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PRESS RELEASE

THE NORDIC COUNTRIES AND VIETNAM STRENGTHEN EXCHANGE OF- EXPERIENCE ON GREEN, SUSTAINABLE AND INNOVATION CITIES

23 March 2021

Hanoi – This year, on the occasion of the Nordic Day 23rd March, the Nordic Embassies in Vietnam (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden), in coordination with the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics jointly organised a seminar on *Nordic Green Capitals – Leadership, Governance, Sustainability and Innovation*. The main purpose of the seminar was to facilitate and promote exchange of knowledge, experience and good practice between the Nordic countries and Vietnam on how to ensure that their capital cities grow in a green, innovative and sustainable manner.

For the past twenty years, Vietnam's stable and impressive economic growth and growing urbanization rate have led to serious challenges that its cities have to cope with in regard to issues such as air pollution, congestion, water and waste management and climate resilient issues.

“One of the elements behind the Nordic countries’ success story is their persistent approach to a sustainable development model, which focuses on the close connection between economic growth and social equity. Thanks to this growth model, the Nordic countries have gained enormous achievements, e.g. in regard to incredible economic growth, advanced welfare systems, protection of the environment and maintaining cultural values and identities. The model has also been a helpful reference for many countries in the world including Vietnam. In addition to the story of sustainable economic development, the Nordic countries have always put high priority and focus on protection of the environment and green and sustainable urban development. The Nordic capital cities for the past years have been appointed European Green Capitals by the EU commission. The Nordic experience in governance and development will provide helpful recommendations for big cities in Vietnam in general and for Hanoi in particular.” said Professor Dr. Duong Trung Y, Vice President of the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics.

We, the Nordic countries, are very pleased to be Vietnam’s long term friends and strong supporters of the country’s poverty reduction and impressive social and economic growth. Now focus is on the transition to a greener and sustainable development. Economic security must go hand in hand with

social and environmental security. All the Nordic capitals: Copenhagen, Helsinki, Oslo and Stockholm have, during the last decade, made bold political and administrative decisions to address urbanization, climate change and environmental challenges. We are very happy to share our Nordic gained knowledge and experience and hope that our Vietnamese counterparts and friends will find them inspirational and helpful for their ongoing efforts to lead the country and its cities in their transition towards green and sustainable development, said the Nordic Ambassadors in Vietnam.

Copenhagen aims to become the world's first carbon-neutral capital city by 2025. The city's population is expected to grow by 20% in the next decade. This opens an opportunity to show that it is feasible to combine growth, development, innovation, job creation and enhanced quality of life with lower CO₂-emissions. Copenhagen launched its first Climate Plan in 2009 and has already achieved major CO₂-reductions. The city also has Environmental Policies in place as clean air, less noise, clean drinking water from the tap and many green spaces increase people's health and well-being significantly.

Helsinki was the first city in Europe to prepare a Voluntary Local Review (VLR) to understand how the city's strategy matches against the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The VLR found that the city's strategic plans are well aligned with the SDGs. For example, the Helsinki City Plan, approved in 2016, sets a sustainable direction for the city's growth over the next 30 or so years. Its aims include ensuring that every part of the city can be easily reached by public transport. Walking and cycling will be given top priority, and the urban structure of the city must be such that everyday services can be obtained nearby. A dense urban structure and sustainable transport play a key role in Helsinki's climate ambitions. Helsinki's goal is to be a carbon neutral city by 2035.

Oslo has ambitious climate goals on both mitigation and adaptation. In 2020, Oslo adopted a new ambitious climate strategy, of which the main aim for Oslo is to reduce climate gas emissions from the city with 50% in relation to 1990-level within 2020 and with 95% within 2030, not by buying quotas but by implementing actual emissions cuts. A first climate budget was put into operation in 2017 as a groundbreaking governance tool. The budget is a means to show municipal agencies where emission must be cut and who is responsible, e.g. in the public transport sector and the construction sector.

In 2010, **Stockholm** was appointed the first European Green Capital, thanks to its cut carbon emissions and ambitious climate goals. In 2016, Stockholm adopted the goal to be fossil free in 2040. Since 1990 up until today, the city has cut its carbon emissions by 50% per citizen. In the beginning of October 2019, Stockholm launched an initiative called the C40:s Global Green New Deal. This initiative aims to gather those willing to deliver reductions in carbon emissions in line with the 1.5 degree goal set out in the Paris Agreement.

The transition to green and sustainable capitals in the Nordic countries' capitals to secure and improve the quality of life for their residents and create opportunities for innovation, jobs and green growth requires long term planning and a multi-stakeholder approach. Thus, involving local political decision makers, municipality agencies, the private sector, environmental and climate organizations as well as mobilizing ordinary citizens has been key in setting targets and implementing policies.

