

PRESS RELEASE

Business representatives met in Hanoi & HCMC to introduce the Vietnam Integrity Alliance



Hanoi, 7th May 2014 – Nearly 100 business representatives, leaders from international chambers of commerce such as EuroCham, CanCham, BBGV, AusCham, and MNCs met in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City on 22 and 24 April, 2014, for the introduction of the **Vietnam Integrity Alliance (VIA)**.

The proposed Alliance aims to become a community of institutions, organizations and their professionals who support each other to promote standards of integrity across all sectors and engage collectively in anti-corruption initiatives. It is designed to be a non-binding, voluntary and unilateral commitment towards a transparent, fair and bribe-free business environment. The Vietnam Integrity Alliance will have a mission to advocate and advance principles of integrity, transparency, accountability and good governance in Vietnam and promote Vietnam as an investment destination.

The Alliance is expected to become an umbrella organization through which the business community catalyzes movement for change and promotes integrity initiatives. This Alliance constructively engages organizations and the private sector in anti-corruption initiatives and is open for all Vietnamese and foreign stakeholders to take part in.

The two events, co-organized by the European Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam (EuroCham) and Towards Transparency, with the support of the UK Department for International Development (DFID), allowed participants to take stock of similar initiatives in the region. This includes Philippine's SHINE project where 1800 companies and 120 organizations signed an integrity pledge, adopted a unified code of conduct and published an integrity self-assessment to help firms identify integrity gaps. This integrity certification program is similar to an ISO certification.

The goal of the workshops was to discuss the main challenges and concerns related to raising integrity standards in Vietnam (e.g. loss of competitiveness due to lack of transparency; lack of engagement of competitors, role of government in fighting corruption, etc.). Participants also contributed to selecting a number of priority areas for the Alliance to work on in the coming months. A leadership group was created to inform the Alliance's agenda, and start designing the Integrity Pledge. A first meeting of this group is scheduled for later in June, 2014.

Acknowledging that there is perceived appetite to move forward with practical actions, Mr. Conrad Zellmann, Acting Director of Towards Transparency, said: *"we think that now is the time to turn motivation into action, and to encourage the establishment of a business led process that can secure sustained efforts and ultimately impact to set the right incentives for clean business"*.

Mr. Michael Behrens, Vice Chairman of EuroCham, added that *"EuroCham highly appreciates recent action of the Vietnamese Communist Party in re-establishing the Commission for Internal Affairs. It shows the determination of the Vietnamese Government to improve the business environment and the competitiveness of Vietnam. EuroCham is willing to join this Alliance in order to share European integrity initiatives with Vietnamese enterprises."*

Ms. Nicola Connolly, Chairwoman of EuroCham said *"In the European mindset, compliance means 'adhering to the rules'. Integrity goes beyond this. Acting with integrity means following an 'inner moral compass' and doing the right thing out of one's own free will because it is the right thing to do. Acting with integrity requires both complying with the rules and aligning one's actions with one's personal attitude."*

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