



Ford Foundation



**Ministry of Natural Resources
and Environment**



**The U.S. - Vietnam Trade Council
Education Forum**

Conference Report

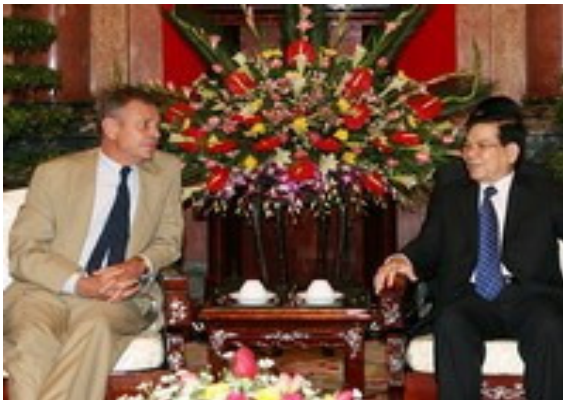
Climate Change: Innovations in Public-Private Partnerships with Global Economic Uncertainty

Sheraton Hotel
Hanoi - October 14-15, 2008

Conference Mission:

Of all countries in East Asia, Vietnam is projected to experience the most severe effects from rising sea levels due to climate change – the coastline and river deltas could see dramatic flooding, population displacement and GDP threatened. In this difficult time for the global economy, can climate change be tackled with new technology and innovation?

Understanding climate change and its full impact is an enormous challenge for all countries, but for nations such as Vietnam and other countries of Southeast Asia, geography places them at the forefront of potentially disastrous environmental events. With support from the Ford Foundation, the U.S.-Vietnam Trade Council Education Forum, in co-operation with the Vietnam Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE), as well as the Network for Social Society Organizations on Climate Change and the Vietnam Forum of Environmental Journalists, held a two-day conference to promote dialogue on visionary leadership, and business and civil society solutions to address climate change. The conference focused on actions private corporations can take to reduce the effects of climate change, as well as policy incentives through carbon credits and tax policies and the integral role of the Vietnamese government in promoting such measures.



Speakers:

- Mr. Tran Hong Ha – Vice Minister, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment
- Mr. Peter Goldmark – Director, Environmental Defense Fund
- Dr. Nguyen Huu Ninh, Chairman of the Center for Education Research and Environment Development
- Dr. Tran Thuc – Director General, Vietnam Institute of Meteorology, Hydrology and Climate Change
- Mr. Kevin O'Donnell – Regional Environmental Engineering Manager, NIKE

Objectives:

The conference promoted dialogue on visionary leadership and showcased business and civil society solutions to address greenhouse gas mitigation, adaptation, climate resilience, forest carbon and clean technology. The conference broadened people's knowledge of the economic, social and environmental implications of climate change and to expand the dialogue by highlighting successful

public-private partnerships. To achieve this objective, special attention was given to highlighting the main messages in the mass media and repeating these messages in closed-door meetings with high-ranking GVN officials including President Nguyen Minh Triet.

Outcomes:

Over 200 representatives of government, business, academia, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and media sectors participated in the unprecedented two-day event, which was held at the Sheraton Hanoi Hotel. Minister of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) Mr. Tran Hong Ha opened the conference. Dr. Nguyen Huu Ninh, Chairman of the Center for Education Research and Environment Development and member of the Nobel Prize Winning International Panel on Climate Change, gave a unique overview of the vulnerabilities, adaptation and resilience to climate change in Vietnam including reference to Karl Marx. Vietnam Institute of Meteorology, Hydrology and Climate Change Director General Dr. Tran Thuc presented an overview of the Vietnam National Target Program to Respond to Climate Change (NTP). Mr. Peter Goldmark, Director of the Environmental Defense Fund Climate and Air Program gave an expert's address about the international science and politics of climate change and how Viet Nam may be well-positioned to be a key country in slowing down the *Global Express Train*.

Panel discussions featuring 27 international and Vietnamese speakers covered a range of climate change issues, including: the GVN strategy for climate change, the effects of climate change on Vietnam, how climate change will affect the future of modern civilization as we know it; how to shift to the low carbon economy, mobilizing private sector carbon finance to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, opportunities to develop sustainable energy and forest carbon initiatives, climate adaptation, mobilizing NGO and civil society action, and the integral role of the Vietnamese government in promoting such measures. Conference participants and speakers alike shared valuable information throughout the two-day event.

