

## INFORMATION

### **The Third Round-Table Seminar on the Twenty-year Renewal**

On 15 and 16 December 2005, in Hanoi, Vietnam Academy for Social Sciences (VASS) in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) organized the Third Round-Table Seminar on reviewing the twenty-year renewal, which was part of the project "Assistance for reviewing the twenty-year renewal in Vietnam". Attending the Seminar included leaders of VASS; Mr. Jordan Ryan - UNDP Permanent Representative in Hanoi; Mrs. Anna Lindsted- Swedish Plenipotentiary Extraordinary Ambassador in Hanoi, representatives of leaders of the Commission for Science and Education of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Hochiminh National Political Academy, the Institute of International Relations, universities, leading international and Vietnamese scholars, researchers, lecturers from the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States, Hong Kong, Australia... and representatives from the mass media. Scholars at the Seminar had a plenary discussion and exchanged views of the twenty-year practice of the renewal drive in Vietnam, giving various inputs to the design of a long-term socio-economic development plan for Vietnam in future. Presentations at the Seminar concentrated on four categories of significant issues for Vietnam, which included the international and regional context; gender and development; rural development and

urbanization; and, the role of the State.

Professor Do Hoai Nam, Chairman of VASS delivered a speech to open the Seminar.

In their welcome remarks to the Seminar, Mr. Jordan Ryan and Mrs. Anna Lindsted affirmed impressive achievements recorded by Vietnam during the renewal process, at the same time pointed at challenges facing Vietnam in the coming time.

Many scholars at the event shared their views with Mr. Jordan Ryan concerning the three transitional periods of Vietnam within about the last thirty years transition from the war to peace time; transition from the centrally-planned regime to the market mechanism; and now, transition from a low-income country to a middle-income country in the on-going five-year period. It is now that Vietnam is entering the fourth transition from the centralized democracy regime to the people's democracy. All scholars held the view that in order to enjoy long-term sustainable growth and to facilitate all Vietnamese to bring their potential into full play, it is right now to start taking into serious account of such issues as globalization, impact of gender imbalance, as well as the widening growth gap between urban and rural areas.

Herman Schwartz, Professor of politics from Virginia University, made a presentation on "Globalization and economic development: A long-term vision". He said that modern states and markets need one and another and are interdependent. To reject the idea saying that market expansion is synonymous with

narrowing the role of the state, Schwartz argued that the history of successful developed nations is the history of those countries promote growth and properly address internal political issues that create obstacles to the industrialization and growth.

As per the public administrative reform in Vietnam, scholars reviewed initial achievements, lessons drawn out and steps to be done in future. Special attention was paid to the presentation delivered by Professor Martin Painter (Hong Kong City University) who analyzed and gave comments on the public administrative reform programme of Vietnam. He cited a number of lessons learned from international models and experiences of other developing countries in the field of public administrative reform.

Scholars from universities in the United States, Britain and Australia presented at the Seminar their profound researches on Vietnam's renewal path in political, social and economic areas. They all affirmed impressive achievements of the last twenty-year renewal and gave numerous advices on the development path ahead of Vietnam, particularly emphasized on how to make achievements of the renewal accessible by all people.

#### *HIEN LY*

##### **The cultural space of the gongs in the Central Highlands of Vietnam - a masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of mankind**

On 25 November 2005, at the headquarters of UNESCO in Paris (the Republic of France), the Director-General of UNESCO proclaimed the cultural space of the gongs in the Central Highlands of Vietnam as a

masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of mankind. As per the spirit of the new Convention, there are two categories of cultural heritage recognized by UNESCO: cultural space and cultural expression. Whatever it is, one to be proclaimed as a masterpiece of the oral and intangible heritage of mankind must demonstrate the six following criteria: 1) possesses outstanding value as a masterpiece of the human creative genius; 2) is rooted in the cultural tradition or cultural history of the community concerned; 3) plays a role as a means of affirming the cultural identity of the community concerned; 4) is distinguished by excellence in the application of skills and technical qualities displayed; 5) constitutes a unique testimony of a living cultural tradition; and 6) is threatened with disappearance due to insufficient means for safeguarding or to processes of rapid change.

Speaking of the Central Highlands is meant to mention the sound of the gongs the divine language, the soul of the population thereat. It expresses either happiness or sadness in the daily life and activities of the people living in this region. As a bronze musical instrument, a gong with a nipple is called as Cong, while a gong without a nipple is stated as Chieng. Though it can not define the age of gongs in the Central Highlands, most of researchers contend that the sound of this musical instrument goes along with the life of minority ethnic groups in the Central Highlands for ages and becomes the blood of the populations living in this region.

The gongs are not made by local craftsmen. They are bought in other places and then tuned to the desired tone for their own use.

