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1. Formation of the overseas Vietnamese community

The overseas Vietnamese community first appeared many centuries ago. Its formation and development has been associated with major political, economic, and cultural upheavals in Vietnam, Southeast Asia and all over the world.

Historical documents reveal that in the 13th century (1225-1226), during the ups and downs of the Ly-Tran Dynasties, the Ly Dynasty descendants had to escape from Vietnam by crossing the sea to the Korean peninsula. They settled in what is now Ong jin, South Korea to avoid any tragedy that might befall the Ly royal family. Consequently, a Vietnamese community was formed there. Currently, there are about 3,600 descendants of the Ly Dynasty living in Korea and they are the pride of both the Vietnamese and Korean people.(2)

Due to political instability, prolonged internal wars and harsh economic situations during the 17th and 19th centuries, many Vietnamese people fled the country and became refugees in neighboring countries such as Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and China.

During the French occupation of Vietnam (1858-1954), a lot of Vietnamese men were forced to work as soldiers or coolies in France and its colonies. Others sought refuge by studying abroad or working as civil servants in France. Women who married French officials returned to France with their spouses after the occupation ended. Until 1954, the number of Vietnamese emigrants abroad was not significant, with only roughly

100,000 people living in about 10 countries, mainly in France and its colonies in Africa.(3)

The aggressive US war in Vietnam sent a new wave of migrants to the America and Europe either to avoid the war, to study abroad, earn a living, or do business. However, before 1975, the total number of Vietnamese expatriates was still limited, with approximately 160,000-200,000 people. Many of them intended to live temporarily abroad while waiting for an opportunity to return to Vietnam.

Since 1975, there has been a profound change in the number, elements and location of overseas Vietnamese. During the last months before the war ended, about 140,000 Vietnamese were evacuated to temporary American refugee camps in Pacific area. Afterwards they immigrated to the United States under the Indochina Migration Act and the Refugee Assistance Act. This was followed by another wave of evacuations, mainly by boat to refugee camps in neighboring Southeast Asian countries such as the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. From there they headed for other countries such as France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium, America and Canada to settle down. During the 1980s and 1990s, many Vietnamese families settled abroad under the Orderly Departure Program and humanitarian programs such as the Amerasian Homecoming Act. These programs in particular were implemented by the United States government from 1979 with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

From 1980-1991 the Government of Vietnam sent as many as 100,000 students, interns, research fellows and about 300,000 workers to socialist countries in eastern Europe such as the Soviet Union, the Democratic Republic of Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Poland. About 100,000 people were sent to China, Cuba, Mongolia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to study and work. After the collapse of the socialist regimes in eastern European countries and the Soviet Union, many Vietnamese students, interns, and workers remained in these countries to live and do business.

From 1991 to the early 2000s, hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese people went abroad to reunite with their families, to study or work. Many were adopted by foreigners, forming Vietnamese communities in new locations such as South Korea, Taipei, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, West Asia and Africa. As of 2004, about 2.7 million Vietnamese lived in nearly 90 countries and territories abroad, of which more than 80% were in industrialized countries.(4)

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the overseas Vietnamese community has continued expanding rapidly with an increasingly diverse components. In addition to those who have been away from the country for a long time, tens of thousands Vietnamese people travel to Asian, European, American and Oceanian countries to work, study and reunite with their families every year.

In 2016, there were 126,296 Vietnamese working in 28 foreign countries and territories, mainly Taipei, Japan, Korea, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. More than 100,000 Vietnamese students were studying in different countries. This number was expected to continue to increase. In 2015, Japan ranked the second after China in attracting Vietnamese students with about 38,882 ones. United States ranked sixth as a destination for 17,875 learners, followed by New Zealand with 17,222, Australia with 10,282, and Canada with 5,618 students.(5)

In addition, more than 130,000 Vietnamese people, mainly women, are married to foreigners who are primarily citizens of the United States, Korea, Taipei, China and Australia. Every year, thousands of Vietnamese people get engaged with foreigners. In 2016, there were 16,223 engagements to foreigners, of which 85% were Vietnamese women.(6) Aside from people who fled from Vietnam, there are second and third generations of Vietnamese being born in foreign countries.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) with sources from the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), the figure of Vietnamese people emigrating abroad in the 1990-2015 period reached 2,558,678.(7)

