance various risks. We are particularly concerned about the possible adverse impacts on*

*the poor, small and medium enterprises and the vulnerable people. Together with other development partners, we would like to provide strong support to the Government in responding to the emerging situation. We will stand ready to do whatever we can to help Vietnam maintain critical development expenditures,”* Mr. Konishi added.

Delivering the statement on behalf of the European Union, Mr. Hervé Bolot, Ambassador of France, acknowledged the challenges for Vietnam, and emphasized EU’s continuing support saying *“the European Union remains firmly committed to its partnership with Vietnam as a long term partner and friend, through times of turbulence as well as those of prosperity. Our recently-opened negotiations on a new and ambitious Partnership Cooperation Agreement are both proof of this, and also an effective framework for expanding and deepening the partnership together”*

*“While it is important to safeguard Vietnam’s economic progress, from a UN perspective, it is also vital that priority continues to be given to addressing the negative impact the current situation is having on the poor,”* remarked Mr. John Hendra, UN Resident Coordinator in Vietnam. *“This will be critical to ensuring that those Vietnamese families that have left poverty do not fall back into it”.*

Meanwhile, the Head of the UK’s Department for International

Development (DFID) in Vietnam, Ms. Fiona Lappin, reminded participants of continuing the fight against entrenched poverty in the ethnic minority groups, new urban poor and landless farmers. *“Development partners commend the Government’s commitment to keep poverty reduction at the heart of its socio-economic policy, and it is particularly important in times of global economic turmoil to protect social sector spending under the 2009 state budget.”* To advance the fight against poverty, Ms. Lappin added, *“we urge the government to use information more effectively to inform policy making, deliver more unified and cost effective local programs based on past experience, and strengthening safety nets and social protection”.*

Speaking on behalf of the Group of four Ambassadors of Canada, Norway, Switzerland and New Zealand, the Ambassador of New Zealand, Mr. James Kember noted that *“while there are signs of commendable progress in government-mandated programs to improve education, health care, infrastructure, and the position of ethnic minorities, considerable challenges remain to ensure ethnic communities benefit fully from growth.”* He emphasized that *“in our view, ethnic minority groups must be part of the economic solutions for the Central Highlands”* and urged *“the government to intensify efforts to this end”.*

The challenges and opportunities in

health finance reform were also discussed by participants, who noted that spending in health represents a good investment, and called on rapid expansion of health insurance in the country.

### ***Harmonization and Aid Effectiveness***

Partners applauded the rapid adoption of the Accra Agenda of Action by the Vietnamese authorities. During the meeting, the findings of a recent monitoring review of the implementation of the Hanoi Core Statement were shared with participants. The review noted that there was still a need to ensure broader ownership by line ministries and provincial governments of the aid effectiveness agenda. The report also encouraged donors to make greater use of Vietnam's own country systems, and called on the Government to ensure a greater role for civil society in ensuring the monitoring of aid efforts.

*"Vietnam continues to be a shining light internationally because of its commitment to using aid well,"* said Australian Ambassador to Vietnam, Mr. Allaster Cox. *"The question is how can Vietnam make real changes in aid delivery practices at the sectoral and sub-national levels. There are some promising developments, but more has to be done to address the challenges, such as capacity constraints at local levels, improving the consistency in the country systems across ministries, and*

*enabling the civil society to maximize its potential to contribute to Vietnam's development."*

### ***Governance and Institutional Reform***

The Government and donors reviewed the progress made in the fight against corruption and in public administration reform. They agreed a continued dialogue is needed in relation to the role of the media in fighting corruption. Recognizing that overcoming corruption will take time, donors supported concrete steps in the shorter term by the cabinet of Vietnam, and applauded the recent decision to ratify the United Nations convention on corruption.

Speaking on behalf of the development partners, Swedish Ambassador, Mr. Rolf Bergman, stated that *"The Government of Vietnam and development partners agreed that the fight against corruption should be based on zero-tolerance. Further actions must now be taken to reach this goal."* He also reiterated the crucial role of the mass media if this fight is to be brought to successful end. *"The mass media should be encouraged by the Government to play this role."*

Mr. Mitsuo Sakaba, Ambassador of Japan, stressed that *"It is encouraging to see the leaders of the Vietnamese government repeatedly express their strong determination to combat corruption, and Japan would like to urge the Vietnamese government to make continuous efforts to prevent the recurrence of corruption."*

### ***Climate Change: Mitigation and Adaptation***

Participants commended the Governments' rapid development of a National Targeted Programme to Respond to Climate Change, appreciating its recent approval by the Prime Minister. As a multisectoral challenge, well functioning coordination mechanisms remain integral for its successful implementation. To this end, they noted that it remains vital that the establishment of implementation modalities are be addressed quickly, to enable the NTP to become operational as soon as possible.

The Danish Ambassador to Vietnam, Mr. Peter Lysholt Hansen, noted that *"Donors stand ready to commit significant resources to the government Program, through on-budget support; technical assistance and through public investment projects. Donors commit to work towards aligning and strengthening the government systems for implementation of the program and other climate initiatives."*

The Ambassador also emphasized that *"low carbon policies are needed, in e.g. urban development, transportation, housing and industry, and especially important are energy efficiency policies and renewable energy"*.

In his closing remarks, the Vice President of the World Bank in East Asia and Pacific, Mr. James Adams, co chair of the meeting, congratulated the Government of Vietnam for overcoming the various economic challenges of

2008. *"2009 will bring about new and more difficult challenges. But the meeting clearly concluded that Government will be sustaining its efforts at economic and social reforms and that as a result, Vietnam can count on the donor community for continued support."*

Minister of Planning and Investment, Mr. Võ Hồng Phúc, in his final speech, thanked the participants for the frank and constructive dialogue. *"The Government of Vietnam has mapped out various solutions to address the current economic crisis, to stabilize the economy and maintain its growth potential, as well as helping the poor people to overcome the difficulties brought about by the new economic challenges. The Government is also committed to step up the fight against corruption, in order to ensure that Government and donor have a maximum impact on development efforts."*

*"The adoption of the Accra Agenda of Action", the Minister remarked, "shows that the Government of Vietnam wants to play a stronger role in the harmonization agenda and improving aid effectiveness. At the same time, we have approved the national target program on climate change, and are encouraged by the donor community's commitment to assist Vietnam's efforts to tackle the challenges by climate change."*

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