



Stadt Bern
Stadtpräsident

“Laudatio for Mr. Nguyen Dinh Xuan”

Award of the Mayor of the City of Bern, Hanoi, April 20, 2010

Dear Mr. Nguyen Dinh Xuan

Dear

Excellencies

Ladies and Gentleman

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to be here today and to welcome you to the Award Ceremony Presentation to honour Mr. Xuan's efforts for the protection of Vietnam's bears.

But before doing so I would like to thank the City of Hanoi whose guest I am these days. It is an honour for me to be here during the time the city celebrates its millennium anniversary. If I would want to see the day my city is going to celebrate its 1000th anniversary, I do have to stay another 150 years in office.

Even though Switzerland and Vietnam are worlds apart, this country makes it regularly to the headlines in Europe. Vietnam's incredible economic growth, the quick reduction of poverty and its swift integration into the international system are well known.

Vietnam will achieve middle income status by the end of this year and I would like to congratulate the Vietnamese government and its people for this impressive achievement.

However, this enormous success comes at a cost. The environment is carrying the burden of the economic development: Raising pollution levels, demographic pressure, loss of habitat are just a few of the consequences.

During the preparation of my visit the Ambassador of Switzerland mentioned to me the work of Education for Nature Vietnam. I decided that I do want to try to support their amazing and important work. I was of course especially pleased by their efforts for the protection of Vietnam's bears.

My city has a very close historical and cultural link with this amazing animal. Legend tells that in 1160 the founder of our city decided that the first animal he is going to hunt in the forests will give its name to the city; it was a bear. This is may be not the perfect story to tell at an award ceremony where somebody is honoured for its support to protect the bear.

But believe me, since then the story between the bear and my city became a love story. Nowadays the animal is not only the symbol of our city but can be literally found everywhere in town: in form of toys and chocolates and even our very successful Ice Hockey Team is called “The Bears”.

However, most famous is probably the new bear park which is one of the tourist highlights of my city. So for me the decision to support the cause of the protection of bears was a very easy one.

The enthusiastic and tireless work of a group of people is sometimes not enough. It needs a person who lends its public face or position to the cause. That is where Mr. Nguyen Dinh Xuan comes into play.

As a member of the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and National Park Director, he has significantly contributed to nature and environment preservation. His contributions for the protection of bears but also other endangered wild animals can not be overstated.

That's why it is my great pleasure to honor today Mr. Xuan's efforts with the "Award of the Mayor of the City of Bern". I hope that with this recognition the work to protect Vietnam's bears will receive even more public attention and provide further momentum to the cause.