

President Bill Clinton's speech at FTU recorded

Thank you very much. Minister, Mr President. I'd like to be here at the Foreign Trade University on another important anniversary. This is the 50th year of this great university's existence. And I am very grateful for the extraordinary work you've done for now, one half of a century, to educate young people of Vietnam and to ... We are about to fix this. Vice President of a university should not have to have such a small duty, but we should get him a round of applause. Among many things that I am grateful for in the history of Foreign Trade University is the partnership established with two great American schools, Colorado State University and California State University, Fullerton. I am grateful to be here today. I'd also like to thank the American Ambassador for his presence here and his service. Thank you, Sir.

I wanted to come here to honour the 15 years of friendship, partnership and economic ties between the United States and Vietnam. The official ceremony was held in July when our nation was represented by another member of our family, Secretary of State Clinton. She did a fine job, I think, and it meant a lot for her to be here. But I was invited to come during this year in 2 meetings with your President in New York around the opening of the United Nations in the last 2 years, and a wonderful conversation with your Prime Minister, and I wanted to be here during this year to mark this important anniversary.

The normalization of relations between the United States and Vietnam was one of the proudest moments of my presidency. Both because it marked a healing of old wounds and because it revealed great possibilities to the entire world about what the 21st century could be. The triumph of our common humanity is over our interesting differences, of reconciliation over recrimination, of tomorrow over yesterday. That is what I want and what I worked for. The 21st century would be better than what we see all around us. A world obsessed with our differences, too paralyzed with recrimination, too determined to hold on to yesterday to be able to create a tomorrow worth leaving to our children. I must say, this is not in my remarks, but this morning I awoke to a new cause for hope, the release in Myanmar, the remarkable Daw Aung San Suu Kyi after such a long time of detention.

I was the 1st president of the United States to serve his entire two terms after the end of the Cold War, a time when the world was organized by its divisions and kept alive by fear of mutual destruction. When I took office, our world was changing very dramatically. Trade, travel and technology were connecting us in a way that was never before imagined possible and perhaps not even desirable. Borders were becoming less like walls and more like nets. They were less able to keep new ideas and new information and people out or in, because we couldn't stop the new world from turning in order to get off, and we couldn't escape the impact of our actions on others or the impact of other actions on us. I know we would have to find ways to work together across geographic, political, cultural and technological divides. Since 1993, the pace of this change has only accelerated. I want the young students here to think about this. When I became President in 1993, the average cell-phone weighed almost 2.5 kilograms. Today, they are so small; I lose them all the time. On the day I became president, there were only 50 sites on the entire Internet; one more has been added since I've begun speaking. When I became President, Vietnam had fewer than 500,000 motorbikes; now there are nearly 30 million. I believe I passed half of them on the way to give this speech today. When I took office I had a simple theory that my job was to

build up the positive forces and reduce the negative forces of our endeavoured global interdependence to create global networks of shared responsibility and shared benefits, to accelerate and speed the benefits of advances of science and technology, to develop a global sense of common humanity and common destiny and to envision a future in which one nation's victories do not require another nation's defeat, but instead require all of us to build an earthly home big enough and strong enough to embrace everyone's dreams. This was then, and it remains today, easy to say but extremely difficult to do.

Nevertheless, this vision provided my presidency with a framework for 8 years of decision making in which the United States and its partners knew and owe, started and implemented many treaties and more than 300 trade agreements, agreed with the Russians to rid ourselves of more than 50 tons of enriched uranium, worked with North Korea to prevent the production of dozens of nuclear weapons, advanced non-proliferation with the chemical weapons convention and an indefinite extension of the non-proliferation treaty, achieved the Dayton peace accords also 15 years ago this year, which ended genocidal killing in Bosnia, stopped the killing in Kosovo before it reached that level, forged a lasting peace in Northern Ireland and came very close in doing so in the Middle East, and formed new alliances to combat the challenges of terrorism, narco trafficking, financial crisis and epidemic diseases, and it allowed the flourishing of this enduring partnership between the United States and Vietnam. It has been 15 years now since we normalized relations, 10 years now since we signed our first trade agreement, 5 years since my foundation has been invited to begin work in Vietnam, first in combating AIDS then climate change. We have, we - American and Vietnamese, put those years to very good use, working together on education, health care and human right, on security co-operation, on clearing the landmines from your fields, on helping Vietnamese citizens to cope with the consequences of Agent Orange and finding the remains and records of soldiers on both sides whilst in the long war we fought. All this work done together has helped us to heal our wounds, to increase our understanding and respect for each other, and to prove that new beginnings are possible. The relationship did not blossom overnight but over time for delivered efforts and incidental personal contacts they've produced. For example, when I took office, one of the first things I did was to persuade the leaders of the Asian Pacific Economic Council to agree to meet every year. Before that the group had been represented only at an administrative level, and so we began to meet in 1993 in Seattle, Washington and have continued to do so every year since right up until last month's meeting here in Vietnam.

