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## **Børne- og undervisningsminister Christine Antorini**

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### **1. Introduction**

- Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.
- Thank you very much for the invitation to this reception celebrating the relations between our two countries.
- I am proud and honoured to take part in the celebration of the 40-year anniversary of diplomatic relations between Vietnam and Denmark. On the 25th of November 1971 our two countries established diplomatic relations, and Denmark thus became one of the first Western European countries to do so.
- Today we benefit from 40 years of diplomatic relations; many Vietnamese visit Denmark and vice versa. Researchers and public institutions exchange experience and best practice, while far-sighted and energetic business people are exploring new ways to expand commercial relations between our two countries.
- We have also seen an enhanced cooperation on the development of policy lines. And I am pleased to note that my ministry, the Danish Ministry for Children and Education and its Vietnamese counterpart the Ministry of Education and Training are frontrunners.

## **2. From aid to partnership**

- Over the last 40 years, Vietnam has gone through an impressive process of economic progress and social development. Today, Vietnam is one of the countries in the region with the most promising outlooks for investment and future growth.
- As we move “from aid to trade” the bond between our people develops into a new partnership. We are gradually scaling down Danish development assistance.
- Instead we are increasing commercial relations and people to people relations between our two countries. Today over 120 Danish companies are represented in Vietnam and they, as well as other Danish companies, are eager to expand the commercial relations even more.

Vietnam is one of the key engines of the Asian economy, but at the same time Vietnam is at a crossroads of its economic development. If the last two decades of consistent growth rates and sustainable development are to be continued, considerable investments must be made.

- As you also know, Vietnam must now focus on areas such as energy efficiency, high-tech clean technology, infrastructure and education. These are all areas where Denmark has strong competencies and relevant experience.

## **3. Education**

- Let me touch upon the area closest to my heart – education. Denmark took at an early stage the initiative to invite and engage Vietnam in the lifelong learning cooperation in the ASEM cooperation – Asia Europe Meeting.

- This has gradually developed to become a strong bilateral relation founded in institutional cooperation and outlined in a well consolidated Memorandum of Understanding. In fact, it is one of the strongest bilateral relations that Denmark is engaged in.
- The scope for the cooperation is indeed wide. From arts education, education of health staff and establishment of commercial upper secondary education to the development of new open and innovative curricula in initial education.
- And by now, we are about to open a new initiative that to my assessment is of utmost strategic importance.

#### **4. Vocational Education and Training as a component in Corporate Social Responsibility.**

- Many companies are eager to outsource production lines to Vietnam, which other Danish companies have done with great success. But one element that surprises some of the companies is the differences in skills they are facing in Vietnam and that the tradition for Vocational Education and Training (VET) is relatively weak in Vietnam. I believe we can strengthen our cooperation in this field to the benefit of both our countries.
- We have noted that in the regions of the country from which industries outsource there is over time an overcapacity in our technical colleges. And why not make an attempt to bridge these gaps?
- Therefore, we will be launching an interesting pilot project with huge potential. The project is supported by the Danish Government . But this will only be a modest amount of seed money and we expect the project to develop its own scheme for finance within a year.

- A Danish college – Skive Technical College – will set up training facilities in Vietnam close to and – as we move ahead - financed by the outsourced industries.
- Vietnamese teachers and trainers will receive hands on instruction in the new settings and in supplement attend courses in Denmark.
- In this way, we create a win-win situation for all. Potentially and to be fair, it can over time develop to be a good business for Skive Technical College.
- But at the same time, it will be good business for the Vietnamese workers that hopefully will be able to produce more value for their company and have the option of increasing their pay. And higher productivity makes Vietnam even more relevant and interesting for Danish companies in the years to come.
- Finally, it will be good business for the Vietnamese nation by the development of the educational infrastructure and the highlighting of the value of Vocational Education and Training in the public.

## **5. CSR conference in Vietnam next week**

- All this will be explained more carefully in Vietnam next week during the celebrations taking place there.
- The Danish Embassy opens two conferences on CSR in the presence of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Frederik. One in Hanoi and one in Ho Chi Minh City.
- My Ministry will organise the education part of these conferences and in addition to the presentation of the 'Skive initiative' the development of the cooperation in other institutional settings will be showcased.

## 6. Conclusion

- I strongly believe that the relations between our countries contain unprecedented opportunities for investment, trade, access to green growth and not the least innovation and education.
- So even though 40 years seems to be ages, we are still at the beginning of a long lasting friendship and the potential mutual benefits seem only to be limited by our imagination.
- The Danish Government and I look forward to working with our friends and partners in Vietnam and in Denmark in advancing our collaboration into a new partnership for the 21st century.
- Thank you for your kind attention.