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Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam

Max S. Baucus

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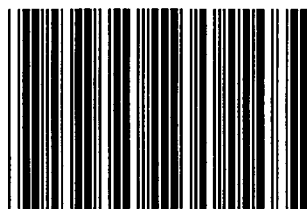
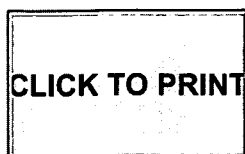
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BAUCUS

Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam
Hanoi, Vietnam
Statement of Senator Max Baucus
December 17, 2008

Xin chao! (seen CHOW (hello)) I am honored to be here at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam. What an impressive place! And what impressive students you are! Thank you for inviting me here today. Xin cam on (seen cam UHN (thank you)).

There are many people to thank for bringing me here. Most important is Vietnam's Ambassador to the United States, Ambassador Le Cong Phung ("Lay Kong Fuhng"). He is doing so much to bring our two countries together as friends and partners.

I also must thank one of America's finest diplomats, Ambassador Mike Michalak ("Mi-HAHL-ick"). He is doing great work in Vietnam, especially in the area of education.

My return to Vietnam has been long time in coming. And it is long overdue. I first came to this country 45 years ago, in 1963. At that time, I was a student, like you. I was traveling around the world on a student's budget. I stopped, for just one day, in what was then Saigon.

I don't remember too much about that visit. But one memory has lingered. I was walking in the center of the city and saw a mother walking with a very young child. The little boy — he must have been about 4 years old at the time — was dressed up in what appeared to be a traditional outfit of red silk. And he wore a small red hat with a long black tassel.

What was remarkable was not his outfit, even though I had never seen a child dressed like that before. Instead, what struck me was that the boy, under hot sun, was eating an ice-cream cone. And the ice-cream was dripping off of the cone onto the little boy's red silk. But neither the boy, nor his mother, seemed to notice or care.

I thought about the red-silk-clad boy with the ice-cream cone many times after I left Saigon that day. As news about Vietnam, war, and death began to horrify and capture the attention of the world, I often wondered what happened to him.

Where was the little boy with the ice-cream cone in January 1968 when the fighting of the Tet Offensive came to Saigon?

Where was he in April 1975 when tanks crashed the gates of the former presidential palace and helicopters buzzed from the top of the old American Embassy?

**Where was that little boy in the mid-1980s
when Vietnam's rice bowl could no longer feed its
people?**

**Where was that boy in 1995, when the United
States and a united Vietnam first exchanged
Ambassadors?**

**Where was he just two years ago when
Congress passed my legislation to grant Vietnam
Permanent Normal Trade Relations?**

**And where is that little boy today, 45 years
after I first saw him in Saigon?**

I would like to think that that boy, who is probably 50 years old, is still alive.

I would like to think that he, unlike 1 million of his countrymen, survived the upheavals of the Vietnam War.

I would like to think that the boy with the ice-cream cone is married, has children of his own, and maybe even a grandchild.

I would like to think that one of you, sitting in this room today, is one of his children.

In a sense, you are all his children. You are the products of his generation's suffering and sacrifices. You are beneficiaries of their hard work. And you embody their hopes and dreams.

And now it is your turn to shape the lives of the next generation. Your plans and dreams will be tomorrow's reality. You are the architects of the future.

It is because of the future that I am here today, some 45 years after my first visit.

It is because of the future that you are here today, to help chart Vietnam's course for the next 45 years.

And it is because of the future that the United States and Vietnam must work together to leave our countries and our planet in better condition for the little ice-cream eating boys and girls of tomorrow's generation.

Building the future together requires hard work on the reinforcing pillars of education and prosperity. We can begin our work on the first pillar here in our classrooms. The more that the United States and Vietnam cooperate on educational initiatives, the more that we will move our peoples and our countries together toward a shared future.

But education is about more than books and degrees. It is about mutual understanding. We cannot build our future together unless we understand and respect each other. We cannot understand and respect each other unless we know each other. And we cannot know each other unless our schools and universities work to educate our youth and facilitate contacts.

That is why, last August, I invited Ambassador Phung (fuhng) to visit my home state of Montana. I come from a beautiful state of mountains, rivers, cowboys, and farmers. There, Ambassador Phung and I together visited the city of Missoula, the home to the University of Montana.

There, Ambassador Phung, the President of the University of Montana, and I signed an educational cooperation agreement. Under that agreement, Vietnamese students like you can come to Montana to study. Likewise, students from the University of Montana can come here to Vietnam to learn your language, your history, and your values. I am committed to making this program a huge success.

Our work on education must stand side-by-side with the second pillar on which our future rests — creating lasting opportunities for jobs, economic growth, and prosperity. The path to economic security and social stability requires both an educated youth and hope for a job. That is why the United States and Vietnam must redouble our efforts to fuel economic growth, not just for ourselves and our children, but for generations to come.

