



Stadt Bern
Stadtpräsident

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40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Vietnam and Switzerland

Wednesday, September 14th 2011

Alexander Tschäppät, Mayor of Bern

Dear guests,

I would like to welcome you all in the heart of the old town of Bern, at the seat of the city government, in the Erlacherhof.

I would like to express a special welcome to

- the Vice Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, His Excellency Mr. Hoang Trung Hai,
- the Federal Councillor and Head of the Swiss Federal Department of Economic Affairs, His Excellency Mr. Johann Schneider-Ammann,
- the Director of Caritas Switzerland, Mr. Hugo Fasel
- and the Project Manager of "solidarit'eau suisse", Ms Monika Trost

Regarding the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Vietnam and Switzerland, the government of the city of Bern, deliberated what gesture would be appropriate to adequately commemorate this important event. Today on the occasion of the celebration of the anniversary I would like to take up the opportunity to inform you about the governments' conclusion:

About 1 billion people suffer from precarious conditions in drinking water supply. This has a fatal outcome: every day five thousand children die of diseases caused by contaminated

drinking water. That is the reason why the UN, as one of its millennium development goals, wants to halve, by 2015, the proportion of the population without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. Furthermore the United Nations General Assembly on the 28 of July 2010 adopted a resolution that recognised the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights.

Today, safe and clean drinking water is taken for granted in Switzerland. Over the last few decades there has been an enormous effort to increase the quality of our water supply. The effort has proven to be successful! Today we have the privilege that the water of our rivers is almost potable. It's only natural for us that Switzerland shares its know-how with countries that are not as privileged as we are in the matter of clean and safe water.

For this reason the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation together with aid agencies and other organizations launched the initiative "solidarit'eau suisse". "solidarit'eau suisse" means "Swiss water solidarity". Thanks to "solidarit'eau suisse" local authorities find technically qualified clean water projects of Swiss aid agencies to support. Municipalities donating at least 1 cent per cubic meter of consumed water receive the "solidarit'eau suisse" label. For the city of Bern this amounts to about 130'000 Swiss Francs or to about 1 Swiss Franc per inhabitant.

As a symbol of the city of Bern's donation of 130'000 Swiss Francs for the clean water project in the Vietnamese district of Quan Ba, I would like to hand this bottle filled with exactly 130'000 drops of clean Swiss water over to the director of Caritas Switzerland, Mr Hugo Fasel and I ask him to give us some additional information about the project in Quan Ba.