

Joint Press Release

The first meeting of the Vietnam-Holy See Joint Working Group in Hanoi

According to the agreement between the Vietnamese Government and the Holy See, the first meeting of the the Vietnam-Holy See Joint Working Group was convened in Hanoi from 16-17 February 2009. The meeting was for the exchange of views on the establishment of bilateral diplomatic relations. The meeting was co-chaired by H.E. Mr. Nguyen Quoc Cuong, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Monsignor Pietro Parolin, Holy See Under-Secretary of State for Relations with States.

At the meeting, Vice Minister Nguyen Quoc Cuong emphasised Vietnam's consistent policy on the freedom of belief as well as the achievements and current situation on religious affairs in Vietnam in recent years. Vice Minister Cuong expressed his wish for the Holy See's active contribution to the life of the Catholic community in Vietnam, the strengthening of solidarity between religions and of the entire Vietnamese population, and the strong cohesion of the Catholic Church in Vietnam with the nation through practical contributions to national construction.

Holy See Under-Secretary Monsignor Pietro Parolin took note of the explanations made by the Vietnamese delegation on the policy on freedom of religion and belief, recognising that positive progress has been made in the religious life in Vietnam and wished that the remaining unsolved matters in bilateral relations between Vietnam and the Holy See could be settled with goodwill through sincere dialogue. Monsignor Parolin emphasised the Holy See's policy to respect independence and sovereignty of Vietnam, by which the Church's religious activities would not be conducted for political purposes. He also stressed that the Church in its teachings invites the faithful to be good citizens, working for the common good of the country.

During the meeting, the two sides held in-depth and comprehensive discussions on bilateral relations, including issues related to the Catholic Church in Vietnam. The two sides also acknowledged the encouraging development in the relations between Vietnam and the Holy See since 1990. The two sides agreed that the first meeting of the Joint Working Group was a new and important step forward in their bilateral relations and greater efforts should be made to further promote bilateral ties.

The two sides agreed to hold the second meeting of the Joint Working Group. The time and venue of the meeting will be agreed upon in due course.

The meeting of the Joint Working Group took place in an atmosphere of openness, frankness and mutual respect.

During the visit to Hanoi to attend the meeting of the Joint Working Group, the Holy See delegation will pay a courtesy call to the Government Committee for Religious Affairs and visit Thai Binh and Bui Chu dioceses, and other cultural, historical and religious sites in Vietnam.