One who can readjust the sound of the gongs must be sensitive to music and fully understand the way that sounds are made to spread on the face of the gongs and in the space. Craftsmen in the Central Highlands use two techniques, either striking or mounding, to readjust the gongs in the forms of pangolin scales or curving waves around the central point of every single gong.

The arrangements of the gongs are different from one to another, depending on the way the musical instruments are played. They could be:

- An arrangement of two or three gongs: this arrangement is though small, in the perception of many ethnic groups in the region, it is the most ancient form. A group of two gongs without nipples are known to belong to the Brau ethnic group; while a group of three gongs with nipples are played by Churu, Ban, Giarai, Gie-Trieng ethnic groups.

- An arrangement of six gongs: it is popular among many ethnic groups. A group of six gongs without nipples are played by Ma, Xodang, Gar, Noong, Mnong, Ede ethnic groups. There can be an arrangement of six gongs with nipples played by Ede ethnic group. Interestingly, the arrangement of six gongs without nipples can be played as the one of six gongs with nipples played by Ede and Mnong ethnic groups.

- An arrangement of eleven or twelve gongs, of which three are gongs with nipples and eight or nine gongs without nipples, played by Giarai (Arap branch), Ban (Tolo, Kon Deh branches), Xodang (Steng) ethnic groups.

The arrangement of three or more gongs without nipples is normally included a drum and cymbals. For the arrangement of

three gongs with nipples played by the Churu ethnic group, there must be a six-sound pan-pine.

Most of the gong players in the Central Highlands are men, even though Ede and Giarai ethnic groups are practicing matriarchy or Bana and Xodang ethnic groups are following both matriarchy and patriarchy. For the Bih branch belonging to Ede ethnic group, only women can play gongs; while in Ma ethnic group, both sexes can play gongs without nipples, but divided into two separate male and female arrangements.

Additionally, in many ethnic groups such as Churu, Xodang, Mnong and particularly Giarai and Bana, there is a group of women (especially girls) dancers to play with gong music. It is worthy to say that these dances are considered indispensable components in playing with gongs (they are never performed separately with gongs or for the purpose of recreation).

Gongs are musical instruments of ceremonies. Gong music are first and foremost played to meet the requirement of the ceremony and considered as an organic component of rituals. Thus, there is a specific gong music played for a ritual. Furthermore, gongs are also played in community activities, such as: new house celebrations, health wishes, mourning rites, harvest celebrations, the ritual sacrifice of bullocks, etc.

The culture and music of the gongs in the Central Highlands demonstrate the creative genius as a masterpiece of mankind. The gongs also play the role as a means to consolidate the community character and identity of minority ethnic communities in

the Central Highlands who know how to play by excellence the gongs in their own culture.

As such, among ninety heritages of countries around the world have been proclaimed by UNESCO as masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritages of mankind, Vietnam possesses two, which are the Royal Court Music and the Space of gong culture in the Central Highlands.

*HOANG NGAN*  
(summarized)

**Vietnam possesses the richest biodiversity in the world**

Vietnam is internationally recognized as one of the countries having the richest biodiversity in the world, which is characterized by different types of forest, wetland, rivers and streams, range of coral..., creating a living environment for about ten percent of international birds and wildlife.

Vietnam has been identified by the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) to have three of more than two hundred globally ecological areas; by the International Birdlife (Birdlife) to possess one of five important bird areas; by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) to have six botanical diversity centers.

Still, Vietnam is one of the eight “seeding and breeding centers” of various plants and animals, including tens of breeding species of animals and poultry. Especially, the rich source of rice and potatoes, which are

considered to originate in Vietnam, are the inputs for the improvement of rice species and other food plants in the world.

The ecosystem in Vietnam is very rich, covering 11,458 species of animals, more than 21,000 botanical species and approximately 3,000 organisms, including those exploited as genetic inputs.

Over the last thirty years, many new species of animals and plants have been added to the list of species in Vietnam, such as five new animal species including saolas, Truong Son muntjac, rhinoceros; three new species of bird Ngoc Linh laughing-thrush, Kon Ka Kinh laughing-thrush...; about 420 species of fish and seven sea animals. Many other species of reptile, amphibian and invertebrate animals have been discovered.

Relating to botany, from 1993 to 2002, scientists discovered two new families, nineteen branches and more than seventy species. Discovery is especially high with the orchid family.

In an attempt to protect and preserve the ecosystem, over the last years, Vietnam has increased its investments in programmes and projects for biological protection. According to Vietnam Environment Report 2005, the total investments in the protection of biodiversity in 2005 stood at approximately 51.8 million USD, ten folds against that of the last decade.

*(Vietnam News Agency)*