



Foreword by
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FIRST

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this Official Report on Vietnam to mark the Visit of His Excellency Pham Binh Minh Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, to the United Kingdom. Lord Astor, Lord Hurd and I are especially grateful to His Excellency Tran Ngoc An, the Ambassador of Vietnam, and his Embassy staff for all their help and guidance in the preparation of this report. We are also very grateful to His Excellency Pham Binh Minh for contributing such an important and personal interview.

This Visit is particularly timely and will help focus the attention of business leaders and policy makers on the many opportunities that exist in Vietnam. The Visit is of special significance given that it coincides with the 45th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between the United Kingdom and Vietnam.

The strength of the United Kingdom's partnership with Vietnam was underlined by the recent successful visit by Rt Hon Mark Field MP, Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, in January 2018 when he attended the sixth Vietnam – UK Strategic Dialogue. The Dialogue covered a range of issues including co-operation on education, science and innovation, the UK Vietnam Defence relationship; and global issues such as the illegal wildlife trade.

Deputy Prime Minister Pham Binh Minh is a very welcome guest to the United Kingdom and brings with him a distinguished group of business leaders. For 45 years the United Kingdom and Vietnam have enjoyed a partnership built on friendship, investment in each other's economic future and on shared interests.

Vietnam is successfully moving from an agrarian economy to a more industrialised,

market driven economy. Strong domestic demand and growing manufacturing exports have boosted recent average GDP growth rates to around seven per cent. The government's commitment to maintain sustainable growth, relatively low inflation, the attraction of inward foreign investment and supporting the manufacturing sector, has created a business friendly environment and one of the most vibrant economies in Asia.

Vietnam therefore represents a significant opportunity for trade and investment. Key growth sectors include energy, education and training, healthcare and pharmaceuticals, and mass transport. Vietnam's power development plan involves a US\$140 billion investment over the next twenty years. The country is also the third largest oil producer in Asia – presenting important opportunities for the supply of equipment and services. UK-Vietnam trade continues to grow and total global Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Vietnam amounted to US\$14 billion in 2017. The UK is the largest EU investor in Vietnam's education sector and the third largest EU investor in Vietnam.

The Visit of Deputy Prime Minister Pham Binh Minh to the United Kingdom, while providing an opportunity for private discussions, will give us all an opportunity to study the important developments in Vietnam and to weigh carefully the opportunities for both countries to work together even more closely.

We at FIRST are delighted to have been asked to produce this official publication to mark this visit – coinciding with the 45th anniversary of diplomatic relations – and hope that it contributes, in a small way, to its success and the further development of the bilateral relationship especially in the area of trade and investment. **E**