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REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN TOAST REMARKS AT STATE DINNER

Presidential Palace
Hanoi, Socialist Republic of Vietnam

7:38 P.M. (L)

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. President, Madam Luong, distinguished representatives of the Vietnamese government, ladies and gentlemen: Let me thank you for your welcome to me and to my family and to our entire American delegation.

We are honored to join you in writing a new chapter in the relationship between the United States and Vietnam, and grateful that this chapter has a happy beginning. Yes, the history we leave behind is painful and hard. We must not forget it, but we must not be controlled by it. The past is only what precedes the future, not what determines it.

America and Vietnam are making a new history today. A generation from now, people will look back on this time and see the American veterans who came back to Vietnam searching for answers about the past, and the Vietnamese who enlisted them in building a common future. They will see the young Vietnamese students, eager to absorb all the world has to offer, and the young Americans who have come here to learn with them. They will see the entrepreneurs and the scientists and the conservationists and the artists, forging links between Vietnam and the world.

In short, people will look back and reach the same conclusion as the great Vietnamese statesman, Nguyen Trai, when he said 500 years ago, "After so many years of war, only life remains."

Today, our people face a changing world and a changing life together, with the same basic aspirations and even some of the same worries. How can we seize the opportunities of a global economy while avoiding its turmoil? How can we open our doors to new ideas while protecting our traditions, our cultures, our way of life?

Globalization is bringing the world to Vietnam and also bringing Vietnam to the world. Films about life in Vietnam, from "The Scent of the Green Papaya" to "The Three Seasons" are winning awards all over the globe. The paintings of the Vietnamese artist, Do Quang Em, command fortunes at international art shows. The 200-year-old poems of Ho Xuan Huong are published in America -- in English, in Vietnamese, and even in the original Nam, the first time ancient Vietnamese script has come off a printing press. Fashion designers like Armani and Calvin Klein base new collections on the traditional Vietnamese dress, the Ao Dai. Americans are tasting lemon grass, garlic chives and even bitter melon, all of which, by the way, grow on a Vietnamese farm in our state of Virginia, just a 20-minute drive from the White House.

Mr. President, globalization also means that on the Internet, Americans can read the latest Vietnamese financial news, or learn about the challenges in restoring Hanoi's Old Quarter, or support the organizations working to preserve new species being found in the central highlands. It means we can download fonts in the Vietnamese language. Indeed, before long, sophisticated translation technologies

will make the Internet a force for linguistic diversity, not uniformity.

When we open our doors, we not only let new ideas in, we let the talent and creativity and potential of our people out. That, too, will come to Vietnam. After just one day in your country, I am certain there will be no stopping the people of Vietnam as they gain the chance to realize their full potential. The people of the United States are happy that the time has come when we can be partners.

As the tale of Kieu foretold, "Just as the lotus wilts, the mums bloom forth; time softens grief, and the winter turns to spring." Now the frozen images of the past have begun to thaw. The outlines of a warmer shared future have begun to take shape. Let us make the most of this new spring together.

I ask you to join me in a toast to the President of Vietnam, to Madam Luong, to the people of this great country and to our future friendship together. (Applause.)

END 7:45 P.M. (L)