

remarks, he referred to White House Executive Chef Cristeta Comerford.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung of Vietnam

June 24, 2008

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, welcome to the Oval Office. I fondly remember my trip to your country. I remember the wonderful hospitality that you and your Government gave to Laura and me. I remember the thousands of people lining the street in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, and it was just a memorable trip. So it's my honor to welcome you back here.

We had a good dialogue. We talked about economic cooperation, and we talked about educational cooperation. We talked about the need to work together on the environment. I thanked the Prime Minister for his work on accounting for the POWs and MIAs. We discussed the neighborhood and the region. We talked about the freedoms—religious and political freedom. And I told the Prime Minister that I thought the strides that the Government is making toward religious freedom is noteworthy, and I appreciated the efforts that he and his Government are making.

All in all, we had a very good discussion. Our relationship with Vietnam is getting closer, in a spirit of respect. And I thank you for coming to help make that relationship even stronger. Welcome.

Prime Minister Dung. Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank you, Mr. President and American friends, for your warm hospitality.

I would like to tell you that Mr. President and I have just had successful talks in a friendly, constructive, and understanding spirit. And we took note, with great pleasure, of rapid development in the Vietnam-U.S. relationship toward a friendly and constructive partnership, multifaceted

cooperation on the basis of equality, mutual respect, and mutual benefit. We agreed with each other on a wide range of issues, which will be fully reflected in our adjoined statement.

And now I would like to give you some highlights of our conversation. Mr. President and I agreed to establish a new dialogue mechanism at the senior level on the strategic matters of economics, education, environment, science, defense, and security. And President Bush reiterated his support for Vietnam's sovereignty, security, and territorial integrity.

We agreed to establish a high-level education task force to effectively advance the education cooperation between our two countries. The two sides also agreed to set up a new subcommittee to assist Vietnam in conducting researches to respond to the climate change and the rising sea level.

And President Bush reaffirmed that the U.S. is actively reviewing Vietnam's request to join the GSP program and acknowledged Vietnam's request to be accorded the market economy status. The U.S. is also considering the import of fruits from Vietnam. Also, the two sides agreed to commence negotiations on a bilateral investment treaty.

Both sides also agreed to strengthen cooperation to address humanitarian issues left over by the war, such as the American MIA issue, mine clearing, remediation of the Agent Orange consequences, the Vietnamese MIA issue.

Ladies and gentlemen, my visit to the U.S. this time is the follow-up of the foreign policy of independence and

sovereignty, diversification and multilateralization of our external relations. Vietnam wants to be friends with all country and trusted partners with all nations and nationalities in the international community. And along that line, with—Vietnam will continue to strengthen the fine relationship between Vietnam and the United States under the framework defined by the two countries' leaders.

I hope that with the fruitful outcome of my visit, the Vietnam-U.S. relationship

will be elevated to new heights in the interest of both peoples, of peace, stability, and development cooperation in the region and the world.

Thank you, Mr. President.

President Bush. Thank you. Yes, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:53 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Prime Minister Dung spoke in Vietnamese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks Honoring 2007 and 2008 NCAA Championship Teams *June 24, 2008*

Thank you all. Please be seated. Welcome to the White House. It is an honor to be here with so many fine student athletes now known as national champs.

It seems like the South Lawn is a fitting place to hold champions day. After all, we have a swimming pool, a tennis court, a running track, a putting green, and a basketball court, just in case any of our athletes here want to squeeze in a little friendly competition. *[Laughter]*

I appreciate the fact that you showed incredible discipline, skill, perseverance. It's hard to become a champ, and that's why we love to honor people here at the White House when you become one. And one of the things I tell people is, is that if you work hard and become a repeat champion, I look forward to welcoming you back to the White House. However, this time around it's not going to work. My eligibility has run out. *[Laughter]* But I do wish you all the very best. So the next President can welcome you to the White House, but in the meantime, we're going to honor the folks here today.

I welcome the members of the Cabinet. Mr. Secretary, thanks for coming. Members of Congress, thank you all for being here;

United States Senators, United States Congressmen, student athletes, coaches, school officials, and fans.

Today we honor 20 teams from 15 campuses in 13 States. These athletes excelled from tee boxes in California to ski slopes in Colorado to parallel bars in Oklahoma to bowling alleys on Maryland's Eastern Shore. You're represented by a wide variety of mascots: the Orange and the Golden Bears; the Hawks, the Eagles, and the Ducks; the Bruins, the Buckeyes, and two different types of Bulldogs. Despite these differences, you all share the right to call—be called champs, a title you'll keep for the rest of your life.

We have two first-time champions here today: UCLA women's tennis and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore women bowling Hawks. We have two teams that have spent a long time waiting to reclaim their national crowns. The University of Oregon men's cross country team brought the national title to Eugene for the first time in 30 years. I know you're proud, Senator. And the UCLA men's golf Bruins earned their first national championship in 20 years.