

SPEECH OF HUU NGHI (FRIENDSHIP) VILLAGE

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of 160 victims of Agent Orange/dioxin who are cared for and given medical treatment at the Huu Nghi (Friendship) Village, under the Vietnam Veterans' Association, I'd like to express our thanks and wish you all the best of health and the conference a success. The Huu Nghi Village has been assigned by the Vietnam Veterans' Association the task to receive and care for war veterans, former young volunteers and their children who are affected by Agent Orange/dioxin left by the US war of aggression in Vietnam. The village always caters 40 war veterans and 120 children with disabilities.

For the 40 war veterans and former young volunteers, when receiving them into the Village, they are given check ups, blood tests and X-rays ... diagnosis for later treatment with traditional and western medicines. For very serious cases that need surgery, we have to send them to hospitals – both military and civilian for help. After two months of health recovery, they are sent back to their families and the Village receives new patients. By so doing, the Village has so far received 6 batches, comprising 240 war veterans and former young volunteers.

- For children and grandchildren of war veterans, about 120 children regularly stay in the Village: They are given orthopedic operations on limbs, medical treatment and functional rehabilitation. When their health is stable, depending on the placement tests, they are put in different general education classes, from grade 1 to grade 5. And children with better health conditions attend job training classes such as artificial flower-making, embroidery, dress making, or computer science. After 2 –3 years, when their health is stable and they have learnt a job, they are sent back to their families and communities and then the Village receives new children and the cycle starts again. Since being established on March 18, 1998, the Village has cared for 2,280 war veterans and former young

volunteers and 532 children from 35 provinces and cities from Quang Ngai Province upward to northern provinces and cities.

- Those who have been admitted into the village suffer from different ailments. Some war veterans and former young volunteers have stomach ache, liver, spleen and kidney diseases and others have warts and tumors on their whole body and suffer at least 2 – 3 diseases.

For children, they are even more pitiful with different disabilities: deaf and dumb, blind, loss of memory, rolled up limbs and deformities. Some can neither walk nor sit up. Some, at the age of 15, 16, but look like children of 5, 6 years old. Others cannot realize who their parents are and cannot remember even their names. The devil poison has greatly damaged human health, its effect is transferred from parents to children and even grandchildren (3rd generation). Naive children and stunted war veterans are eroded by Agent Orange/dioxin day and night. Their families have never enjoyed full happiness and they themselves have never been relaxed and peaceful. They are ill-fated children of parents affected by Agent Orange/dioxin, born with birth defects. They need love, compassion, support and shelter to relieve their complex to make great stride to quickly integrate into family and community.

To care for those two target groups of war veterans and children, we mainly rely on the assistance given by the International Committee on Friendship Villages comprising five countries: France, Germany, USA, Japan and Canada, and local and international organizations and individuals. For this reason, we cannot avoid being financially passive in the care, medical treatment and functional rehabilitation for affected war veterans, former young volunteers and children.

Once again, I wish you the best of health and great success.

Thank you for your attention.