



Fact Sheet
Office of the Spokesman
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The United States and Vietnam: Expanding Relations

U.S.-Vietnam relations in recent years have expanded into an increasingly broad number of areas. Nothing demonstrates this more clearly than Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung's June 24, 2008 visit to Washington for the fourth top-level visit between our two countries in four years. During this visit the United States and Vietnam worked together on a broad range of shared concerns including human rights, education, energy and climate change, food security and economic integration.

Vietnam continues to become more integrated in the global economy since joining the World Trade Organization in the beginning of 2007. Vietnam is expanding its role in regional affairs following its hosting of the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders' Meeting in November 2006. Vietnam's diplomatic profile has grown since assuming a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council in January 2008, and the United States would like to see closer U.S.-Vietnamese cooperation within the United Nations. Vietnam is working with the United States in areas such as combating transnational crime—including fighting the drug trade and human trafficking—and minimizing the threat of emerging infectious diseases, and there is broad support in Vietnam for continued improvement in relations with the United States. Another sign of the deepening relations between our two countries is the rapid increase in travel between the United States and Vietnam: over the past three years the number of Americans visiting Vietnam has grown by 151%, while the number of Vietnamese citizens traveling to the United States is up 176%. Last year, the United States issued visas to over 8,000 Vietnamese students, an increase of 359% since 2005.

Economic and Other Goals

Vietnam's government continues its path of economic reform, greater integration with the global economy and its quest to transform Vietnam into a market-oriented economy. One of its biggest immediate challenges is tackling high inflation while maintaining economic growth. The public and the National Assembly are also increasingly pressing for action to deal with such critical issues as corruption, infrastructure, energy and education. In the last decade, the United States and Vietnam have improved their bilateral economic relationship by implementing new agreements on trade and investment.

The 2001 Bilateral Trade Agreement helped set the stage for the success of subsequent bilateral and multilateral negotiations that led to the United States extending Permanent Normal Trade Relations to Vietnam in December 2006 and Vietnam's entry to the World Trade Organization on January 11, 2007.

In addition, on June 21, 2007, the two countries signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA). These agreements have greatly enhanced commercial opportunities for U.S. companies. Since the Bilateral Trade Agreement took effect in 2001, our bilateral trade relationship has increased more than eightfold, with two-way trade topping \$12 billion in 2007. In order to further strengthen the bilateral economic relationship, the two countries agreed during Prime Minister Dung's visit on June 24, 2008 to launch negotiations of a bilateral investment treaty, which will help promote cross-border investment by significantly strengthening the legal protections afforded to investors under the BTA.

Human Rights

Vietnam has made some progress on its human rights record, particularly in expanding religious freedom, although serious concerns remain. The United States and Vietnam maintain a constructive Bilateral Human Rights Dialogue, which included recent commitments to revise Vietnam's criminal code in conformity with international standards and to allow foreign news outlets to open offices in Ho Chi Minh City. The most recent Human Rights Dialogue held in May 2008 also included discussions urging Vietnam to end its use of "national security" provisions such as Article 88, used to detain dissidents for activities considered legal acts of free speech under international norms, and to release all political prisoners, including Nguyen Van Dai, Le Thi Cong Nhan, Father Nguyen Van Ly and two journalists arrested in May for having reported on official corruption. The United States continues to urge Vietnam to allow greater political freedoms and to make additional improvements on religious freedom.

Other Issues

The United States and Vietnam have maintained excellent cooperation on demining issues and continue to work closely to achieve the fullest possible accounting for Americans still missing from the Vietnam War. We also continue to broaden our bilateral relationship in such areas as law enforcement, counter-narcotics, military and regional security cooperation, nuclear non-proliferation, climate change and environmental protection.

The United States and Vietnam are working to develop an intercountry adoption agreement that ensures the best interests of the child, respects his or her fundamental rights, and prevents the abduction and trafficking of children, including U.S. assistance to facilitate Vietnam's early accession to the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoptions. Eighty-five percent of all U.S. Official Development Assistance to Vietnam focuses on health issues, and our cooperative efforts to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS and combat Avian Influenza are the hallmarks of our bilateral health relationship. The United States is providing International Military Education and Training to Vietnam and using Economic Support Funds to help ethnic minorities in the Central Highlands. We have also discussed the possibility for a Peace Corps agreement with Vietnam. The United States has engaged actively with the Vietnamese on various regional and global issues, particularly in light of its non-permanent UN Security Council seat in 2008-2009.

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