Currently, with more than 4.5 million people, the vast majority of the overseas Vietnamese community (about 98%) are concentrated in 21 countries in such geographical areas as North America, Northwest Europe, Russia, Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia and Oceania. In other regions such as South and Northwest Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and South America, the number is insignificant.(8)

In foreign countries, Vietnamese people live relatively close to one another. For example, in the United States, Vietnamese people live mainly in the west, in urban areas in California and Texas, notably in Orange County and San Jose, California and in Houston, Texas. In Australia, the Vietnamese community of which 75% are Vietnamese-Australians is concentrated in New South Wales (40.7%) and Victoria (36.8%). In the United Kingdom (UK), the Vietnamese are concentrated in Hackney, Birmingham, Manchester and parts of London. There are also many Vietnamese communities in other major British cities. The Vietnamese in the Czech Republic live mainly in the capital city of Prague. The Vietnamese in France live mainly in Paris and its surrounding areas or in urban centers in the southwest, primarily in Marseille, Lyon and Bordeaux. The majority of overseas Vietnamese communities have settled down and integrated into local life. The majority of Vietnamese people in Australia, the United States, Canada and Western Europe have tended to settle down permanently. More than 80% have been naturalized in their place of residence, but still retain their Vietnamese citizenship.

2. Characteristics of the overseas Vietnamese community

Despite going abroad at different times and for different reasons, the overseas Vietnamese community has always been considered an integral part of the entire Vietnamese community. The vast majority of overseas Vietnamese try to maintain a close relationship with their homeland and hope Vietnam to quickly develop and integrate into the world.

Notably, the overseas Vietnamese community has shown a trend of heading back to their roots and homeland. This is clearly shown through their emotional, material, and intellectual contributions to the country. The number of overseas Vietnamese who visited their homeland increased from 8,000 people in 1987 to 97,000 people in 1992, and 350,000 people in 2000. Since 2004, approximately 430,000 people return to Vietnam to visit relatives, travel, and explore business investment opportunities every year.⁽⁹⁾ Remittances to Vietnam increase yearly by 10-15 percent on average. The total amount of remittances to Vietnam from 1993 to 2015 reached about 108.6 billion USD, of which 12.25 billion USD was sent in 2015 alone.⁽¹⁰⁾ As of 2012, there were about 3,400 businesses owned by members of the overseas Vietnamese community, with a total investment capital of about 6 billion USD.⁽¹¹⁾

Many large enterprises in Vietnam today were established thanks to early-stage contributions of the overseas Vietnamese community such as Vingroup, Sun Group (Ukraine), Euro Windows (Russia), Da Lat Eden, Furama Resort Da Nang, and Cafe Highland (United States), etc. In addition, thousands of expatriate Vietnamese are coming to Vietnam to explore investment and business opportunities. Hundreds of international Vietnamese intellectuals and experts participate in research, give lectures at graduate and postgraduate levels and carry out collaborative projects on scientific research and technology with such standouts as Professor Ngo Bao Chau, Professor Dam Thanh Son, etc.

Overall, the overseas Vietnamese community is patriotic, has national self-respect, and a motivation to preserve national traditions and cultural identity. Vietnamese artists regularly hold many cultural and artistic activities in their local community. With

the support of the overseas Vietnamese diplomatic missions, Vietnamese cultural events are also regularly organized, such as Vietnam Day, Vietnam Week, gatherings on Independence Day, Tet holidays, and artists' trips to visit and entertain the overseas community and their international friends and colleagues. Communities in many countries also regularly organize social and charity activities to raise money for Vietnamese nationals affected by natural disasters, for poor people, Agent Orange and Dioxin victims or Truong Sa soldiers, etc.

