

## UPDATE

January – March 2006



*Above: USABC/USVTC Senior Executives Trade Mission delegation met with Prime Minister Phan Van Khai on March 11, 2006. US Ambassador to Vietnam Michael W. Marine also attended the meeting.*

### **USABC/USVTC Senior Executives Trade Mission to Vietnam – March 8 to 11**

The U.S.-ASEAN Business Council and U.S.-Vietnam Trade Council conducted a Senior Executive Trade Mission to Vietnam to discuss priority issue areas affecting U.S. businesses and Vietnam's accession to the WTO. The mission was particularly timely; coming ahead of Vietnam's planned WTO multilateral negotiations and bilateral negotiations with the U.S. in Geneva in late March 2006. During their visits to Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, mission participants met with members of Vietnam's leadership including the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Industry, Minister of Planning & Investment, Vice Minister of Trade, Minister and Vice Minister of Foreign

### **UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS**

*(See Page 4 for further details)*

Congressional Delegation to Vietnam led by House Speaker Dennis Hastert – April 14-17

Launch of US-Vietnam WTO Business Coalition – April 2006

Affairs, Vice Minister of Finance, two key National Assembly Delegates, Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Ho Chi Minh People's Committee, as well as other senior officials. The 39 delegates represented a broad cross section of industries and the following companies: ACE Group, AIG, Alticor, Anheuser-Busch, Boeing Company, Cargill, Citigroup, Diageo, FedEx Express, Ford, GE, GlaxoSmithKline, JHPIEGO, J. Ray McDermott, JP Morgan Chase, Oracle, Phillip Morris, Time Warner, Unisys, UPS and United Technologies Corporation.

In addition to discussing specific issues of individual company's concern, the delegates forwarded to Vietnam's leadership their shared messages on Vietnam's WTO negotiations, PNTR, and plans for APEC 2006 in Vietnam. The mission was received at the highest level and generated very substantial news coverage in both the local and foreign press.

### **Meeting with Deputy PM Nguyen Tan Dung – March 15 (Hanoi)**

In follow-up to the USABC/USVTC Senior Executives Trade Mission to Vietnam, Virginia B. Foote met with Deputy Prime

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affiliate of the US-ASEAN Business Council

Minister Nguyen Tan Dung to discuss outstanding issues of WTO accession.

### **The US-ASEAN Business Council chairs the US-APEC Business Coalition**

As Vietnam hosts APEC in November, the US-ASEAN Business Council assumes the Chair of the US-APEC Business Coalition for the year 2006. Founded in support of the APEC process, the US-APEC Business Coalition brings together the leading U.S. business associations including the Council of the Americas, National Center for APEC, US-ASEAN Business Council, US-Asia Pacific Council, US Chamber of Commerce, US-China Business Council and US-Japan Business Council, US Council for International Business and several other organizations. The Coalition will work on the CEO Summit and additional programs during the year-long activities of APEC 06.

APEC Website: The Council is pleased to announce our APEC website, which provides updated information on APEC 2006 themes, events and logistics in Vietnam and planned involvement by the US business community. You may access the website at: <http://www.us-asean.org/APEC/>.

### **Update on Vietnam's WTO Accession**

During the first few months of 2006, Vietnam closed bilateral WTO negotiations with New Zealand, Australia, Honduras, and the Dominican Republic. The only remaining countries are Mexico and the United States.

In January, the U.S. negotiation team, led by Assistant USTRs Dorothy Dvoskin and Barbara Weisel, met with their Vietnamese counterparts in Hanoi for the 10<sup>th</sup> round of bilateral WTO talks. On March 19, Vietnam's WTO Working Party convened in Geneva for a new round of multilateral and bilateral negotiations. Excellent progress was made in both the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> rounds.

To provide members with the latest updates from the negotiations, USVTC/USABC, in partnership with the American Chamber of Commerce, organized briefing sessions by the USTR WTO negotiation team for member companies in Hanoi on January 17 and 18. In Washington D.C., the Council also organized briefings for our members on February 10 and on April 6 after the January

and March rounds of bilateral and multilateral negotiations.



*Above: Tom O'Dore, Chairman of AmCham Hanoi, welcomes the U.S. WTO negotiating team to Hanoi during a briefing meeting with US companies, which was held on the sidelines of the 10<sup>th</sup> round of US-VN bilateral talks on WTO (January 17).*

### **U.S. Congressional Delegations Visit Vietnam**

House Speaker Hastert and a delegation of 9 members of Congress and 10 staffers will visit Vietnam in April during the Spring recess (see page 4). In January 2006, Congressman Paul E. Gillmor (R-OH), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Environment and Hazardous Materials, under the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, led a delegation from the U.S. House of Representatives to Hanoi and HCMC for a two day visit. The delegation included the Rep. Jerry F. Costello(D-IL), Rep. Sam Johnson (R-TX), Rep. Kay Granger (R-TX), Rep. Dennis J. Kucinich (D-OH), Rep. Greg Walden (R-OR), Rep. Bobby Jindal (R-LA), Mr. Chris Walker, Ms. Rachel Perry, Mr Mark Wellman, Rev. Daniel P. Coughlin, Ms. Martha Morrison, Mr. Steve Rusnak and Mr. Eric Stocky.

### **Roundtable Discussion with Delegation from Vietnam's National Assembly – February 28 (Washington, DC)**

USVTC/USABC organized a roundtable for member companies to meet with visiting delegation from Vietnam's National Assembly, led by Vice President Nguyen Van Yeu and including Madame Ton Nu Thi Ninh and Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Le Bang. The delegation

spoke with an audience of member company representatives and US government officials about the status of Vietnam's WTO accession and requested US public and private sector support for a PNTR vote in the US Congress. US company representatives raised specific issues and promised support for PNTR.

