

Tour of Ngoc Lam Pagoda and Signing of PEPFAR Agreement

Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
Vietnamese Minister of Justice Ha Hung Cuong
Hanoi, Vietnam
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SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you very much. Thank you Justice Minister Hung Cuong. And please, everyone, sit down if you have seats to sit in and maybe pull in the chairs that are not yet taken. There's more spaces to sit.

I am so pleased and honored to be here in this place of calm and rest and healing in the midst of such a busy, historic city. And I'm very glad to be able to sign the partnership framework which will support the joint efforts of Vietnam and the United States to fight and to end one of the worst epidemics facing humankind today – HIV and AIDS. My country is proud to be a partner and supporter of the work you are doing here at Ngoc Lam Pagoda, the daycare you provide for children living with or orphaned by AIDS, the HIV counseling and the outreach done through the Bright Futures Network.

What we see here is the kind of comprehensive response that this disease demands. The effects of AIDS are devastating and far-reaching. AIDS targets those who are often in the prime of their life, leaving children without parents; schools without teachers; hospitals without nurses; fields without farmers. It weakens economies, creates instability, and threatens long-term progress, and it causes families to lose loved ones and nations to lose their potential.

But the work here at Ngoc Lam proves that we have the power to respond effectively to this epidemic if we combine our knowledge of what works with our commitment and our compassion. And it's especially important to stress compassion, as the monk was just telling me that is, of course, one of the primary tenets of Buddhism, and it is especially important today.

The AIDS epidemic is global and demands a global response. And here in Vietnam, through PEPFAR, the United States is providing life-saving AIDS treatment, medication assisted therapy, and critical health services. We are also supporting government programs, like what your ministry of health is doing, to strengthen services to prevent mother-to-child transmission. And we are supporting the work of groups like Bright Futures Network because of the compassionate care it offers.

The United States is proud of this work, but now we want to take it to the next level, to transition from emergency measures to help Vietnam with building an enduring health system. And the framework we find today provides a roadmap. We are committed to working with many people from many walks of life, from government, business, civil society, religion, and engaged citizens to help Vietnam create and carry out a comprehensive strategy for fighting the AIDS epidemic. We know that Vietnam is working on its own unique health program, and we applaud what Vietnam is doing to intensify its campaign against AIDS.

Our partnership has the potential to combat the spread of HIV and extend the life of those living with AIDS. And this collaboration could provide a model that could perhaps be used even by other countries.

This year, as Hanoi celebrates its millennium, our two nations recognize 15 years of diplomatic relations, and cooperating on health is one of the cornerstones of this relationship. This agreement demonstrates how we together can make a meaningful difference in the lives of people.

So thank you, Minister. Thank your government. President Obama and I look forward to working with the government and people of Vietnam in the years to come.

Thank you. (Applause.)

JUSTICE MINISTER HA HUNG CUONG: (In Vietnamese.) (Applause.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: Thank you so much.

JUSTICE MINISTER HA HUNG CUONG: (Inaudible.)

SECRETARY CLINTON: Oh, my pleasure, thank you.

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