

OPENING REMARKS BY
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS PHAM BINH MINH AT THE HIGH-
LEVEL EURO-ASIA REGIONAL MEETING ON IMPROVING COOPERATION ON TRANSIT, TRADE
FACILITATION
AND THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Ha Noi, 7 March 2017

Excellencies,

Distinguished participants, dear friends,

On behalf of the Government of Viet Nam, I welcome you all to Ha Noi from across Asia and Europe, UN agencies and many international and regional organizations. I hope you will have a pleasant stay and have the time to explore the history, beauty and culture that Ha Noi has to offer.

Viet Nam is pleased to host, in collaboration with the United Nations, this important High-Level Meeting, to discuss ways to assist landlocked developing countries (or LLDCs) and transit countries in enhancing regional connectivity and deepening their participation in global value chains so as to ensure sustainable development.

Distinguished participants,

We have entered 2017 with a great deal of uncertainties. A slow global economic recovery, a downturn in international trade and the rise of globalization skepticism pose daunting challenges to many countries.

2017 is also the second year of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - an ambitious, transformative and holistic development agenda of the people, for the people and by the people. It is an agenda supported by a revitalized Global Partnership for Sustainable Development and guided by the principles of equity, of common but differentiated responsibilities, and of leaving no one and no country behind.

Viet Nam is fully committed to the 2030 Agenda and is a strong champion of partnerships. We believe that enhanced international co-operation and multi-stakeholder engagement are crucial to help all countries, including transit countries and landlocked developing countries (or LLDCs), overcome our own challenges and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. We also firmly believe that partnership and cooperation on the basis of mutual respect and benefits between LLDCs and transit countries remains the path to a future of shared prosperity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Through our experience of over 30 years of reform and international integration, we have come to fully appreciate that trade and investment facilitation is critical to economic growth and poverty alleviation. Viet Nam's membership in the WTO, ASEAN, APEC and our participation in various Free Trade Agreements, including the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, have given our goods better and easier access to global markets. This contributed immensely to the achievement of our socio-economic goals and most Millennium Development Goals.

While blessed with a 3,000-kilometer-long coastline, Viet Nam also has mountainous and remote areas that face difficulties in infrastructure and economic linkages. As such, we can, to a certain extent, appreciate the challenges LLDCs face due to their geographical disadvantages. Viet Nam has always made it one of our highest priorities to foster relations with our neighbouring countries, including strong economic linkages. We believe the success and prosperity of our neighbors will have a positive multiplier effect on our own development, and help advance the sustainable development of the whole region.

Viet Nam has taken concrete steps to strengthen economic linkages and infrastructure connectivity with our neighbours, especially with our only LLDC brother, the Lao PDR, both

bilaterally and regionally.

Viet Nam is working closely with other countries in the Lower Mekong Basin to develop economic corridors in order to link remote regions with international seaports. The East – West Economic Corridor aims to connect inland provinces of Myanmar, Northern Thailand, Lao PDR and the Central of Viet Nam with both the Pacific and Indian Oceans, as part of the ASEAN Connectivity Master Plan. Another flagship project of ASEAN is the ASEAN Single Window live operation, which aims to expedite cargo clearance and facilitate cross-border movement of goods.

Bilaterally, Lao PDR and Viet Nam have put in place the Single-Stop Inspection model at Lao Bao – Dansavanh border checkpoint on the East-West Economic Corridor and will apply this model at all border check points between the two countries. Our two countries are also cooperating to enable Laos's access to Vung Ang Sea Port on the coast of Viet Nam as a gateway to ASEAN and the international market. Lao PDR and Vietnam have agreed to build the Vientiane-Hanoi highway to further facilitate the regional trade flow. In this regard, we greatly appreciate Japan and ADB for their supports and call on other development partners to join our efforts in transit infrastructure development.

Distinguished participants,

This year marks 40 years of Viet Nam's membership in the United Nations. The United Nations have helped Viet Nam achieve important social and economic progress. I take this opportunity to thank the United Nations the past forty years of invaluable support and cooperation, and look forward to our continued partnership for sustainable development.

On our part, Viet Nam has done its best to contribute to the work of the UN over the last four decades, and we plan to do more. We are pleased to organize this Meeting to deliberate on issues relevant not only to Viet Nam, to the LLDCs and transit countries in the Euro-Asia region, but also to the entire UN membership that is taking action on the global development agenda. We need to take bold and transformative steps to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path. Let us work together to help turn land-locked countries into land-linked countries, to move forward together and truly leave no one behind.

I wish you a successful and fruitful Meeting.

Thank you.