I remember going to invite Vietnam into APEC, never thinking that the primary benefit to us was the alphabetical seating arrangement which place the United States and Vietnam next to each other during long, long meetings for hours on end every single year. Once, when the second Vietnamese Prime Minister within my work, Phan Van Khai, and I were together at APEC, he began to talk to me about his family, about the brother lost in the war whom he loved very much. And he said he appreciated the fact that as a young man I had opposed America's policy in Vietnam. I thanked him, but I also told him that the American's who disagreed with me, who supported the war or fought in it were good people whose motives were not to colonize Vietnam or exercise their imperial control. They simply thought they were standing for freedom. He nodded and quietly said that he understood that. It is a great thing when people who have disagreed, even to the point of death, can nonetheless look each other in the eyes and say I know your heart was good. It was a moment I will never forget as long as I live. None of this would

have happened on our side through my efforts alone. We were carried in the U.S. Congress by veterans of the Vietnam War, including Senator John McCain, John Kerry, Chuck Robb and Max Cleland, one a prisoner of war, one who lost 3 of his 4 limbs on your soil. And we were carried by one of our longest serving prisoner of war, Congressman Pete Peterson, whom I made to be the first U.S. ambassador to Vietnam. They all wanted reconciliation, perhaps more than anyone else in America, for they knew the price of division. Today the importance of our ties with Vietnam is one of the few things that both political parties in Washington D.C. agree on, as I said a few years ago at the American observance of this important year, which was sponsored by your embassy in Washington D.C. and the U.S. State Department. Perhaps Vietnam has the answer to ending all those partisan conflicts that are tearing America up today. I invite you all to come to America and remind us that we can get along.

Ten years ago next week, walking and digging in mud that was knee deep looking for the remains of a long lost American pilot, when I saw them doing that I knew beyond a doubt that we had found each other in spite of all the pain so many of you and so many of us had endured. Today you have identified 660 Americans previously listed as missing. You have given their families peace. That work continues and all Americans are profoundly grateful.

10 years ago we also signed our first bilateral trade agreement. It was the right thing to do for both of us. Just look at what happened afterwards. Bilateral trade has increased more than 17 folds. Even during the global economic downturn in 2009, U.S. exports to Vietnam grew by 11%, while they dropped by a number of digits in most ASEAN countries. And we're looking to break new records this year.

In these 15 years the per capita income has increased by 5 times. We've become your largest export partner and one of your largest investors. The U.S. company, Intel, just opened a billion dollar assembly and test facility in Vietnam. It's largest in the entire world. We're cooperating with you to build Vietnam's capacity in science and technology, something I fully expect this great university to be at the heart of. Your 13,000 students in our universities make Vietnam the eighth among all nations in the world in the number of international students in the US. I'm also grateful that the U.S. government has made substantial contribution to the remediation of environmental hazards caused by Agent Orange, and to support your citizens who have been affected by the exposure to it and their families. Now I'm no longer the one in my family who makes official agreements or represents the U.S. in high level talks. That's Hillary's job, but as a private citizen I've tried to do things that have been in the public's interest, working on AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, building healthcare capacity, which as the Minister has kindly said we have been privileged to do together. And I thank you again Minister. We work to combat climate change, to promote economic empowerment and education all around the world to build a worldwide network of problem solvers through the Clinton Global Initiative. It has been said by the Minister of Health the Vietnamese government invited me in 2005 to have my foundation to come to provide medicine to people living with HIV and AIDS, including all the children who needed medicine. We've built up laboratory and testing capacity and helped the health system to better deal with that burden of that awful disease. Later, your 2 major cities asked the foundation to work on finding ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in ways that lift local economies. This is very important to your future because Vietnam is one of the top 5 or 6 countries on earth most at risk of the harmful consequences of climate change and the rising water levels and

increasing severe weather events it will produce. We're exploring important projects here for better waste management and methane recovery in your landfills to more efficient street lighting and retrofitting large buildings; all of which will be both environmentally and economically beneficial. I do this work because I believe no matter how good a government's policies are or how strong a nation's economy is, there will always be gaps between what the government can provide and products that the private economy can produce to fill those gaps, and you find the best, fastest, most economical way to solve complex problems. We need a global civil society movement working with governments, businesses and committed local citizens. I am honored to do this work alongside so many Vietnamese. This nation and its people hold a very special place in my heart. And just as I did everything I could as president to build a stronger bond between us, I will continue to do so as a private citizen.

I would like to close these remarks with a story to illustrate just how far we have come. Every year, at the opening of the United Nations, I have a meeting of the Clinton Global Initiative in which I invite present and former world leaders who are still active, business leaders, philanthropists and leaders of non-governmental organizations from all around the world to discuss how to respond to the world's most pressing challenges and then to make specific commitments to address them. In just 6 years, thousands of commitments have brought measurable benefits to about 300 million people in more than 170 countries. 3 years ago, we began to hold a separate meeting just for university students from all around the world. Typically, the students don't have very much money, at least I didn't when I was a student, but they are full of good ideas, remarkable energy and are passionate desire to make a difference. At our last meeting, in April, a young Vietnamese-American woman, who attended a college in the North Eastern United States, made a commitment that was especially meaningful to me in this year. *[I couldn't catch the student's name]* committed to establish a fund which would provide micro loans of 212 dollars to 35 Vietnamese families whose children have been disabled due to exposure to Agent Orange. Working with your office of genetic counseling and disabled children in Hue, she and her team went to meet personally with eligible families and worked with them to ensure the increase in their incomes. The project ready to produce will in fact help them to pay for medical expenses and more education and other necessities for their children. This young woman embodies our shared determination to build up on our past and not be imprisoned by it. I'd like to invite your President to send some students from this great school to the next Clinton Global Initiative at the University of California, San Diego, and April 1st-3rd. You can apply on our website and I hope some of you will.

Many of the younger people here are too young to remember a time when our relations were not friendly and when there was no trade and investment, no travel and study exchange. Your freedom from those memories is the legacy of the last 15 years. Instead you now carry the future of closer relations in your minds and hearts, and with it you have the power to ensure it is a future of shared responsibilities, shared benefits, and a shared sense of community. In building that future, you, and only you now, can redeem the sacrifice of those who were lost on both sides in a terrible war. You can redeem it by freeing future generations of Vietnamese and Americans to live their dreams. For what has happened in the last 15 years and for what lies ahead, I am very, very grateful. Thank you very much!