

OPENING CEREMONY

Opening speech, by Mr. Vu Xuan Hong President of the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations Chairman of the National Organizing Committee

H.E. Deputy PM of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Friends,

First of all, allow me, on behalf of the National Organizing Committee, to extend the warmest greetings to all representatives of people's organizations from 25 ASEM member countries attending ASEM People's Forum V in Hanoi, Vietnam. It is our welcome and thanks to distinguished speakers for having accepted to participate in and contribute to our Forum. My special gratitude goes to H.E. Deputy PM on behalf of the Government of Vietnam, and distinguished guests present here at the Official Opening Ceremony of our Forum.

Friends,

Having undergone 4 forums in Bangkok (1996), London (1998), Seoul (2000) and Copenhagen (2002), the People's Forum has become an important traditional activity held by people's organizations in ASEM member countries to share information and experiences, express ideas and desires of all walks of life in ASEM member countries, enhance mutual understanding, solidarity and cooperation among people's organizations for the sake of peace, national independence, equitable and sustainable development, democracy and social progress. ASEM People's Forum V is held in Hanoi, featuring the theme of "People's Actions for Human Security in Asia and Europe", attended by more than 500 participants representing 350 people's organizations from ASEM member countries. The number of filled-in registers has exceeded the expectation of the organizers, which reflects the great attraction of the People's Forum within the ASEM process, as well as the interest of a large number of people's organizations in this Forum V.

At this Forum, besides 3 conferences on the main themes of "Peace and Security", "Economic and Social Security" and "Democratization and People's Rights" jointly held by the International Organizing Committee and the National Organizing Committee, 29 workshops will take place, based on proposals of and hosted by people's organizations

participating to the Forum, with the cooperation and assistance of the International Organizing Committee and the National Organizing Committee. As a common practice, the Forum expects the adoption of a “Final Statement” proposed by the Drafting Committee which was established and authorized by the International Organizing Committee. Apart from its official program, the Forum offers opportunities for our people’s organizations to meet, share experiences and information, as well as chances for foreigners to understand Vietnam better. The National Organizing Committee will hold a “Meeting Vietnam Forum” to provide you with relevant information about Vietnam and organize fieldtrips to get acquainted with Vietnamese history and culture, the war’s legacy, economic, rural and agricultural development, and other aspects of social life in Vietnam.

Friends,

The preparation for this Forum has seen close cooperation between the International Organizing Committee and the National Organizing Committee. We have conducted 3 preparatory meetings in Hanoi to discuss and finalize participant composition, themes, contents, programs, coordination mechanism, modes and means of activity of the Forum. Those highly responsible preparation meetings carefully considered all proposals and came up with consensus in all raised issues. Sticking to traditional principles, the International Organizing Committee agreed upon a set of measures to renew and enhance the effectiveness of the Forum’s activities. I am convinced that all preparatory work has been carried out in accordance with those agreements, which constitutes the key factor guaranteeing the success of this Forum.

To the National Organizing Committee, hosting the People’s Forum for the first time poses a great challenge. Limitation of facilities might have prevented us from fully meeting your expectation. However, I believe that we have been trying our best to facilitate your participation in this Forum. Taking this opportunity, may I extend our sincere thanks to the members of the International Organizing Committee for their close and responsible cooperation with us during the preparatory process. Our sincere gratitude also goes to the Government and its agencies and people’s organizations in Vietnam for their support of and assistance to our preparation for the Forum, to governments of other countries and donors for their financial support for the Forum, to all volunteers for their contributions to our preparatory work.

Distinguished Guests,

Friends,

The objectives of ASEM People’s Forum V have been defined in the main theme of the Forum. We are here for discussions and dialogues to enhance mutual understanding,

solidarity and joint-actions for the common interests of our people. To bring about those goals, let people's organizations be active and constructive insiders instead of outside critics; let's first try to understand before making any judgment; let's opt for dialogues and sharing instead of imposition; let's seek similarity and unity while respecting reasonable diversity and differences; let's be heading toward solutions instead of stopping at rejection; let's discuss the most common issues instead of jumping into particular cases. As representatives of people's organizations in ASEM member countries, we can not help involving our discussions in Ames's agenda. On this basis, speakers are requested to facilitate ideas and initiatives during discussions, organizers and co-organizers to facilitate dialogues and discussions at workshops. We call on all participants to be actively involved in the Forum's activities. We also call on reporters and journalists to pay close attention to the Forum, so as to cover the most substantial contents of the Forum and the most common interests of its participants. Thus, our Forum will certainly be successful, contributing a great deal to the strengthening of our cooperation for a better ASEM and a better world.

In that spirit, may I officially declare open ASEM People's Forum V. May you all have interesting and useful discussions. My best wishes for your good health and pleasant stay in Hanoi, the capital city of Vietnam, our City for Peace.

Thank you.

**Welcoming speech, by H.E. Vu Khoan,
Deputy Prime Minister of Vietnam**

Distinguished Guests,

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Government of Vietnam, I would like, in the first place, to convey the warmest greetings to the representatives of people's organizations of Asian and European countries who have come to Hanoi for the ASEM People's Forum V, and to wish the Forum splendid success. The people of Vietnam always bear in mind the valuable friendship, solidarity and support reserved by the people of Asian and European countries for our people's cause of national liberation and construction. Allow me to take this opportunity to ask you to transmit to the people of your respective countries the feelings of our people's profound gratitude and sincere friendship.