The overseas Vietnamese community has a moderate level of economic potential which is not substantial in comparison with other overseas groups. Their annual income is estimated at 25-30 billion USD. Most people work in agencies, organizations and businesses of the host country while others still live on social allowances. The business of overseas Vietnamese is primarily small and medium with low competitiveness in the international market compared to large enterprises. However, they have relationships with entrepreneurs, businesses, economic organizations of their host countries and can find partners on the global stage. Therefore, they can act as a bridge with domestic business, entrepreneurs, and organizations, attract foreign investment and transfer technology for domestic production, etc. On the other hand, the intellectual potential of the overseas Vietnamese community is considerable, especially in North America, Western Europe, Eastern Europe and Australia. More than 400,000 experts and scholars (about 10% of the total number) have university degrees or higher, many of whom are highly skilled and technical experts.⁽¹²⁾ Most educated Vietnamese experts work in science and high-tech fields such as electronics, biology, new materials, new energy, informatics, nanotechnology, aviation, spaceflight and oceanography. A lot of them have achieved important positions in prestigious research institutes, universities, hospitals, businesses, companies, and international organizations such as Dr. Vo Dinh Tuan, Director of Duke University's Fitzpatrick Institute in the United States and Dr. Chu Hoang Long at the Crawford School of Management Economics of the Australian National University. They also act as a bridge to connect with local economic and scientific agencies and organizations.

The overseas Vietnamese community is a dynamic body that quickly adapts and integrates with the people of their host country. The majority of overseas Vietnamese have been naturalized in the host country but still retain their Vietnamese citizenship. Over the years, the regulations on living and working for Vietnamese have been legalized in many countries, notably in the Czech Republic where the Vietnamese community has been recognized as an ethnic minority community since 2013.

However, in several other nations in Eastern Europe, many Vietnamese still have difficulty stabilizing their lives, suffering from unclear regulations and discrimination. Whereas some people still accept temporary lives and do not intend to settle permanently, others do not have legal documents to stay in foreign countries. Most of them stay for economic reasons and expect to return to Vietnam. This triggers instability and opportunism, leading to the increasing number of crimes in the community. In some countries, there are complexities in terms of social components, political trends, occupations, religions, and ethnicities. It varies from region to region, so community cohesion and mutual assistance is not satisfactory.

In addition, the overseas Vietnamese community also faces many evolving problems, difficulties and challenges such as the risk of war, conflict, terrorism and other type of crisis. They find themselves discriminated by extremist or racist forces. Some workers are exploited and mistreated in their workplace such as 'illegal garment factories' where they have to work and live in terrible, unsafe and unhygienic conditions. In addition, many Vietnamese women who marry foreign husbands through brokers are mistreated, suffering violence, being deprived of their legal rights when getting divorced due to the barriers of language, customs and unfamiliar practices.

3. External information for the overseas Vietnamese community

Communicating information from Vietnam's Government to the overseas Vietnamese community is an important task which is always paid much attention in the country's external information work. The overseas Vietnamese community should become both

the target subjects and the on-site force. To this end, the major contents of our external information work must include the following requirements:

The first requirement is to distribute the guidelines and policies of the Party and the State in different fields.

These include Vietnam's foreign policies regarding its independence, self-reliance, peaceful cooperation, and ambition for development; multi-lateralization and diversification of foreign relations; proactive integration into the international economy; open policy of attracting foreign investment, creating the most favorable conditions for foreign investors, promoting the intellectual potential, cooperation in business and investment.

It is necessary to provide complete and transparent information about the guidelines and policies of the Party and the State towards the overseas Vietnamese community. The Communist Party of Vietnam issued Resolution No. 08 NQ/TW dated November 29, 1993 on mobilizing overseas Vietnamese and Resolution No. 36NQ/TW dated March 26, 2004 on working with overseas Vietnamese. More recently, the Government issued Resolution No. 27/NQ-CP dated April 5, 2016 on an action program to continue promoting the implementation of Resolution 36-NQ/TW on working with overseas Vietnamese in the period 2016-2020. It set out the Government's views, goals and measures to promote the mobilization and promotion of overseas Vietnamese resources in the new situation. The above resolutions and directives have shown our Party and State's concern and transparent views towards the Vietnamese community in the current era.

The second requirement is to distribute accurate information about Vietnam's outstanding achievements during recent socioeconomic development brought about by the renovation (doimoi) over the past 30 years.

From an impoverished and underdeveloped country, Vietnam has become a nation with high economic growth in ASEAN, owning some top exports to major markets around the world. In particular, Vietnam has transformed from a centralized economic model into a successful socialist-oriented market economy with multiple economic sectors. Thanks to the dynamic development and steady integration, Vietnam has become an attractive investment destination not just in Southeast Asia but all over the world. Currently, Vietnam is actively restructuring its economy while continuing to innovate its growth model, improve its productivity, quality, efficiency and competitiveness. It has encouraged innovation, entrepreneurship, strengthened administrative reform, constantly renewed management and administration while building a tectonic government of integrity, serving its people.