### **Vietnam Investment Forum "Accessing Post-WTO Investment Opportunities" – March 15 to 16 (Hanoi)**

USVTC President, Virginia B. Foote, participated as a panel speaker at the Vietnam Investment Forum co-hosted by the Ministry of Planning and Investment and Euromoney Conferences. One of the biggest investment gatherings ever held in Vietnam, the Forum brought together 1,300 business and financial executives from Vietnam and 22 foreign countries to discuss investment opportunities in Vietnam.

## **Technical Assistance Updates**

### **WTO Accession**

#### **Technical Assistance on WTO Bilateral and Multilateral Negotiations (On-going)**

The Council continues to provide support through issuing technical memos on specific trade issues and on the PNTR process. The Vietnam WTO Issues Paper, which highlights the country's achievements and details the remaining concerns of U.S. businesses, was updated in March 2006. This paper was forwarded to Vietnam's WTO negotiators and government leaders. In addition, the Trade Council, in cooperation with Phillips Fox, has been assisting Vietnam's Ministry of Justice by providing English translations of all BTA implementation and WTO-related laws. *Our newly formatted Catalogue of Legal Updates will be available later this month.*

### **International Trade Law Training**

#### **Publication and Distribution of a Premier Textbook on International Trade Law – March 2 to 3 (Hanoi & HCMC)**

The Ministry of Justice, Hanoi Law University, HCMC Law University and the US-Vietnam Trade Council were pleased to formally announce the translation, publication and distribution of the premier international trade

law textbook, "International Trade Law: Theory and Practice" by Professor Raj Bhala. This book provides in-depth analysis and case studies of core international trade law issues. Vice Minister of Justice Hoang The Lien, Professor Doctor Le Minh Tam - Dean of Hanoi Law University and Madame Mai Hong Quy - Vice Rector of the HCMC University of Law, joined in announcing the publication at ceremonies held in Hanoi on March 2<sup>nd</sup> and in Ho Chi Minh City on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. 300 books were distributed to law schools throughout Vietnam, as well as a number of government offices and private training programs.



*Above: Mdm. Mai Hong Quy - Vice Rector of the HCMC University of Law and Virginia Foote announce the publication of Prof. Raj Bhala's textbook on March 3, 2006 in HCMC*

#### **Roundtable Discussion with Vietnamese Delegation on Standards Initiative Orientation Visit to the U.S. – March 17**

USABC/USVTC organized a roundtable discussion for member companies with a delegation of government officials studying standards policy and initiatives in the United States. Members of the U.S. private sector shared their perspectives and experiences on how standards and conformity assessment policies can act as trade barriers. This TDA-funded study mission brought to the U.S. a team of senior Vietnamese Government officials preparing for the drafting of Vietnam's new standards legislation, expected to be submitted to the National Assembly in its May 2006 session.

#### **2<sup>nd</sup> Annual East West Economic Corridor Conference – March 27 to 28 (HCMC)**

The USVTC was pleased to support the Asia Development Bank (ADB) in its efforts to add private sector to its the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual East West Economic Corridor Conference, which was held in Ho Chi Minh City on

March 27 and 28<sup>th</sup>. The audience included 130 attendees - 90 from the private sector and another 40 senior officials from the Greater Mekong Sub-region specialized in transport, customs and policy

### **Upcoming Highlights**

#### **Congressional Delegation to Vietnam led by House Speaker Dennis Hastert – April 14-17 (Vietnam)**

A Congressional delegation, led by U.S. House Speaker Dennis Hastert, will be visiting Vietnam during their 2006 Spring Recess. The visit to Vietnam, where the group will meet with Chairman of the National Assembly Nguyen Van An and Prime Minister Phan Van Khai, is the last leg of the group's program, which also includes visits to Greece, India and Nepal. The delegation includes the following eight representatives, their spouses and staff: Rep. Dennis Hastert (R-IL), Rep. Michael Oxley (R- OH), Rep. Sherwood Boehlert (R-NY), Rep. Frank Lucas (R- OK), Rep. Ray LaHood (R- IL), Rep. Paul Ryan (R- WI), Rep. Randy Neugebauer (R- TX), Rep. Dan Boren (D- OK).

#### **Launching of the US-Vietnam WTO Business Coalition – April 2006**

In anticipation of the conclusion of bilateral WTO negotiations between the U.S. and Vietnam, the Council is working with the American business community to form a U.S. - Vietnam WTO Business Coalition. The Coalition will be the lead coordinating body to support the U.S. granting of Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) status to Vietnam and Vietnam's accession to WTO. Membership of the Coalition is free and open to any American company or business/trade association that supports Vietnam's PNTR and its accession to the WTO.

In the meantime, the Council has been arranging meetings with key Congressional staff from the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Finance Committee to build support for a vote on Vietnam's PNTR. The Council's memos on PNTR for Vietnam have been circulated among Congressional members and their

staff, trade associations and U.S. companies.

#### **WITA Event “Vietnam: From BTA to WTO Membership” – April 12 (Washington)**

The Washington International Trade Association and the USVTC are working together to organize this WITA Diplomatic Series, presented by FedEx Express and featuring the Honorable Vu Dang Dzung, Deputy Chief of Mission, Minister Counselor. Mr. Dzung will speak about the development of Vietnam as a U.S. trading partner, tracing the country's ascent - from conclusion of the U.S.-Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement to the country's pending accession to the World Trade Organization.