Friends,

As the host country, Vietnam has been making active preparations for the Fifth ASEM Summit. This poses not a minor challenge, but we are convinced that, with our own political will and the support of ASEM member countries and the entire people of Vietnam, we will fulfil our obligations. With 2.3 billion inhabitants and nearly 50% of the world's economy, Asian and European countries members of ASEM are playing an extremely important role for the prosperity of the world and peace of nations. Over the past 8 years since its beginning, the process of Asian-European cooperation has made considerable progress in all three tracks "economic cooperation and trade, political dialogue and cultural exchange". However, potentials for cooperation remain enormous. In both our continents major economies converge, many of which with high scientific-technological standards; the two continents are each other's top-ranking markets, and both are cradles of brilliant civilizations. Certainly, if such potentialities are fully tapped, it will lead to a still stronger development of Asian-European cooperation and bring practical benefits not only to the people of the two continents but also to mankind as a whole. That is why, "Further Revitalizing and Substantiating the Asia-Europe Partnership" has been unanimously chosen by ASEM member countries as the theme of their Fifth Summit in Hanoi. It is our confidence that the success of ASEM V will bring about a new impetus to Asian-European cooperation. The ASEM process has been one of cooperation not only among the governments of member countries but also among their people. In that spirit, the Government of Vietnam welcomes the initiative for holding, on the threshold of the ASEM V Summit, the ASEM People's Forum V under the theme "People's actions for human security in Asia and Europe". We also value highly the close coordination between the International Organizing Committee and Vietnam's National Organizing Committee during

the preparatory process. I am convinced that the activities at the Forum will facilitate open dialogues, exchanges of experience and information, agreement on a common action plan, and the strengthening of cooperation in the interests of the people of our countries and of a more efficient ASEM.

Friends,

I hope that your participation in the Hanoi Forum will provide you with an opportunity to contact Vietnamese people's organizations, to know more about Vietnamese history and culture, our people's achievements, as well as the problems facing us. The people of Vietnam are endeavouring to materialize a historic option, namely to make ours "a prosperous people, a strong country, and an equitable, democratic and advanced society". For this undertaking, our starting point is but a poor and backward land which, in addition, has suffered from the heavy consequences of long and fierce wars. The achievements recorded over the past nearly 20 years of renewal have resulted in remarkable changes in all aspects of social life. The motive force for Vietnam's vigorous development lies in the all-people great unity. Along with a fairly high economic growth rate, we have attached the greatest attention to solving social issues, e.g. in culture, education, health care, and especially hunger eradication and poverty alleviation, thereby narrowing down the income gaps among different population strata and geographic areas. For, after all, our highest goal is human welfare and social equity. Parallel to socio-economic development, democracy has been broadened constantly, the establishment of a law-governed state of the people, by the people and for the people stepped up, and the role of elected bodies heightened unceasingly; hundreds of social organizations and mass communication media have emerged, and mechanisms for grassroots democracy have developed vigorously under the guideline that everything related to the people's life should be "known by the people, discussed by the people, done by the people, and supervised by the people".

In international relations, we persist in a policy of openness in the spirit of "Vietnam is willing to be a friend and a reliable partner of all nations in the international community, striving for peace, national independence and development". Great have been the achievements recorded by our people; yet, there remain ahead a great deal of things to be done. Our priorities for the time to come are to maintain a high and sustainable growth rate and build an equitable, democratic and advanced society. To such ends, we need peace, stability, and friendly relations and equal cooperation among nations. We wish to strive, together with other nations, for a world of peace, equity and sustainable development. Such was Vietnam's fundamental objective when it joined others as co-founders of ASEM; such is also its earnest desire when it offers its hospitality to the Fifth ASEM Summit. Once more, allow me to wish the Forum the best of successes, and all of you useful and enjoyable days in Hanoi and elsewhere in our country.

Thank you.

**Speech by Sally Rousette,
on behalf of the International Organizing Committee**

On behalf of the International Organizing Committee of the Asia-Europe People's Forum, I wish to welcome everyone to the Fifth Asia-Europe People's Forum. This effort on the part of civil society sectors in Asia and Europe represents the deep concern of our organizations to create the space to make our voices heard in what we believe are matters that affect the lives of the majority of populations in the two continents. Linking this event to the official Asia-Europe Meetings through the past years since 1996 in Bangkok, two years later held in London, then Seoul and Copenhagen, has given us the opportunity to actively take up the social issues that have been missing in the official process, pushing for real participation of the civil society sector in the global Asia-Europe dialogue. Though welcomed and supported by some of our governments, we have yet to admit that the process of recognition of what the AEPF represents has not been easy and still poses a continuing challenge for our organizations.

Nonetheless, the AEPF has enabled us to join the other social movements in the other continents in constructing closer solidarity ties and actions, in this case, between European and Asian groups. Each time we hold the Forum in one country of Asia or likewise in Europe, we benefit from the rare opportunities of building links with the local and regional groups involved. It is a great and rare opportunity for Asian and European organizations and people's movements to gather together here in Vietnam today, and we are very happy to be here. We hope that this unique experience will help to maintain and widen new solidarity relationships with our Vietnamese friends in the future and strengthen the people-to-people ties in the whole region. Let us already note that with this Forum this process has begun with the unexpectedly large participation of various Asian movements.