Among the country's greatest achievements in recent years, it is always important to emphasize the information on its policy of great national unity. With the position that "great national unity is the strategy of the Vietnamese revolution and a great driving force in national construction and defense," Vietnam has made great efforts to improve national unity so that all ethnic groups in the Vietnamese nation have conditions to preserve and promote their traditions and cultural identity. Over the past years, the Vietnamese government has made considerable investments in the socio-economic and cultural development of ethnic and mountainous regions through more than 40 major programs, goals and projects in the fields of production development, alleviating poverty, training and education, health care, transportation and irrigation. The most notable programs are Vietnam's National Target Program on eradicating hunger and poverty; the SocioEconomic Development Program in disadvantaged communes, ethnic minority areas, and mountainous regions (known as Program 135); the program on supporting residential land allocation, housing, arable land and ensuring fresh water for poor households (Program 134); and the program on rapid and sustainable poverty reduction for the 62 poorest districts in the country (Resolution 30a).

The policy of great national unity also includes building national solidarity with the overseas Vietnamese community. The Party and State have always considered the

overseas Vietnamese community a part of the nation. This is clearly seen in the Government's legal documents, policies, and practice. The State has always created favorable conditions for the overseas Vietnamese community to do business, to live and integrate with life in host countries and in Vietnam. In recent years, many progressive policies related to the interests of overseas Vietnamese have been issued, such as citizenship, home and land ownership for expatriates, visa exemptions, and settlement of other legal issues and inadequacies related to retaining their nationality of origin, issuing certificates of nationality and certification of Vietnamese origin. Administrative procedures related to the entry, exit, residence and investment of overseas Vietnamese have been simplified, creating favorable conditions for them to return home.

The third requirement is to distribute accurate information on significant political, economic, cultural, and social issues as well as Partybuilding, anti- bureaucracy, anti-corruption and anti-prodigality.

Political, economic, cultural, and social life in the fatherland is an issue of great concern by the overseas Vietnamese community because it reflects the image of their homeland and their roots. Along with economic development, Vietnam has always focused on effectively implementing cultural and social development tasks, practicing democracy and social justice, improving people's living standards, environmental protection, natural disaster prevention, and a sustainable response to climate change. Despite being far from the country, overseas Vietnamese still closely follow developments and events in the country's political, economic, and social life. The hot issues of the country, especially the fights against corruption and prodigality that the Party and State are determined to win, have always received attention.

The fourth requirement is to distribute accurate information on issues of ensuring Vietnam's national security and defense; improving its efficiency in foreign affairs and international integration; engaging in the struggle to protect its sovereignty over the sea and islands; democracy, human rights, freedom of religion, belief, and ethnicity; and the fight against distorted and false claims about Vietnam. Maintaining

independence and sovereignty while ensuring its national defense and security, and maintaining a peaceful and stable environment for national development are the two issues of supreme national interest with fundamental and long-term goals. In recent years, the struggle to protect Vietnam's sovereignty over the seas has become a hot issue and attracted people's interest because it is associated with the history of the nation's building and defense.

On the other hand, these issues are often misrepresented and distorted by hostile forces, so it is necessary to provide the overseas Vietnamese community with complete and timely information on this issue.

In addition, the issues of democracy, human rights, freedom of religion, belief, and ethnicity are always captivated by the international public. Hostile and reactionary forces also constantly distort and deny the achievements that Vietnam has made in these fields. Therefore, the external information work should attach the greatest importance to fighting against distorting claims made by hostile and reactionary forces. It is important to timely introduce Vietnam's achievements in ensuring fundamental human rights such as democracy in political activities, freedom of religion and belief, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press while ensuring the rights of all ethnic groups to develop equally. It is apparent that the overseas Vietnamese community has always played an important position and role in the external information work. Despite moving abroad at different times and for different purposes, the overseas Vietnamese community is an integral part of the Vietnamese community. It should become the beneficiaries of Vietnam's external information and an on-the-spot force to spread the information. The Party and State are committed to the policy of solidarity and national harmony with the overseas Vietnamese community. Policies and laws on the overseas Vietnamese community will be supplemented, creating favorable conditions for them to stabilize and integrate into the social life of the host countries, strengthening external information for the overseas Vietnamese community especially in the current new situation.

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