

Keynote remarks by Mr. David Gottlieb, Counsellor, Economic and Development Cooperation, Australian Embassy Vietnam

- Ms. Caitlin Wiesen, Resident Representative, UNDP Viet Nam
- Dr. Phung Duc Tung, President, Mekong Development Research Institute
- Kính thưa quý vị
- Tôi xin phép bắt đầu bài phát biểu của tôi bằng tiếng Việt. Xin quý vị bỏ qua bất kỳ sai sót nào của tôi.
- Tôi rất vui mừng được có mặt tại Hội thảo chiều nay. Hội thảo sẽ công bố báo cáo: "Cảm nhận và trải nghiệm của người dân về phản ứng của chính quyền trước tác động của đại dịch Covid-19 tại Việt Nam".
- Chủ đề này rất có ý nghĩa với tôi. Bởi vì tôi bắt đầu công việc tại Việt Nam vào đúng lúc Chính phủ Việt Nam thực hiện giãn cách xã hội lần đầu tiên vào cuối tháng 3 năm nay.
 - Trong giai đoạn này tôi đã có một trải nghiệm quý báu về sự ứng phó của Chính phủ Việt Nam cũng như cảm nhận của người dân với đại dịch nguy hiểm và phức tạp này.
- Tôi mong muốn chia sẻ một chút về kinh nghiệm này, nhưng để nói sâu hơn thì tôi nghĩ sẽ tốt hơn nếu tôi chuyển sang tiếng Anh.
- As I just said, I commenced work here in Vietnam at the start of the country's national social distancing campaign early this year
 - And this survey was conducted a few short months later amid the outbreak that affected parts of the country in September.
- Throughout that whole period, I was mightily impressed to witness the sense of commitment and determination of Vietnam to control COVID-19 successfully.
 - It seemed to me then, that the country's effort was not only swift and decisive, but also unified at all levels – from Government leaders to implementing agencies and the community at large.

- But notwithstanding these efforts, and Vietnam's impressive unity during this difficult period, I could see firsthand the huge impact on people and their livelihoods
 - Mobility was restricted, trade and business was disrupted, incomes were lost.
- These were my personal experiences, and they shaped my perspectives of Vietnam and the crisis a great deal at a very early period in my time working here.
- But as impactful as these impressions were, it isn't my impressions, nor those of other commentators and observers like me, that really matter for public policy.
 - It is the impressions of the people for whom those policies are designed that matters.
- I am therefore delighted that today, thanks to this survey, we now have the opportunity to hear these impressions, these voices and these experiences
 - from income and employment impacts, to people's beliefs about economic prospects in the future.
- And what the survey respondents' state clearly is a high degree of consensus on and strong support for the government's policy and actions to contain the pandemic.
 - this is a testament to the efforts of all of those involved.
- And furthermore, the survey will allow us to draw lessons from these impressions to improve public policy
 - Which is our ultimate, and some would say primary, objective of social science research of this kind.
- On that note, I am particularly pleased to see that the survey we're launching today has investigated citizens' perceptions on the Government of Vietnam's 62 trillion VND support package
 - This was a critical part of Vietnam's response, alongside the health security and infection control measures that have been globally recognised.

- Australia too rolled out a substantial COVID-19 support package amid the height of the crisis when the virus' health impacts were becoming clearer and the socio-economic effects were already taking hold
 - like Vietnam, we in Australia have faced constant challenges ensuring that all those citizens who need the support have the information and access to make use of it.
- I look forward to hearing what the beneficiaries of Vietnam's support package have to say about their access to the aid and the way in which it was delivered
 - and to exploring in more depth how it has affected the individuals who received it.
- The Australian Government is proud to have supported United Nations Development Programme to conduct and launch this survey today
 - and we would like to thank UNDP and the Mekong Development Research Institute for their important role in co-ordinating this initiative.
- This support is part of our larger collaboration with UNDP to improve citizens' voice in policy planning and implementation
 - Specifically, through out long-term support of the Provincial Governance and Public Administration survey – otherwise known as PAPI – and its associated activities.
- Australia's support for these initiatives is predicated on the notion that the policy challenges governments around the world are addressing are complex and many of the policy solutions proposed to address these challenges are contested
 - COVID-19 has exacerbated these challenges here in VN and across the globe.
- Yet we firmly believe that policy making is easier, and building consensus for change is simpler, when you have robust and trusted data.
 - giving policy makers confidence they are making decisions based on the best evidence available.

- Constructive feedback ultimately makes better public policy, streamlines implementation and encourages all of us to improve our performance.
- We hope that this research on citizens' opinions and experiences of COVID-19 in Viet Nam will be a concrete contribution to these efforts
 - And we hope its findings will be heard by policy makers and all levels of government so that Vietnam can continue to be successful in combatting COVID-19.
- We look forward to continuing our work with you and the government of Vietnam to achieve our shared objectives of improving the public administration in Vietnam
 - and through that process, creating a safer and more prosperous Vietnam.
- Finally, I would like to wish you all safety, health and happiness as we head into the upcoming holiday periods.
 - Xin cảm ơn và xin chúc Hội thảo thành công tốt đẹp!