And we deeply thank the National Organizing Commission and the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organizations for having accepted to undertake this big project with us, and for all that they are doing to make it a success.

Key-note speech: Challenging Times

*by Walden Bello,
Executive Director Focus on the Global South*

Madame Binh, comrades, and friends. Allow me first to express my appreciation and thanks to the International Organizing Committee and the National Organizing Committee of the Asia Europe People's Forum for inviting me to be one of tonight's keynote speakers. It is always a pleasure to come to Vietnam and engage in dialogue with people like the Vietnamese, who are wise in the ways of the world. It is always an honour to be chosen to speak to my prime community, international civil society.

We are assembled here in Hanoi at a critical moment. The US is entering the final phase of campaign leading up to presidential elections that will determine whether or not the world will experience four more years of unilateralism, imperial adventurism, and war. The World Trade Organization, the supreme institution of corporate - driven globalization, is back on its feet with adoption of Geneva Framework Document last month. A year ago, our movement was celebrating the collapse of the WTO's Fifth Ministerial in Cancun.

Less than 10 year ago, our movement was marginalized. The founding of the WTO in 1995 seemed to signal that globalization was the wave of the future, and that those who opposed it were destined to suffer the same fate as the Luddites that fought against the introduction of machines during the industrial revolution. Globalization was going to bring prosperity in its wake, and how could one oppose the promise of the greatest good for the greatest number that the transnational corporations, guided by the invisible hand of the market, were going to shower the world?

But the movement stood firm in the face of the scorn of the establishment during the 1990's when the boom in the world's mightiest capitalist engine - the US economy - appeared to be destined to go on and on. It was steadfast in its prediction that, driven by the logic of corporate profitability, the liberalization and deregulation of trade and finance would bring about crises, widen inequalities within and across countries, and increase global poverty.

The Asian financial crisis in 1997 provided sudden, savage proof of the destabilizing impact of eliminating controls from the flow of global capital. Indeed, what could be more savage than the fact that the crisis would bring 1 million people in Thailand and 22 million people in Indonesia below the poverty line in the space of a few weeks in the fateful summer of 1997s?

The Asian financial crisis was one of those momentous events that removed the scales from people's eyes and enabled them see cold, brutal realities. And one of those realities was the fact that the free market policies that the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank imposed on some 100 developing and transitional economies had included, in all but a vicious cycle of economic stagnation, poverty and inequality. The year of 2001 brought us not only Sept. 11. 2001 was also the year of reckoning for free - market fundamentalism - the year that the Argentine economy, the poster boy of neoliberal economics, crashed, while in the United States, the contradictions of finance - driven, deregulated global capitalism wiped out \$,46 trillion in investor wealth- haft of the US's gross domestic product- and inaugurated a period of stagnation and rising unemployment.

As global capitalism moved from crisis to crisis, people organized in the streets, in work places, in the political arena to counter its destructive logic. In December 1999, massive street resistance by over 50,000 demonstrators combined with a revolt of the developing governments inside the Seattle convention centre to bring down the third ministerial of the WTO. Global protests also eroded the legitimacy of the IMF and the World Bank, the two other pillars of global economic governance, albeit in less dramatic fashion. Anti-neoliberal regimes came to power in Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, and Ecuador. The fifth ministerial meeting in Cancun, an event associated in many people's minds with the altruistic suicide of the Korean farmer Lee Kyung-Hae at the barricades, became Seattle II. And, just three weeks ago, in Miami, the same alliance of civil society and developing country governments forced Washington to retreat from the neoliberal program of radical liberalization of trade, finance, and investment that it had threatened to impose in the western hemisphere via the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

Justice and equity has been one thrust of our movement. The other has been peace. For we never believed the pro-globalization argument that accelerated globalization would bring about the reign of "perpetual peace". Indeed, we warned that as globalization proceeded, its economically and social destabilizing effects would multiply conflicts and insecurities. Driven by corporate logic, globalization, we seek to batter down opposition, seize control of natural resources, and secure markets.

It gave us no pleasure that we were proved right. Instead, the movements swung into action, becoming a global force for justice and peace, that mobilized tens of millions of people throughout the world on Feb. 15, 2003, against the planned invasion of Iraq. We did not succeed in stopping the American and British invasion, but we have surely contributed to delegitimizing the Occupation and made it increasingly difficult for invaders that brazenly violated international law and many rules of the Geneva Convention to remain in Iraq.

The New York Times, on the occasion of the Feb. 15, 2003, march, said that there are only two superpowers left in the world today, the United States and global civil society. Let me add that I have no doubt that the forces of justice and peace will prevail over the contemporary incarnation of empire, blood, terror, and greed that is the USA.

Our movement is on the ascendant. But our agenda is massive, our tasks formidable. To name just a few: We have to drive the US out of Iraq and Afghanistan. We must stop Israel from destroying the Palestinian people. We must impose the rule of law on outlaw, rogue states like the US, Britain, and Israel.

I would like to take this opportunity to focus on the war in Iraq. Over the last few months, there have been two defining events. One was the expose of systematic sexual abuse at the Abu Ghraib prison facility outside Baghdad. The second was the uprising in Fallujah in April.

