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Background Brief:

Vietnam After the 13th Party Congress: New Urgency

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We request your assessment of the following issues:

Q1. What are the urgent issues for Vietnam after the thirteenth national party congress?

ANSWER: The 13th National Congress of the Vietnam Communist Party ended early because of a new outbreak of the coronavirus in several northern provinces, possibly including a new strain that mutated in the United Kingdom. Before the congress ended Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc convened an emergency meeting to deal with this unwelcome development. Vietnam must continue to give priority attention to addressing this outbreak and acquiring and distributing the AstraZeneca vaccine as soon as possible.

The new Politburo must meet and immediately allocate work assignments to its members. The new Politburo must take full advantage of the next four to five months to prepare for and hold elections to the National Assembly to complete the process of leadership transition in the government.

This is a time for outgoing ministers to ensure that a smooth transition occurs and the incoming ministers and deputy ministers are well briefed on their responsibilities. Prime Minister Phuc must be proactive in turning over his responsibilities to his successor so the new Cabinet can begin work immediately. The new government must prepare a national stimulus and economic recovery plan to be implemented as soon as possible.

Now is the time for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to begin planning for the exchange of high-level visits after the National Assembly elections. Priority should be given to Vietnam's closest strategic partners.

Vietnam also must move ahead on multiple fronts to address possible impediments to continued economic growth. High priority must be given to establishing working relations with the Biden Administration to address bilateral economic and commercial issues. Immediate attention must be given to fully implementing Vietnam's responsibilities to its free trade agreements, especially the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership.

In short, Vietnam cannot conduct “business as usual” but must work hard with a sense of urgency to pick up momentum for domestic recovery with the assistance and support of the international community.

Q2. What improvements have you seen in Vietnam over the last five years?

ANSWER: Five developments in Vietnam stand out.

First, Vietnam has been successful in lowering the rate of poverty.

Second, Vietnam has been able to maintain relatively high growth rates before and after the COVID-19 pandemic compared to other developing countries.

Third, Vietnam has been extremely successful in combatting the coronavirus pandemic. According to a survey released by one of Australia’s leading think tanks, Vietnam ranks second in the world after New Zealand for this achievement.

Fourth, Vietnam’s prestige as a constructive member of the international community is at an all-time high.

Fifth, Vietnam’s leaders have responded swiftly and decisively to the recent outbreak of the coronavirus in several northern provinces to bring it under control.

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