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March 31, 2009

The Honourable Lawrence Cannon, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Trade  
125 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0G2

Re Imminent colossal environmental disaster in Vietnam

Dear Sir:

On November 1, 2007, Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung of the Vietnamese Communist Government signed the Decision No. 167 to allow Chinese companies to mine bauxite in Central Vietnam (in Tan Rai, Lam Dong Province, and Nhan Co, Dac Nong Province) to produce aluminum from 2007 to 2015.

Despite a wave of intense objections raised from scientists and environmentalists both inside and outside Vietnam, the Hanoi government confirmed in mid March of this year that the bauxite mining projects would continued as planned.

Although coming from different sources, these objections focus on the following common issues:

### **An environmental disaster**

These projects will lead to a disastrous and long-term environmental impact. Among its consequences would be: the loss of living space to millions of Vietnamese Highlanders and their ways of life, the pollution of water sources that would cause unimaginable diseases and birth deformations to millions of other people living in the affected lowlands areas for generations to come. The reason for all these adverse consequences is that the red mud, a byproduct of bauxite mining, is extremely toxic and will be destructive to plants and animals living in vast areas of the country. The percolation of red mud into the ground will pollute underground water resources that will poison vast areas of vegetable growing (such as Lam Dong Province) that feed the whole population of the lowlands areas.

According to scientists, both inside and outside of Vietnam, at the present time no technology is available that can effectively deal with the terrible consequences of red mud. As a result, even China itself in the last few years has discontinued the operation of hundreds of its own bauxite mines, preferring instead to export the dangers of bauxite mining to other countries. If not

stopped in a relatively short time these projects will turn vast areas of Vietnam into deserts of red mud.

### **An unjustified economic decision**

Despite Mr. Nguyen Tan Dung's reiteration on February 4, 2009 that this was a "major policy" of the Communist Party and Government, this decision simply makes no economic sense as the value of aluminum extracted per hectare of land in this region amounts to only about 3% of the value of the crops of coffee, pepper or other plants which are currently grown there.

Furthermore, it is estimated that to produce 1.2 million tons of aluminum per year, Vietnam would have to double the amount of power currently produced in Vietnam, thereby placing a heavy pressure on the power generation capacity of the whole country. As well, this operation would require a huge amount of water, which would be detrimental to the vegetation and forest lands in the affected areas. Against the well justified and well meaning objections of the environmentalists and scientists, the Hanoi government only promises to hold future conferences on the concerns that have been raised on this matter. Meanwhile, the bidding had been completed and exploitation has already been started in Dac Nong.

In conclusion, the decision of the Vietnamese government to allow bauxite mining in the Central Highlands will bring a colossal environment disaster to millions of its citizens for generations to come.

In view of the above considerations, the Vietnamese Canadian Federation calls upon Canada, as one of the countries providing development aid to Vietnam, to voice its concern over this matter, and to urge the Government of Vietnam to abandon this ill-conceived decision.

Yours sincerely,

(Original signed by)

Ut Ngo  
President, Vietnamese Canadian Federation

c.c. The Honourable Jason Kenney, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Citizenship, Immigration, and Multiculturalism