The seminar ‘*Nordic Green Capitals - Leadership, Governance, Sustainability and Innovation*’ was co-hosted by the Nordic Embassies and the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics in Hanoi on 23 March 2021 both off-line and online through video links between Hanoi and the four Nordic capitals. The seminar is an annual cooperation event aimed at strengthening exchange of academic knowledge and experience between Vietnam and the Nordic countries. The seminar had broad participation of high-ranking representatives and policy-makers from the Vietnamese government agencies, local experts, academia researchers, etc.

The seminar is part of the Nordic countries’ support to Vietnam’s achievement of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 11 on the importance of making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

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Background Information

The Nordic countries

The Nordic countries consist of Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Iceland as well as The Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. Since the Helsinki Agreement, in which the Nordic cooperation “constitution” was signed in 1962, it has touched the lives of many people in the Nordic countries by creating the oldest and most diverse forms of regional political collaboration for the past six decades. It is not by chance that a region with only 27 million people, which would not even make it into the top 50 of countries ranked by population, is one of the most integrated regions with shared values and common development goals.

As a result, the Nordic countries generally score highly on international rankings and indexes on *Innovation, Happiness, Human Development, Citizens’ Welfare, Governance, Transparency, Equality, Social Progress, Inclusive Development, Sustainability* and more. The region is also widely acknowledged as a digital frontrunner in a European and even a global context. The UN E-Government Development Index (EGDI) 2020 ranked Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden among the countries with very high EGDI.

All four Nordic countries were among the first European countries that established diplomatic ties with Vietnam (Sweden: 1969, Denmark and Norway: 1971, Finland: 1973). Over the years, the Nordic countries have remained Vietnam’s trusted and good friends even during hard times. We continue to walk with Vietnam and support efforts to strengthen governance, economic growth and promote equality, democracy, respect for human rights, environmental protection, and inclusiveness as the foundations for prosperity and sustainable development.

The Embassy of Denmark in Vietnam

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1971, Vietnam and Denmark have enjoyed a strong and close cooperation. We are indeed to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries this year. Vietnam remains an important partner-country for the Danish government with cooperation within areas such as green growth, energy, water, health, education, food safety, culture and commerce.

For further information about the Danish-Vietnamese relationship and the Embassy of Denmark in Vietnam please visit: www.vietnam.um.dk and www.facebook.com/dkvietnam

The Embassy of Finland in Vietnam

Finland and Viet Nam share excellent relations since the establishment of the diplomatic relations in 1973. Our relationship is expanding from development co-operation towards an equal and mutually reinforcing relationship that is highlighted by trade, investment and commerce. The economic and trade cooperation activities in recent years demonstrated Finnish commercial interest in the key sectors of the Vietnamese economy: digitalisation, Smart City development, energy, cleantech, innovation, water and waste management. Education remains one of the key areas of cooperation and also Finnish visibility in Viet Nam. All of these activities support sustainable development and the UN sustainable development goals.

The Embassy of Finland in Hanoi continues its work to create favourable conditions for increased business and other mutually beneficial co-operation between Finland and Viet Nam. For more information, please visit: finlandabroad.fi/vnm and www.facebook.com/FinnishEmbassyHanoi/

The Embassy of Norway in Vietnam

2021 marks the 50th anniversary of Norway-Vietnam diplomatic relations. Over the last five decades, the bilateral relationship between the two countries has been evolving in numerous areas such as marine, maritime, education, governance, gender equality, human rights, energy, commerce etc. From traditional development cooperation the relationship has developed into equal partners based on business and trade as well as regional (ASEAN) and multilateral cooperation (UN). Norway and Vietnam share common interests in promoting multilateralism, respect for international law, sustainable blue and green economy such as renewable energy, circular economy, marine aquaculture and initiatives against marine littering of plastics.

For further information about the cooperation between Norway and Vietnam please visit: norway.no/en/vietnam; www.facebook.com/norwayinvietnam; and www.instagram.com/norwayinvietnam/

The Embassy of Sweden in Vietnam

Sweden has an impressive history in the country as the diplomatic ties between Sweden and Vietnam started in 1969. Sweden's strong commitment to support Vietnam in its development with a massive aid programme until 2014 has given Sweden an influential position in Vietnam. We are known as a trustworthy, open and creative partner. With increased trade and business opportunities, the Embassy will bring the relationship forward in close cooperation with Swedish businesses, to contribute to a better perception and overall visibility of Sweden in Vietnam.

For video and pictures

Journalists can access to free photos of Nordic environments, policies and events on the links below. The vast majority of the images may be freely used as long as the source is cited, but please check the individual file for information on rights.

- This is our vision – our Nordic perspective: <https://youtu.be/aeme-ka5mEA>
- <http://www.norden.org/en/news-and-events/images>
- <https://www.youtube.com/user/NordicInnovation/videos>
- https://nordregio.org/sustainable_cities/
- <https://nordregio.org/publications/white-paper-on-nordic-sustainable-cities/>
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