

## Remarks Following a Meeting With Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phú Trọng of Vietnam July 7, 2015

*General Secretary Trong.* And again, let me invite you to visit Vietnam, together with the First Lady. [Laughter]

*President Obama.* As you heard, I got an invitation to Vietnam. And I think this is indicative of the remarkable progress that's taken place in the relationship between our two countries over the last 20 years.

I want to welcome General Secretary Trong to the Oval Office for his first visit to the United States during this 20-year anniversary of the normalization of relations between the United States and Vietnam.

Obviously, there has been a difficult history between our two countries in the 20th century. And there continue to be significant differences in political philosophy and political systems between our two countries. But because, I think, of the efforts of leaders in both parties here in the United States, as well as the leadership in Vietnam over successive years, what we've seen is the emergence of a constructive relationship that is based on mutual respect and that has benefited the peoples of both countries.

Already in the last 2 years alone, we've made significant progress on deepening our cooperation in the areas of education, science, technology, climate change, public health, as well as security issues. And this was an excellent opportunity for us to deepen our discussions around our vision for a comprehensive partnership.

We discussed the Trans-Pacific Partnership, or TPP, and the enormous potential of a high-standards trade agreement that raises labor standards, raises environmental standards, and could potentially create significant job growth and prosperity for both the Vietnamese and the American people.

We discussed the importance of resolving maritime disputes in the South China Sea and throughout the Asia-Pacific in accordance with international law, to ensure that the prosperity and freedom of navigation that has underwrit-

ten the enormous economic growth that's taken place in the region continues for decades to come.

We discussed continuing people-to-people exchanges. As General Secretary Trong noted, we have more Vietnamese Americans here and expatriate Vietnamese than any other country in the world, and they've made enormous contributions to our country. We want to continue to deepen those exchanges, including through the soon-to-be-opened Fulbright University that has just been approved.

And we also discussed the importance of us cooperating on global issues, particularly climate change, which could have a profound impact on both our countries; issues of global health security and dealing with the potential of pandemic; global peacekeeping. In all these areas, Vietnam has proven to be a very constructive partner.

There remain to be—there remain differences in the bilateral relationship, and we discussed candidly some of our differences around issues of human rights, for example, and freedom of religion. But what I'm confident about is that the diplomatic dialogue and practical steps that we are taking together will benefit both countries, that these tensions can be resolved in an effective fashion and that not only bilaterally, but also through our cooperation in multilateral organizations like ASEAN and the East Asia Summit, we can continue to make significant strides.

So I want to thank once again General Secretary Trong for his visit. I hope he has felt the warmth and hospitality that the American people feel towards all the people of Vietnam. And I certainly do look forward to visiting your beautiful country sometime in the future.

*General Secretary Trong.* Thank you, Mr. President. And good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

I think that 20 years ago, not too many people would imagine a meeting—interesting meeting, a substantive meeting—between the

General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam and the President of the United States. And as the President just mentioned, we had a cordial, constructive, positive, and frank discussion with each other. What is of utmost importance is that we have been transformed from former enemies to become friends, partners, comprehensive partners. And I'm convinced that our relationship will continue to grow in the future.

I think these achievements are owed to the strategic vision and the efforts by all leaders of the two countries, but also thanks to the support—the full support—of the peoples of the two countries. Because it is in their interest that we want to promote this relationship. This relationship is also contributing significantly to peace, stability, cooperation for prosperity in the region and around the world.

Like the President just mentioned, there had been a bad, difficult chapter in our history, but we have been able to rise above the past to overcome differences, to promote our shared interests, and look towards a future in order to build the comprehensive partnership that we have today. And as I mentioned to the President in our meeting, the past cannot be changed, but the future depends on our action, and it is our responsibility to ensure a bright future.

At the meeting today, the President and I reviewed the growth of our relations over the past 20 years, and we also discussed and agreed on the major directions for moving our relationship forward to make it more substantive, more positive, to build the mutual trust and cooperation between the two countries. And we agreed to continue to promote the comprehensive relationship between the two countries in

all areas, ranging from political, diplomatic cooperation, to economic, trade, investment, education and training, environment, public health, responding to climate change, to defense and security cooperation, as well as better collaboration at regional and international forums.

In a constructive and candid manner, we also discussed our differences and the way forward, including the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the TPP, as well as the human rights issues. At the same time, we discussed and shared our views on the recent developments in the South China Sea, and also, I shared our concern about the recent activities that are not in accordance with international law that may complicate the situation.

And I had the particular honor to extend our invitation to the President and the First Lady to visit Vietnam, and I'm glad that the President had graciously accepted my invitation.

Once again, I would like to thank the President and the U.S. Government for inviting me to visit your beautiful country. And allow me also to take this opportunity to send my greetings and best regards to the Vietnamese community here in the United States. We hope for further growth in our relationship.

*President Obama.* Excellent.

*General Secretary Trong.* Hope to see you again soon.

*President Obama.* Thank you.

Thank you, guys. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:32 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. General Secretary Trong spoke in Vietnamese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

## Joint Statement—United States-Vietnam Joint Vision Statement *July 7, 2015*

At the invitation of the Administration of President Barack Obama, His Excellency Nguyen Phu Trong, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), paid a historic visit to the United States, the first by a CPV's General

Secretary. On this occasion, which included a meeting between President Barack Obama and General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong at the White House on July 7, 2015, the United States and Vietnam adopted this Joint Vision Statement.