

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's remarks at a news conference following talks with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Vietnam Pham Binh Minh, Hanoi, March 23, 2018

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Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to our Vietnamese friends, on behalf of our delegation and personally, for their hospitality.

This morning we had a meeting with the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Nguyen Phu Trong. We have had very substantive talks and we also plan to have a meeting with President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam Tran Dai Quang.

Our talks with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Vietnam Pham Binh Minh were held in a friendly atmosphere. We exchanged opinions on a broad range of matters. Vietnam and Russia are old and reliable friends, as well as strategic partners. We maintain a trust-based political dialogue at the high and top levels, as well as cooperation between nearly all the concerned ministries, agencies and services.

Today we discussed the implementation of the agreements that were reached during the official visit made by the President of Vietnam to Russia in the summer of 2017, as well as during our presidents' meeting on the sidelines of the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in Danang in the autumn of 2017 and during a meeting of our prime ministers at the East Asia Summit in Manila, also last autumn.

We pointed out the sustainable deepening of ties between our parliaments, ministries and agencies, political parties and public associations, as well as between people, as evidenced by a considerable increase in the mutual tourist flow to Russia and Vietnam last year.

We have agreed to speed up the preparation process for the programmes and events due to take place during the cross-years of Russia and Vietnam in 2019.

We pointed out with satisfaction that bilateral trade increased by over 30 per cent last year, although figures differ. According to our statistics, bilateral trade has exceeded \$5 billion, whereas the Vietnamese data put it at slightly below \$5 billion. But growth is evident in both cases. We agree that this was made possible largely thanks to the implementation of the free trade agreement signed between Vietnam and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU).

We talked about the efficient operation of the Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation, which convened its 20th meeting in Ho Chi Minh City in September 2017.

Vietnam and Russia want to develop not just trade but also mutual investments. We believe that progress in this sphere will be facilitated by the recently established working group on priority investment projects. We will encourage direct ties between the business communities of Russia and Vietnam. In particular, we expect to see large Vietnamese business delegations at the St Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) and at the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok.

We share a high opinion of the operation of joint ventures between the leading Russian and Vietnamese oil and gas companies. It is a key area of our economic partnership. We also discussed the future of our cooperation in electricity production, the peaceful use of nuclear energy, agriculture, mechanical engineering, banking, as well as transportation and infrastructure. We have agreed to promote our cultural ties and educational exchanges. The number of government scholarships that are assigned to Vietnamese students in Russia every year is growing constantly and is rapidly approaching 1,000.

Vietnam and Russia hold identical views on the world order. They stand for respecting international law and the central role of the UN, for a collective approach to any problems, as well as for an exclusively peaceful settlement of any disputes. We also uphold this position with regard to the situation in the Asia-Pacific Region. Our countries want to create a regional cooperation architecture there that will ensure the sustainable development and protect the security interests of all regional countries without exception. We pointed out that military and technical cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam is in full compliance with these criteria.

Regarding our ties with regional countries and our views on the collective development of a new, inclusive and non-bloc architecture, Russia believes that these efforts must be based on ASEAN's central and inspiring role. The plan of cooperation between our foreign ministries, which we have signed for the period of 2019 and 2020, is designed to further improve our foreign policy coordination.

We share the opinion that this visit and the talks we have had in Vietnam have greatly contributed to the strengthening of our comprehensive strategic partnership.