An ongoing constructive outcome will be the continued correspondence and support through a framework of an informal network to continue tackling the issues addressed at the conference. This includes the development of informal and formal networks in the private sector in Hanoi and HCMC, as well as NGO-Private, NGO-NGO and NGO-media partnerships. Another achievement from the conference was instilling a sense of camaraderie and ensuring ongoing efforts are reached on climate change among participants and speakers alike. With recent feedback from several participants the sharing of knowledge and expertise is being transferred.

The conference attracted great interest in the press corps and news media outlets. Vietnam News Agency gave the conference extensive news coverage and Vietnam Television broadcasted clips of the conference twice on national television during prime time evening news. Also, numerous articles were published in a variety of newspapers throughout Vietnam.



Following the conference Mr. Goldmark paid a visit to the President of Vietnam, H.E. Nguyen Minh Triet. President Triet welcomed Mr. Goldmark and U.S. organizations involvement on climate change issues and reiterated that Vietnam is one of several countries to suffer the worst effects caused by climate change. President Triet affirmed the Vietnamese government's efforts on promoting campaigns to raise people's awareness about climate change and environmental protection and Vietnam's ongoing active participation in international conventions on climate change.

After Mr. Goldmark's trip to Hanoi he traveled to Ho Chi Minh City for a day where he visited with prominent business leaders and civic organizations to discuss the importance of climate change

initiatives and the impact these groups have on mitigation and adaptation responses to their operations.

Lessons Learned:

Through engagement, dialogue and discourse, the Climate Change Conference fostered an intimate atmosphere of professional like-minded individuals and organizations bridging the public and private sectors. The conference cultivated a real purpose to enhance a deeper understanding of the critical issues to climate change from mitigation to adaptation. With the full participation of the Vietnamese government, Vietnamese civil society, foreign organizations and experts interest among the varying parties came together to offer salient solutions and guidance on climate change initiatives.

Follow-up:

USVTCEF and the Environmental Defense Fund are cooperating with relevant Vietnamese ministries and government offices in assessing appropriate follow-up activities stemming from conference discussions. The process has highlighted several key opportunities and challenges for Vietnam and possible next steps.

Opportunities & Challenges

- Rules of climate change are about to change with the recent election in the U.S.
- Time is running out on nature's clock – situation worse than understood and we have less time.
- There will be winners and losers. Vietnam is currently in an excellent position: low present emissions, energy self-sufficiency, and food-self-sufficiency.
- Vietnam needs to adjust its growth plan to be high-efficient/low carbon – before it builds a vast, old-style infrastructure.
- Vietnam can propose a “docking station” position in the global carbon deal that will allow it to earn early carbon credits and possibly access to new technologies.

Next Steps

- To continue and expand their work together in Vietnam and to prepare a three-year action plan for discussion with partners and with donors.
- To focus on gaps in the response to climate change in Viet Nam and which meet these criteria:
 - Priorities of top government officials and experts in Vietnam and are at present lacking or under-developed in Viet Nam's response to climate change.
 - Have potential to produce double benefits to Vietnam's economic development and to reduce the factors that drive climate change damage.
 - Complement the well-developed response underway in Vietnam to the adaptation aspect of climate change.
 - Continuing broad inquiry and consultation on Vietnam's mitigation component. Likely core topics are:
 1. Energy security/independence.
 2. Agricultural methods that engage and increase income of poor farmers.
- A study tour and technical assistance targeting key Vietnamese partners who can take leadership on climate change issues. (President Triet's recommendation).
- To organize two or more events during 2009 that already have been encouraged by high-level officials and by dialogue at and around the October conference by a wide cross-section of junior and senior participants from private and public sectors in Viet Nam.

1. A workshop/seminar with National Assembly Member Ambassador Ngo Quang Xuan on the Copenhagen Consensus and the revision of the Kyoto Protocol.
2. A conference for foreign investors on their solutions to climate change and the impact they can have in the process.

The conference laid excellent groundwork with Vietnamese government counterparts, which include the President's Office, the National Assembly, the Ministry of Natural Resources & the Environment, the Ministry of Planning & Investment, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Agriculture & Rural Development. It also provided contacts with both Vietnamese and foreign companies, investment funds, journalists, Vietnamese civil society and scientific groups.

For further information pertaining to the conference and those interested in continuing the ongoing dialogue should contact the U.S.-Vietnam Trade Council Education Forum and its educational affiliate at <http://www.usvtc.org> or please contact Mr. Robert Schiffer, USVTC – EF Chief Executive Officer (schifferrl@hotmail.com) or Ms. Thuy Nguyen, Program Associate (thuy.nguyen@usvtc.org).

Co-organizers

Vietnam Network for Civil Society on Climate Change		Vietnam Forum of Environmental Journalists
--	---	---