**Part 1 - Welcome Remarks (and background on AmCham)**

HE Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Nguyen Quoc Dung

MOFA Director General for the Americas Le Chi Dung

HCMC External Relations Office Deputy Director General Pham Tran Thanh Thao

Consul General Marie Damour

AmCham colleagues

On behalf of AmCham Vietnam, based in Ho Chi Minh City, I want to extend a very warm welcome on your visit to HCMC and thank you for making time to meet with us shortly before you take up your important new role in Washington. We also are delighted to welcome back Consul General Marie Damour after her long stint as Charge d’Affaires, now that we, too, have a new U.S. Ambassador in Hanoi, Ambassador Marc Knapper.

AmCham has longstanding roots in Vietnam. In 1994, even before normalization, a few young American entrepreneurs started AmCham operations informally in both HCMC and Hanoi. We received our license as AmCham Vietnam here in HCMC in 1998, AmCham Hanoi was approved as a branch in 2001, and more recently we established an AmCham Da Nang branch in 2020 to support our members in Central Vietnam. Our mission has remained consistent over the years – to promote trade and investment between the United States and Vietnam and serve as the voice of American business in Vietnam.

While some of our original founder/entrepreneurs are still in Vietnam and active in AmCham, two here today (not quite so young), our membership has grown significantly over the years and now represents many iconic MNCs, international law firms and consulting companies, private equity and venture capital funds, leading universities, and innovative startups. We now have over 650 corporate and 250 individual members throughout the country, about 3/4 in HCMC and the Southern and Central economic region, and the other 1/4 with AmCham Hanoi. Together, we represent billions of dollars of investment, millions of indirect and tens of thousands of direct jobs, and a significant portion of Vietnam’s tax revenues and exports. Our actual investment in Vietnam remains understated in official statistics, since much of it comes indirectly, but it is real and growing – as you will see this afternoon in your visit to Intel.

In HCMC, our vision is to be the most influential, strategic, and dynamic business association in Vietnam, that drives innovation and sustainable growth, and helps our members succeed. We welcome American, Vietnamese, and international companies that share our interest in enabling a fair, transparent, predictable, and efficient regulatory environment that values innovation. We are committed to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Environment, Social, and Governance values and aim to be a community that people want to join. We are dedicated to strengthening our own corporate governance and collaboration as a Chamber to ensure we are representing our member’s interests effectively.

AmCham has been a longstanding supporter of what is now the U.S.-Vietnam comprehensive partnership. Ambassador Dung,we look forward to learning more about your key priorities today and continuing to work with you and your team both in Washington and at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to deepen and strengthen our bilateral partnership -- and partner strategically on issues of common concern – in our case the trade and investment partnership.

**Remarks on Strategic Priorities by Chair Winnie Wong**

***Strengthening our Bilateral Trade and Investment Partnership.*** AmCham’s overall objective is laying the groundwork for an eventual Free Trade Agreement, ideally the United States joining the CPTPP. Since that does not appear possible in the near-term, we will support other actions to strengthen trade and investment ties, whether under the Indo Pacific Economic Framework, including on the Digital Economy and Supply Chain Resiliency, or bilaterally, including on Cybersecurity and the Digital Economy, possibly under an expanded Trade and Investment Framework Agreement, through a Strategic Comprehensive Partnership, or at least a Strategic ***Economic*** Comprehensive Partnership.

***Partnering through the Pandemic/Maintaining Supply Chains.*** We value the partnerships through the pandemic with both the U.S. and Vietnamese governments which have enabled the continuity of supply chains and the rebound now underway. Together with Ambassador Ngoc and our colleagues at the U.S. Mission in Vietnam, we were strong advocates for U.S. vaccine donations to Vietnam as well as donors to support COVID relief and recovery. We are proud of and grateful for the U.S. government’s 24.6 million vaccine donations to date. We also are deeply grateful for the Vietnamese government’s impressive vaccine roll-out which is protecting lives and livelihoods, enabling us to live safely with the virus. We also have a very active Healthcare Committee that is eager to partner to promote health and wellness in Vietnam.

***Enabling a Safe Reopening for Foreign Travel and Tourism.*** We welcome the steps that have been taken already to streamline requirements for foreign travel, enabling the return of investors (like Pacifico Energy’s Nate Franklin here with us today after two years away), and look forward to partnering to enable a safe reopening of the Tourism and Hospitality sector soon, ideally on or before March 31. We are excited about the opportunities to expand tourism and business travel with new direct flights by Vietnam and Bamboo airlines.

***Building Infrastructure for Sustainable Development.*** Our members want to partner to support development of ports, airports, industrial parks and logistics operations in Vietnam to support growing FDI. We look forward to finding ways to strengthen supply chains and reduce shipping costs. Our members in the Energy Sector want to partner to support Vietnam’s COP 26 climate change commitments and promote energy security and clean energy goals. Our technology companies want to partner on cybersecurity and creating a digital infrastructure regulatory ecosystem that enables Vietnam to drive innovation and become a regional and global leader in the digital economy and IR 4.0.

***Developing a Globally Competitive Workforce.*** AmCham is committed to partnering to develop a globally competitive workforce in Vietnam, both through study in the United States, and here in Vietnam. Our members represent some of the top international K-12 schools in HCMC and central Vietnam, as well as leading universities like FUV and ASU. We are committed to addressing skills gaps and promoting lifelong learning.

I hope it is clear AmCham wants to be a key strategic partner to the governments of Vietnam and the United States, and to you personally in your new role as Ambassador.

We have valued the dialogues with Ambassador Ngoc – in person and virtually – and the role that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has played in facilitating dialogues with senior leaders, including the Prime Minister in September, as well as provincial engagement through the Meet the USA programs. We look forward to identifying new areas of collaboration to strengthen our economic partnership – and hope we can continue our work together in-person and virtually!

Follow-on remarks by Intel’s KH Ooi, Nike’s Giang Vu, Suntory-Pepsi’s Jahanzeb Khan, Coca-Cola’s Bui Dang Duyen Mai, First Solar’s KJ Ung, Wanek’s Andrew Lien, SSA Marine’s Soren Pedersen, AES’s James Meffen, Pacifico Energy’s Nate Franklin, Ho Tram Grand’s Walt Power, MSD/Healthcare Committee’s Dr. Lan Dam, and Baker McKenzie’s Chung Seck on Digital Economy.