



Vietnam Formalizes Religious Freedom Agreement

10 September 2006

Hanoi, Vietnam: On the heels of the APEC finance ministers' meeting in Hanoi this week, Vietnam has demonstrated its increasing openness about issues of religious freedom through several concrete steps. First, Vietnam hosted a delegation of American evangelical pastors and businessmen for meetings with governmental and religious leaders in the Central and Northwest Highlands from 30 August to 6 September. The delegation witnessed first-hand the progress made in implementing recent religious freedom laws in provinces with significant histories of religious persecution.

Second, Vietnam has successfully concluded a groundbreaking conference, "Beginning the Conversation: Religion and the Rule of Law in Southeast Asia," held from 8-9 September in Hanoi. This conference convened experts from within Southeast Asia and abroad, addressing comparative approaches to regulating religion through the rule of law. The event was cosponsored by the Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences, the Vietnam-USA Society (VUS), the Institute for Global Engagement (IGE), the International Center for Law and Religion Studies at Brigham Young University, and the Center for the Study of Law and Religion at Emory University.

Both steps are the culmination of a July 2005 signed agreement between IGE and VUS to deepen people-to-people diplomacy between the U.S. and Vietnam and promote sustainable religious freedom in Vietnam.

This agreement was formalized on 9 September, when IGE and VUS signed a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) to further promote religious freedom in the context of U.S.-Vietnam relations. This MOU will establish an annual conference series on religion and rule of law; partnerships between Vietnamese and American communities through which to promote socioeconomic development; exchanges of analysis on religious discrimination reports; and dialogue between governmental and religious representatives on Vietnam's religious freedom laws.

About the Institute

The Institute for Global Engagement (IGE) promotes sustainable environments for religious freedom worldwide. As a faith-based organization, IGE believes firmly in universal human dignity and is committed to the protection of all faiths through the rule of law. IGE encourages governments to respect their citizens' right to religious freedom and educates people of faith to exercise that right responsibly. Operating at the nexus of faith, culture, security, development, and the rule of law, IGE's relational diplomacy—currently focused on East and Central Asia—enables respectful dialogue and practical agreements that help transition countries toward sustainable religious freedom. IGE also works to equip all people who care about the world with a holistic perspective that combines top-down (strategic) and bottom-up (grassroots) views on the global relevance of religion.

For more information, please contact the Institute at +1.703.527.3100 or go to <http://www.globalengage.org>. IGE is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization registered as a 501(c)3 in the United States.
