



April 3, 2015

To: H.E. Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung

Re: Vietnam's Restrictive Visa Procedures

Dear Mr. Prime Minister,

The American Chamber of Commerce is concerned that the recently enacted Law No.47/2014/QH13 ("**Law 47**") on foreigners' entry into, exit from, transit through and residence in Vietnam with effect from January 1st, 2015 and Circular No. 04/2015/TT-BCA of the Ministry of Public Security on the forms of papers in respect of entry, exit and residence of foreigners in Vietnam with effect from February 25th, 2015, may have serious negative consequences for Vietnam's business and tourism environment. Specifically, Articles 8 and 9 of Law 47 limit the period of validity of a visa for people who come to Vietnam as tourists to three months (Article 8, Clause 17). Moreover, visas may not be extended.

Law 47 will directly and significantly alter US visa rules. The US provides visas to citizens of Vietnam and other countries on a strictly reciprocal basis. Therefore, the US will no longer be able to grant B1 visas (travelers to the US to conduct business) and B2 visas (tourists) to Vietnamese citizens, which are valid for multiple entries and valid for up to one year as was previously possible. It will have to implement the more restrictive policy followed by Vietnam.

In 2014, U.S. imports from Vietnam exceeded US\$ 30 billion, and Vietnam was the top ASEAN exporter to the U.S. By 2020, U.S. imports from Vietnam are projected to exceed \$60 billion, if present trends continue. The TPP Agreement is expected to be concluded soon. It provides huge possibilities for increased trade and investment between Vietnam and the U.S. At a time when business and trade relations between Vietnam and the US are multiplying, in the framework of the "Comprehensive Partnership" announced during President Truong Tan Sang's July 2013 visit to the U.S., these new rules would constitute a significant negative development.

Business people from Vietnam and the US often need to travel back and forth while a transaction is being negotiated or finalized or while distribution networks are being established or to attend trade shows. New visa rules for visitors from both countries would introduce very significant and burdensome changes that will almost certainly change the commercial and trade environment for citizens of both countries. It will no longer be possible for Vietnamese citizens to obtain a long term B1 visa to make multiple



visits to the US. They will be required to apply for a visa for each visit with all of the attendant cost, loss of time, and loss of opportunity that will occur. Such a change will have a significant downside impact on two-way travel for both ordinary citizens and business travelers.

Visits to Vietnam by American tourists will be affected. There is every reason to believe that travel to Vietnam by American tourists should be encouraged, not discouraged. Data show that American tourists spend significantly more money during visits to Vietnam than many other groups. In 2014, nearly 450,000 US citizens visited Vietnam, the fourth highest country, and spent over US\$ 500,000,000.

Furthermore, in addition to the ASEAN countries, citizens from Denmark, Finland, Japan, Norway, Russia, the Republic of Korea, and Sweden benefit from a limited visa waiver program. We understand that Vietnam is currently considering approving additional countries for the program, but, oddly, the United States is not among them. The United States and Vietnam are working to conclude Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations in 2015. Of the other 11 TPP countries, only Vietnam requires visas of American short-term business travelers and tourists.

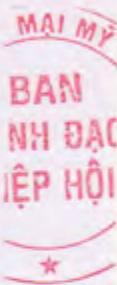
Among the other ASEAN member states, the US issues visas valid for 10 years to 5 countries - Brunei, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. All of these countries do not require visas from US for short-term business travelers and tourism. Indonesia, which requires visas for US citizens, receives visas valid for 5 years from United States. Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar are the only three ASEAN countries that receive 3-month visas from the United States for business and tourist travelers.

At a time when Vietnam is trying to enhance tourism and commercial activity, we find such visa changes in Vietnam, with the consequent reciprocal mandated visa changes in the US, to be a step backward in the development of a robust relationship between our countries. It is also quite unlike what is generally happening elsewhere where countries are relaxing rather than tightening visa requirements that affect trade and commerce. The US and China, for example, have recently agreed to grant each other's citizens 10 year visas to facilitate business, travel and understanding.

We respectfully request the Government to re-examine this policy. We suggest that it grant exemption or clarifications to this onerous policy in order to permit continued easy travel between our countries for both business travelers and tourists.

Yours sincerely,

Sherry S. Boger



American Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam

Also to:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Minister of Public Security

Minister of Planning and Investment

Minister of Trade and Industry

Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism

Ministry of Justice

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