Trade helps build that prosperity. Fifteen years ago, our two countries did not trade. But step by step, we developed a remarkably robust trade relationship. We went from lifting the embargo in 1994, to concluding our Bilateral Trade Agreement in 2000, to granting Vietnam Permanent Normal Trade Relations in 2006. The resulting trade relationship has helped charge Vietnam's economic growth. And, in turn, that trade relationship has created opportunities for a better life.

Today, Vietnam is America's fastest growing trading partner in the region. And the United States is Vietnam's largest export market.

But that is not the end of the story. Enduring prosperity and sustainable growth can only come by following through on what we have done in the past. We must seize the opportunities of the present. And we must think about an ambitious future.

First, we must fully realize the promise of what we already have in place. That means working together to implement our current bilateral and multilateral trade pacts. Vietnam has already taken significant steps in this direction and deserves great credit for the job that it has done so far. But implementation is not yet complete.

Most important, Vietnam continues to maintain unscientific restrictions on U.S. beef. Vietnam, unlike China and others in the region, has already made significant progress by allowing imports of beef from cattle under 30 months. International rules, however, support the safety of all U.S. beef, regardless of the age of the cattle.

I know that Vietnam is working hard to take the next step. And I hope to see results very soon. I will urge Prime Minister Dung (Zuhng) and National Assembly Chairman Trong (Chong) to lift Vietnam's beef restrictions when I meet with them today.

Second, we must look beyond our current trade agreements to see how else we can use trade to fuel economic growth and development. One such initiative is the Generalized System of Preferences. GSP provides trade preferences to developing countries.

132 countries currently benefit from this program. Vietnam does not. It should. I strongly support Vietnam's bid to obtain GSP.

To benefit from GSP, however, Vietnam must meet certain conditions. Notable among these is respect for internationally recognized worker rights.

Vietnam has made progress. But there is more that Vietnam can do. In particular, Vietnam will need to take steps to ensure that its labor laws meet international standards regarding the right of association and the right to organize and bargain collectively. The faster that Vietnam moves in this area, the faster that the U.S. President will be able to grant GSP to Vietnam.

GSP should not be goal in and of itself. GSP is something for today, when Vietnam is a developing economy. But we need to think about tomorrow, when Vietnam will be a developed economy.

That is why our third task should look far into the future. We must put in place the conditions today that will underpin our shared economic growth tomorrow.

Creating future prosperity will require more progress on protecting and enforcing intellectual property rights. Universities, like yours, are incubators for ideas. These ideas drive innovation. And innovation fuels economic growth and prosperity.

But the novel idea that you develop at this university today will remain just a good idea until you protect it, grow it, and give it life in a market that respects its value. And you will have much more incentive to do so if you can protect your idea from theft or piracy.

Vietnam's piracy rate for sound recordings is about 95 percent. That's close to a total breakdown of intellectual property for sound recordings. That is way too high to sustain a future economy based on innovation.

There are important steps that Vietnam could take to improve. Greater enforcement will help. So will providing criminal penalties for willful violations of copyright and counterfeiting.

Until Vietnam makes these changes, Vietnam will limit the vast array of future opportunities open to you here, the creators of ideas. And until Vietnam makes these changes, Vietnam will hold back its own economic progress and its own march toward developed country status.

Creating our future also requires us to tap into the vast potential of Asia-Pacific region that both Vietnam and the United States inhabit. That is why the ongoing effort to create a Trans Pacific Partnership Agreement is so important. It looks to the future. It looks to a time when the United States and its Asia-Pacific partners can join together to promote trade and shared values on labor and the environment.

It looks to a future regional agreement — based on the free trade agreements we already have with Singapore, Chile, Australia, and Peru — that other important partners, like Vietnam, can join when they are ready.

That is the future towards which the United States and Vietnam should together strive.

It is a future that honors those who have sacrificed and worked so hard to give us what we have today.

It is a future worthy of their hopes and dreams.

It is a future that we can create by never forgetting all that came before the eyes of that little boy I saw in 1963.

And it is a future that we can realize by never letting go of the dreams and aspirations that I see here in your eyes, 45 years later.

When I walk through Hanoi's Old Quarter this afternoon, I will stop into a store that sells kem (kehm) — your word for ice cream. I will see if I can find my little friend in his silk, red outfit. And I will tell him something that I did not think was possible when I was your age as student in Saigon in 1963. I will tell him that the United States and a united Vietnam are friends, at peace, and have a promising future together.

**And then I will order him and me two scoops
of kem to share.**

Xin cam on (seen cam UHN (thank you)).