The Abu Ghraib scandal, which has angered most of the world and shamed most Americans, stripped the last shred of legitimacy from the US presence in Iraq. The uprising in Fallujah, which saw Iraqi men, women, and children fighters defeat the elite of Washington's colonial legions, the US Marines, was the turning point of the Iraqi war of national liberation. It showed that the Iraqi resistance is not one carried out by remnants of the Saddam Hussein regime but one that is widespread, popular, and on the ascendant.

Yet Washington hangs in despite the daily attacks on its troops by the resistance. Major reason is that the situation in Iraq will not be determined by the events in Iraq alone but also be developments in the US and internationally. The stalemate between the US and the Iraqi resistance can only be broken by one thing: a strong global anti-war movement such as that which took to the streets daily and in the thousands before and after the Tet Offensive in 1968. So far that has not materialized, though disillusionment with US policy in Iraq has spread to a majority of the US public, especially after Abu Ghraib.

Indeed, at the very time that it is most needed by the people of Iraq, the international peace movement has had trouble getting into gear. The demonstrations on March 20, 2004, were significantly smaller than the Feb.15, 2003, when tens of millions marched throughout the world against the projected invasion of Iraq. The kind of international mass pressure that makes an impact on policymakers - the daily staging of demonstration after demonstration in hundreds of thousands in city after city - is simply not in evidence, at least not yet.

Perhaps a major part of the reason is that a significant part of the international peace movement, particularly in Europe and the United States, hesitates to legitimize the Iraqi resistance. Who are they? Can we really support them? These question have increasingly

been flung at me and other advocates of an unconditional military and political withdrawal from Iraq. The use of suicide as a political weapon continues to bother many US and European activists who were repelled by statements such as that of the Palestinian leaders who proudly assert that suicide bombers were the oppressed people's equivalent of the F-16. The role of Islamic fundamentalists and the possibility that, on account of the presence of a majority Shiite population, a post - US Iraq could turn into an Islamic state a la Iran is also a matter of great concern.

Yet there has never been any pretty movement for national liberation or independence. Many Western progressive were also repelled by some of the methods of the "Mau Mau" movement in Kenya, the FLN in Algeria, the NLF here in Vietnam itself. What western progressives forget is that national liberation movements are not asking them mainly for ideological or political support. What they really want from the outside is international pressure for the withdrawal of an illegitimate occupying power so that internal forces can have the space to forge a truly national government based on their unique processes. Until they give up this dream of having an ideal liberation movement tailored to their values and discourses, US and western peace activists will continue to be trapped within a paradigm of imposing their terms on other people.

But if the future in Iraq itself continues to hang in the balance, the Iraqi resistance has already transformed the global equation. The US is weaker today than it was before May 1, 2003. The Atlantic Alliance that won the Cold War no longer functions. The situation in Afghanistan is more unstable now than last year, and US troops are also pinned down there. Islamic revivalism, against which the US has ranged itself, is now more vigorously spreading. In Latin America, we now have government in Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, and Bolivia that we avowedly against the old neoliberal economic policies imposed by Washington.

Owing to its hubris, the US is suffering from that fatal disease of all empires - imperial overstretch. Our role, to echo that great Cuban revolutionary Che Guevara, is to worsen this crisis of overextension, not only by creating or expanding movement of international solidarity against the US in Iraq, the US - Israel axis in Palestine, and the creeping US intervention in Columbia. It is also to give birth or reinvigorate struggles against the US imperial presence in our own countries and regions. The struggle against the US bases in Northeast Asia and the renewed US military presence via the so -called war on Terror in Southeast Asia is one that we Asians must rededicate ourselves to.

Struggle against imperialism and war is one front of our struggle. The other front is the struggle to change the rules of the global economy, for it is the logic of global capitalism whose fountainheads are the US, the European Union, and Japan that is the source of the disruption of society and of the environment. The challenge here goes

beyond simply disempowering institutions like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization, though this task must not be underestimated - witness, for instance, the recent resurrection in Geneva of the WTO, which many of us thought had suffered a major blow to its foundations in Cancun.

The challenge is that even as we deconstruct the old, we dare to imagine and win over people to our visions and programs for the few. Contrary to the claims of the ideologues of the establishment, the principles that would serve as the pillars of a new global order are present. The primordial principle is that instead of the economy, the market, driving society, the market must be - to use the image of the great Hungarian Social Democrat Kark Polanyi - "reembedded" in society and governed by the overarching values of community, solidarity, justice and equity. At the international level, the global economy must be deglobalized or rid of the distorting, disfiguring logic of corporate profitability and truly internationalized, meaning that participation in the international economy must serve to strengthen and develop rather than disintegrate and destroy local and national economies.

The perspective and principles are there; the challenge is how each society can articulate these principles and programme in unique ways that respond to their values, their rhythms, their personality as societies. Call it post- modern, but central to our movement is the conviction that, in contrast to the belief common to both neoliberalism and bureaucratic socialism, there is no one shoe that will fit all. It is no longer a question of an alternative but of alternatives.

