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VN embraces ...

(From P.1)

With its participation in the Francophone Community, Viet Nam is able to expand its relationship with many African countries — a region where Viet Nam has received much solidarity and mutual support in the course of its struggle for national liberation and independence.

Its economic relations and co-operation remain modest, while at the same time it could be able to make use of technical co-operation and support and human resource training, and enjoy part of the aid of the developed countries and organisations in the community, beneficial to national construction.

Together with the English, the French language is one of six official languages and one of two working languages used in the UN system.

Viet Nam lies in a region where English is the most used language, so the use of the English language is an inevitable requirement of the process of national industrialisation and modernisation.

The use of French apart from English and other foreign languages has made a contribution to expanding the chance of Viet Nam taking an opportunity to expand economic, scientific and technical co-operation and cultural exchange with the outside world, to help further develop the Vietnamese people's intellectual standards.

Participation in Francophonie has brought some practical benefits to Viet Nam in regard to international prestige, material benefits and experience gained from undertaking activities in a multilateral arena.

All Francophonie member countries, particularly African countries, have highly appreciated contributions made by Viet Nam, especially its experiences in national defence, construction and development.

Every year, the organisations in the community extend their considerable material, technical and experience assistance to Viet Nam in many fields. Each year alone, ACCT provides Viet Nam with tens of millions of French francs through co-operation projects in different areas.

Viet Nam's preparations for the 7th Summit

Viet Nam was appointed the 7th Francophonie Summit in Hà Nội in November 1997 at the 6th Summit in Berlin in December 1995.

Viet Nam's appointment stems from interest in holding the summit within Viet Nam, and at the same time conforming to the expectation of the member countries in the community and the increasing profile of Viet Nam in international arenas.

The summit will be the first time that Viet Nam has ever organised an international conference of such paramount importance and at such a high level.

The satisfactory organisation of the summit will make a strong contribution to raising Viet Nam's international prestige, marking growth in international activities, and provide a practical way for Viet Nam to contribute to the community's lofty objectives.

The summit is also a good opportunity for Viet Nam to learn from experiences in the organisation of multilateral activities, and the training and fostering of a contingent of cadres and staff to prepare the necessary material basis to play host to other important international conferences such as the ASEAN Summit in 1998.

The summit is also a good opportunity for international friends to better understand the land and people of Viet Nam and the renovation cause of the Vietnamese people.

Last, but not least, the summit will provide investment, trade and tourist opportunities for Viet Nam.

Highly conscious of its responsibility in hosting the organisation of the summit, Viet Nam has conducted all preparatory works for the summit in an active and serious manner.

The then prime minister, Võ Văn Kiệt, issued a decision in March last year to establish the National Committee for the Organisation of the 7th Francophonie Summit, appointing former deputy prime minister, Nguyễn Khánh, as its chairman.

The other members of the committee included leading representatives of appropriate ministries and branches and from the Hà Nội People's Committee.

French language training for the summit has been deployed at various levels, with some 2,000 people trained in total.

In regard to material and logistical preparations, Viet Nam has completed construction of an international convention hall (using French financing); a press centre; and the repair and upgrading of the Friendship Cultural Palace, the Municipal Theatre and the VIP lounge at Nội Bài International Airport.

As for the content of the Summit, Viet Nam has been co-ordinating with the Standing Council of the Community and the concerned countries to prepare

documents and agendas for the summit.

Viet Nam has taken the initiative to hold this summit with economic co-operation as its key focus.

The March 1997 meeting of the Standing Council of the Community unanimously approved Viet Nam's proposed theme for the summit: "Strengthening Co-operation and Solidarity in the Francophone Community in the Interests of Peace, and Social and Economic Development."

They also agreed to the secondary theme of: "Developing Human Resources: the Driving Force and Focus of Development."

Francophonie's relationship with Viet Nam

Since the 1970s, Viet Nam has joined various organisations under Francophonie.

ACCT (Agency for Co-operation in Culture and Technology) and AUUP-WPFL are the two most important organisations in terms of the implementation of co-operation programmes within the Community, and have established regional representative offices in Viet Nam.

All the Community's organisations, particularly these two organisations, have given great assistance to Viet Nam through many co-operation projects in the fields of the environment, agriculture, education and training, research, health care and cultural areas.

ACCT-VIET NAM

Since Viet Nam joined ACCT, the country has received many valuable materials and intellectual resources. Even during the difficult years of the 80s, the organisation maintained active co-operation in training, and scientific and technical exchanges.

From 1980 to 1985, ACCT helped hundreds of cadres from different branches to attend seminars, forums, practical courses and experience exchanges to France, Canada and some African countries. At the same time, the organisation also provided a range of office and technical equipment worth tens of millions of French francs to many research institutions and archive agencies.

After a visit by the ACCT General Secretary to Viet Nam in March 1991, relations between Viet Nam and ACCT have seen many new developments.

Asia-Pacific ACCT decided to open an office in Hà Nội in March 1994, preceded by the Asia-Pacific French Language Teaching Centre established in HCM City in 1993.

The Centre is a large project of regional character and holds four seminars and French teaching courses

in Hà Nội and started up the operation of its Hà City-based management board. Through this off the organisation has extended its relations with Viet Nam, by signing agreements on the teaching of French in secondary schools throughout Viet Nam and giving support to French teaching programmes and scientific researchers in various universities, centres and institutes in Viet Nam.

AUUP-WPFL has also implemented the following co-operation programmes:

- French language establishments universities: This programme is aimed training a young generation who use French language in their research work as focuses mainly on the pilot areas technology, economics, trade, health care elementary science and law.

- In 1996, there were 24 education establishments at the university level across the whole country (with 3,897 students and about two hundred lecturers and teachers) who were partners in the project.

- The Vietnamese-French Bilingual Programme: This programme started in 1994 with the aim of training a young generation who could master the French language or maybe later on continue their studies in French language teaching colleges.

- This programme has set up a system of classes from the first year of elementary education to the final year of secondary education. In the 1996-1997 school year, 36 Vietnamese-French bilingual classes were held with over 11,000 students and 300 teachers involved.

- The daily French programme: This programme aims to make French a language for advertisements and bill boards in urban or tourist areas in Viet Nam like museums, hotels, restaurants etc.

- The French in enterprises programme: In co-operation with Alcatel, BGT, La Vie, Proconco, Schneider, and Sài Gòn Tourist, this programme aims to train people to speak French people in these enterprises so that they can use the language in their daily work.

- French language in the press programme: This programme helps the Viet Nam Courier newspaper publish daily in French through financial and technical aid.

- French publications and research information: Provides information and documents to students, teachers and researchers of Viet Nam.