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PRESS RELEASE

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VIETNAM EDUCATION FOUNDATION SUPPORTS EFFORT TO ESTABLISH CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE IN VIETNAM

Washington, D.C., November 17, 2004 – The Vietnam Education Foundation (VEF) announced today that it has signed a statement of cooperation with the Vietnamese Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) and the U.S.-based Science Initiative Group (SIG) to formulate a plan for Centers of Excellence in science and technology in Vietnam.

According to the plan, VEF and SIG would provide technical and strategic support to MOST as it investigates and builds an appropriate model to create Centers of Excellence in Vietnam. MOST will coordinate a Vietnamese inter-agency group on this program. Once approved by the Prime Minister of Vietnam, a program proposal will be submitted to the World Bank for financing.

The World Bank has financed similar programs under its Millennium Science Initiative (MSI) in other countries such as Chile, Brazil, and Mexico. The MSI, supported and monitored by SIG, is designed to build internal capacity in science and technology in developing countries. Currently, Vietnam is the largest recipient of World Bank funding.

At the signing ceremony held today at the U.S. National Academies in Washington, D.C., MOST Vice Minister Bui Manh Hai said “We highly appreciate the experience of SIG on creating an appropriate model of Centers of Excellence in developing countries. In Vietnam, we are of the view that Centers of Excellence will play a remarkable role in promoting the research and educational capacity of the country.”

SIG Chairman Dr. Phillip Griffiths noted “Vietnam has a culture of learning and some of the most talented scientists in the world. What the country needs is a

research and education structure that is competitive and transparent, with linkages to the international scientific community. MSI offers Vietnam that opportunity.”

"This agreement represents a milestone toward creating a world-class environment for scientific research in Vietnam, enabling Vietnamese scientists and educators to excel at innovation in their own country," said VEF Board Chairman Herb Allison. "We are very pleased and honored that VEF is a catalyst for this progress. We gratefully acknowledge the outstanding support and cooperation of the Vietnamese Ministry of Science and Technology, the U.S. National Academies and the Science Initiative Group in launching this initiative."

As a precursor to this cooperation, VEF sponsored a workshop in April 2004 on “Building Science and Technology Capacity in Vietnam” for Vietnamese scientists and policy makers. The workshop focused on various models and requirements for Centers of Excellence and included experts from the U.S., South Korea, Chile and Malaysia.

For more information, visit websites:

www.msi-sig.org

www.vef.gov

www.worldbank.org

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