But there is an urgency to the task of articulating credible and viable alternatives to the global community, for the dying spasms of old orders have always presented not just great opportunity but great risk. At the beginning of the 20th century, the revolutionary thinker Rosa Luxemburg made her famous comment about the possibility that the future might belong to "barbarism". Barbarism in the form of fascism nearly triumphed in the 1930's and 1940's. Today, corporate - driven globalization is creating so much of the same instability, resentment, and crisis that are the breeding grounds of fascist, fanatical, and authoritarian populist movements. Globalization not only has lost its promise but it is embittering many in Europe, the United States, Latin America and Asia. The crisis of global capitalism creates opportunities for charismatic individuals who speak anti - IMF language, engage in the politics of populism, but whose vision of the future is and authoritarian, not - too democratic one. Our friends from Thailand are familiar with this phenomenon.

The forces representing human solidarity and community have no choice but to step in quickly convince the disenchanted masses that, indeed, as the banner of World Social Forum in Porto Alegre proclaims, "Another world is possible". For the alternative is, as

in the 1930's, to see the vacuum filled by terrorists, demagogues of the religious and secular Right, and the purveyors of irrationality and nihilism.

The future is not guaranteed. It lies in the balance. Let us remember that our personal act of international in the struggle may be the element that will tip that fine balance in favour of the forces of justice, peace, and solidarity.

Key-note speech: A Perspective from Europe

by *Yves Berthelot*¹

French Committee of International Solidarity, France

The message that the Asia-Europe People's Forum will transmit to the Fifth Asia- Europe Meeting matters for at least two reasons. First, because Heads of States and Governments need to hear the voice of the people who are willing to live in our common world enjoying development, human security, peace, equity, and brotherhood. Second, because people have recommendations to make in order to address their common problems, including the need for interregional dialogue as an essential requisite for civilising globalisation.

It is because I believe that globalisation, as conceived and managed today, is a threat to human security, that I will devote the first part of my presentation to its nature and to some possible remedies. But, thereafter, because I believe that we are facing even more difficult challenges to which we have no clear answer, I will raise a few questions calling for a common and humble effort of reflection.

Globalisation: facts, ideology, and some remedies:

In the course of the 1980s the word "globalisation" came into fashion to describe what many felt to be a new and central reality of the times. This "reality" was supposed to be first the result of technological progress that had reduced the costs and the risks of international communications and transports, and dramatically increased the capacity to process information. Second, the progressive removal of trade barriers in industrialised countries since World War II and, since the 1980s, the deregulation of financial markets and privatisation were expected to give its full effect to technical progress and managerial rationalisation in the developing world and, after 1990, in countries with economies in transition.

Facts:

It cannot be denied that there has been significant technical progress in recent years. But, can it really be claimed that the pace of change has been greater than in the late 19th century when the speed of communication between Europe and North America, for

¹ *Yves Berthelot former Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe (UN-ECE) is President of the French Committee for International Solidarity (CFSI) and of Political and Ethical Knowledge on Economic Activities (PEKEA). He is Senior Research Fellow of UNITAR and of the City University of New York*

example, was reduced in the 1860s from several days' sailing time to the minute or so that it took to send a telegraph message? The point here is that the rupture in the way of doing business introduced over the last two decades by the new information technology is not without precedent of similar magnitude, but also that we cannot ignore these progresses but have to harness them to the benefit of all and, not, of a minority.

Statistical data show, first, contrary to what could be expected given the relentless publicity about the "global village" and global markets, that the external trade of the broad regions of the world evolved towards a much closer integration of the countries within each region rather than towards a global engagement. Second fact, statistics show that the more a region is industrialised, the more important is its intra regional trade. The regional trade concentration has been a long-standing phenomenon in Western Europe. The same phenomenon occurred in Latin America and Asia with the diversification of their economies. For Africa and the Middle East, the very low level of regional integration reflects the countries' continuing dependence on a few commodities exported throughout the world and their low level of industrialisation.

With the liberalisation of capital movement, it was expected that capital flows would have globalised. But, foreign direct investments for which data are available replicate, if slightly less sharply, the pattern of regional trade concentration. Even if FDI data by provenance and destination are not among the most reliable of economic statistics, they suggest indeed that there is no globalisation of Western European Investments, but increasing concentration in the region. The evolution in Asia and Latin America goes in the same direction.

Globalisation and ideology:

The ideological dimension of globalisation is not new either. Since the word appeared, it has been legitimised by the belief, shared by some policy makers, academics, and entrepreneurs, that open trade and investment regimes would lead not only to faster growth for the world economy but also to increasing convergence of national incomes per head across the world. To achieve these objectives, advocates of globalisation recommended releasing market forces by limiting the economic role of the state to securing the good functioning of markets, and by avoiding interference with market forces. "In this normative mode, so to speak, the globalisation agenda turns out to be the traditional neo-classical, neoliberal agenda updated for a world where geographic distance is alleged to have little significance for business activity".²

² "Globalization: A European Perspective", note prepared by the secretariat of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe to the Interactive Debate with Heads of UN Regional Commissions at the UNCTAD X Meeting, Bangkok, February 2000.

The ideology is not new and, it does not surprise us that globalisation failed to deliver its promises: it did not improve the situation of all throughout the world as income gaps within and between countries increased. The United Nations Secretary General challenged recently this dogma: "Trade is the most visible manifestation of globalisation. It has proved its ability to deliver jobs and wealth for some. Yet there is widespread unease, and even distrust, about the new economic and technological space we inhabit. So many people have yet to benefit, and in the developing world there has been great dislocation without a safety net."³ Maybe, finally, Harry Kissinger's cynical vision has the merit of reconciling ideology and politics when he describes globalisation as an instrument of US hegemony: "what is called globalisation is really another name for the dominant role of the United States." It is because we believe that hegemony is dangerous for human security that we have to fight the ideological dimension of globalisation through, in a first step, the strengthening of the regions.

Regionalisation as a remedy to some damage of globalisation:

The scandal of hunger and of the social irresponsibility of some multinational corporations illustrate remedies that regionalisation could bring to problems that concern our two regions even if apparently in opposite manners.

- *The scandal of hunger:*

The desire of governments to feed urban citizens at low cost, as well as bilateral pressures of food exporting countries, conditions imposed by International Financial Institutions in the framework of structural adjustment programs or debt alleviation mechanisms, and WTO rules led progressively to food trade liberalisation in most developing countries and countries with economies in transition, far more than in Europe and United States. This puts the small farmers of these countries in direct competition with farmers from developed countries who have benefited from state support for decades and whose exports are directly or indirectly subsidised. The competition is obviously unfair and the main cause of hunger for poor farmers who, because of declining prices and of compulsory expenditures such as housing, health care, education, and food, are forced to sell an increasing share of their production, leaving their families without enough to eat and themselves without the resources to buy the equipment and inputs necessary to increase productivity.

Markets do not adjust production to demand for many agricultural products, as peasants, who cannot shift to other productions or activities, tend to allocate a higher percentage and this creates over supply and accelerates the fall of prices. In most of the OECD countries

³ *In the statement of the UN Secretary General at the WTO Summit delivered by Rubens RICUPERO, Secretary General of UNCTAD, in Cancun, 10 September 2003.*

subsidies permit peasants to survive. This is not the case in developing countries. Developing countries. They should gain food sovereignty in order to recover the necessary policy space to conduct their agricultural policies and fight against hunger. In particular, the right to impose duties on food imports should be recognised as part of a strategy to increase food security and concretise the right to adequate food for both small farmers and vulnerable urban dwellers. Countries would derive an advantage from pursuing such policies at an appropriate regional level for, at least, two reasons. The first is that contrary to industry, agriculture is diversified even in poor developing countries. Operating on a regional basis could help overcome climatic hazards, induce regional trade, promote the harmonisation of food norms, and facilitate further integration in other sectors. Second, a group of countries carries more weight in international negotiations or vis-à-vis financial institutions for obtaining in international forums the margin of manoeuvre they feel necessary to fight against hunger.

- *The social irresponsibility of some corporations:*

There is a need for stronger corporate governance. This is not to say that all corporations or enterprises are corrupt. But the need in general for the development of more stringent guidelines and rules is clear. As it stands in some corporations, the existing accounting and reporting mechanisms can be manipulated in order to make losses or benefits appear where more advantageous. This is an excuse for delocalisation and may lead to organising the bankruptcy of a sound subsidiary, leaving creditors and employees without recourse and eventually retirees with under-financed pension liabilities. The liberal answer is that the market will eventually sanction wrong behaviour. It is not convincing. As the dramatic begging thy neighbour policies of the 1930s are now practised by big companies, the international debate should address the responsibilities of the firms vis-à-vis customers, employees and shareholders and consider if the absolute priority given to shareholders during the last twenty years is not undermining the whole system. This would provide a basis for condemning irresponsible enterprises. It will not be easy at the global level "in a political climate in which corporate insiders get pretty much what they want" and the politicians who do their bidding are not likely to pay any price"⁴: But Europe and Asia should start and, if they establish criteria and legal obligations that countries concerned with the recent drift of the capitalist system could apply, it will have an impact on the rest of the world.

The remarks made above and the examples given point to the importance of regions and interregional relations, but the latter are still in need of proper practices, clear goals, and concrete results. They have to transform dialogues into negotiations of agreements, to

⁴ See Paul KRUGMAN "The U.S. corporate system still needs fixing" in the *International Herald Tribune* Saturday-Sunday, January 10-11 2004.

find ways to compensate imbalances between parties and to prove that they have a positive impact on global negotiations. If they succeed, they will have a decisive influence in the management of globalisation, if not, they will remain another layer of discussion, useful but time consuming.

To succeed there are at least two conditions. First the authorities of the regional groupings should have delegation of authority and clear mandates to take initiatives and explore possible interregional agreements. This is not often the case as illustrated in a recent encounter between the EU and ASEAN, where Pascal Lamy, the European Commissioner, found himself alone vis-à-vis ministers from each ASEAN country who had divergences among themselves on what to achieve and how. Second, if authority is delegated to regional entities to conduct regional policies and negotiate interregional agreements, then democratic control of these policies and agreement should be exercised at the regional level. In Europe it remains to be seen, if the Project of Constitution is adopted, how the Parliament and the Commission will exercise their power and how the principles of participatory democracy (Article I-46) will be applied. The civil society organisations should be able to make known their views and to hold regular dialogue with the EU Institutions; they should be consulted by the Commission to ensure that the Union's actions are coherent and transparent. A minimum of one million citizens could invite the Commission "to submit any appropriate proposal on matters where citizens consider that a legal act of the Union is required for the purpose of implementing the Constitution". This goes in the right direction. But, it will depend on the CSO to make it effective or cosmetic.

A few questions to be addressed:

Beyond the criticism of globalisation for its failure to reduce gaps between rich and poor, there are other fundamental questions to raise. First, a global approach of the economy should have been able to more strongly limit the damage to the environment than it has actually done. Beyond the easy expression of "sustainable development", action is needed to change behaviours of consumers and producers rather than leaving rules on the book and conducting a few corrective actions. Conducted by enterprises with the dominant objective of short-term maximisation of the value of the stocks and by government striving for GDP growth, economic activities are now threatening the future of our children more than they are building it, a serious threat to human security. It is now admitted that if all developing countries, and first of all those of Asia, were to enjoy the pattern of consumption of the United States or Europe, the pressure on natural resources, including air and water, would be unsustainable. This is difficult to say here as it could be interpreted as denying other people the right to enjoy OECD standards. But, it means simply that the OECD model is not adapted to present circumstances: therefore, people

from OECD countries will have to change their way of life and people from other parts of the world will have to change their implicit model. Second, we still all equate more to better, when in fact more threatens the future. This, also, is particularly difficult to say when so many people are suffering from hunger and cannot benefit from their human right to "adequate conditions of living". But, according to the FAO, the world food production exceeded nutrition needs by 23% in 2000, and market forces conduct to invent needs for the wealthy and to neglect basic needs and services for the poor.

If "more" is no longer "better", to produce more is not the priority. Rather the priority is to better share production capacity, access to production means, and to share them both with all the countries of the world and with future generations. "The question becomes: "to produce more? Maybe - but, what, why, for whom and for doing what?" The economic rationality moves to other ground. The criterion is no more the efficiency of the productive apparatus but its capacity to cover human basic needs. ... From competition we move to solidarity".⁵ But then, how to agree on basic human needs, which is closely related to societal values, and how to appreciate the rationality of economic policies? The arbitration between different possible answers can only come from a democratic debate at the end of which the society designs its social goals for a period of time and judges policies on their capacity to meet them.

Two concluding remarks:

To ensure that regional entities conduct internal and external policies for people and that national economic policies aim at meeting basic human needs for today and tomorrow, CSO have to be present and active. Beyond demonstrations, they have to work daily, modestly and perseveringly, at the local, national, regional, and global levels. At each level, they can promote ideas and contribute to good practices. It is my own experience in the UN that well prepared NGOs with clear and coherent goals can influence decisions and have their proposals endorsed by governments in international conventions. For them to fully play their role at the local, national and regional levels, it matters that their rights and responsibilities be fully recognised in institutions, laws and rules and that, on major issues, governments adopt rights-based approaches, i.e. that identify claims and claim holders, duty bearers, remedies, and secure participation. It is one of the messages that, I think, our Forum should convey to governments and peoples.

A second message is not to be shy in affirming that social and cultural values are different from one people to another and in drawing the consequences of this fact. Because of the differences, the answers to the questions raised above will be different

⁵ René PASSET, *Pourquoi la question de l'éthique devient-elle incontournable en économie? Communication to the General Assembly of Political and Ethical Knowledge on Economic Activities, PEKEA, Rennes December 2003.*

from one people to another, from one country to another, from one region to another. This is not a threat as there is no need for a single answer, contrary to what the theoreticians of globalisation would like us to think. But, there is a need for a dialogue between the peoples of different cultures and civilisations that will lead to mutual recognition and benefit and to peace. Vietnam has, for centuries, fought successfully for its culture and Michelet more than a century ago described wonderfully the unity and diversity of Europe: "Europe is not a half hazard collection of a simple juxtaposition of peoples; it is a vast harmonic instrument in which each nationality is a chord with its own tone. Everyone is necessary in itself and in relation to the others. Take one away and you alter the whole, rendering it unviable, discordant, ... silent". Let Asia and Europe develop two harmonic instruments and play together in the world orchestra. This could be our second message.

**Key-note speech: "People's action for human security:
A Perspective from Vietnam",**

*by Mme. Nguyen Thi Binh,
Former Vice President of Vietnam,
President of the Vietnam Peace and Development Foundation*

Distinguished Guests,

Friends,

The ASEM Summit V is going to be held under the theme “Further Revitalizing and Substantiating the Asia-Europe Partnership”; whereas our ASEM People’s Forum V is being held under the theme “People’s Actions for Human Security in Asia and Europe”. They constitute a meaningful combination. Further revitalization and substantiation of the partnership among governments should ultimately aim at better meeting people’s interests, including human security as one of the most essential issues. The theme of our Forum leads us to this question: “what will we – the people’s organizations in ASEM member countries – do for that goal?”. That is a positive approach that takes the people as the key actors. In my opinion, human security represents a very vast and comprehensive concept. In a nutshell, it composes all conditions that guarantee ensure the survival, development and maximization of each and every human being. Are those conditions getting any better? What are the challenges and threats to human security and what are the causes? What can and should we do to contribute to the promotion of human security in our continents, and how? In my perspective, they constitute the focus of our discussions at this Forum. First, regarding conditions for human survival, these are assurance for one of the most important and sacred rights of human beings – the right to life. For that right to be realized, there needs to be peace in the first place, instead of wars and violence. The world of today can not be said to have become safer and more secured when wars of aggression and terrorist acts are continuing to kill numerous innocent lives, among them many are women and children. Why has terrorism broken out? Can the so-called “war against terrorism”, which has been going on, make the world a more secured and safer place? What should be done to address the root causes of terrorism?

The Cold War has gone for more than a decade now? However, we are still witnessing the enhancement and enlargement of military alliances, the ever increase of military expenditures in the world and in our regions, and the introduction of a doctrine on “pre-emption”. Are these effective solutions to ensure peace and security? From our own historical experiences, we Vietnamese people deeply cherish the right to life, a life in peace, freedom and independence. The past 30 years since the end of the war still see

grace war aftermath inflicting on our people. Millions of Vietnamese adults are tormented by diseases; hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese children either die prematurely or live with birth defects due to the US Agent Orange/Dioxin. These are unrecoverable pains we are suffering. Therefore, we are sincerely keen on striving, together with you, for a world of peace, non-use of force and no threat to use force, respect for independence, sovereignty, and equality among nations. These are precondition that guarantee all the fundamental rights of each and every human being.

Second, regarding rights to development, we need a more equitable and humane globalization and a development pattern really for the people. We do not need an economic order that drives people into blind competition. Nor can we accept an economic development paradigm that destroys the environment and exhausts natural resources, let alone a development paradigm that impoverishes and enslaves human beings. Can Asia-Europe partnership be built on an economic cooperation that works for a more equitable and sustainable development? In my opinion, while enhanced economic cooperation becomes imperative, agreements on trade, investment, labor, etc. must help eradicate hunger and reduce poverty, and narrow down the development gaps amongst countries on the basis of respect for economic sovereignty of each nation. Although each nation may have her own development models and policies, the people of all lands do share the same desire of having decent housing, employment and incomes, access to education and health care, and support assistance for the disadvantaged. Naturally, the extent to which social demands are met depends on economic development levels. Yet, we need to ensure that higher economic development should result in better response to social needs, and fewer poor people, not the other way around.

In Vietnam, we are pursuing a socialist-oriented market economy. Such pursuit is necessary to release the productive power and develop production forces. Nevertheless, the market economy in the context of globalization also poses an array of challenges. Unemployment, under-employment, corruption and social vices are among constant concerns of the entire society. The economic growth level is low, development remains uneven, parts of the population still face many difficulties. Trade barriers and unfair rulings on trade disputes are directly affecting the interests of millions of working people, especially farmers. Under the current international economic order, it is a must for us to accede to the World Trade Organization to expand our markets, attract more foreign investment, and enjoy a legitimate status to protect our economic interests. Yet, we are well aware of the negative aspects of that imposed order, particularly on poorer countries. Therefore, we earnestly wish work more closely with you and all other people around the world for an international economic order that ensures equitable, humane and sustainable development. Third, regarding the issue “democracy and people’s rights”, which I want to discuss with you. Democracy does not merely mean suffrage. The essence of

democracy lies in the implementation of human rights, and the rights of the people as masters. To that end, people need accurate and sufficient information, participation in processes of decision formulation, implementation and supervision, or to put in our way, “people know, discuss, implement and inspect”. In this connection, I like to share with you some thoughts: Realization of democracy must be immune from the influence of money on information, election, policy making and law enforcement. Otherwise, the democratic institution in the final analysis will essentially be the theater for power rivalry among wealthy class.

Democracy implies not only an adequate definition of rights but, more importantly, also the creation of equal opportunities for the people to exercise these rights, including education, access to information, knowledge of laws, legal services, etc. Freedom and democracy have long been legitimate aspirations of humankind. Today's achievements of freedom and democracy do not come from windfalls, but from a hard and enduring struggle of oppressed populations, in conformity with economic, cultural and social settings of each country. That struggle needs to be perseveringly continued in every community and country toward our common target. We resolutely negate fascism, militarism and all forms of suppression, slavery, as well as racial, ethnic, religious, sexual discrimination. We are all united in that struggle. However, the building and completion of a socio-political regime in each country must be determined by its own people in line with their desires and conditions. There should be no imposition of any ready-made model. The most important criteria to judge the progressiveness and appropriateness of a regime are whether the people's living standards are increasingly improved, and whether their role is increasingly prompted. And the best judgement should be made by the people of that country themselves. Vietnam has over the years worked hard to consolidate our law-governed State and build up a legal system to ensure the people's rights. The role of people's organizations has been more and more uplifted. The status of women in the society has been improved significantly. Yet, we still have a lot to do, including to continue improving the people's education levels, further improve the legal system, increase transparency and effectiveness of law enforcement and administrative reform, and further develop mechanisms to better promote the people's rights as masters. Anyway, I can assure you that our consistent objective remains one of building a State of the people, by the people and for the people. Last but not least, I wish to convey to you our strong belief in the power of the people, and of unity, as Ho Chi Minh said: “Unity, unity, great unity. Success, success, great success”. It is my hope that this Forum will serve as a chance for us to enhance our unity and solidarity in the common struggle for a better ASEM and a better world and for wellbeing of our peoples.

Thank you for your attention.