# REMARKS

**Ms. Nguyen Thi Mai Huu**

Director, The National Foreign Languages 2020 Project

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

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| On behalf of the Managing Board of the National Foreign Languages 2020 Project, I am honored to have the privilege of giving the congratulatory address in front of this array of world-famous invited speakers, diplomatic corps, English language teachers and researchers from Vietnam and abroad. I would like to express my whole-hearted congratulations to SEAMEO RETRAC on hosting the 8th International Conference on TESOL. I greatly appreciate SEAMEO RETRAC’s initiative in organizing annual international conferences on TESOL. Since 2010, the conference has become a major event in the calendar of the English language education in Vietnam, which makes significant contributions to English teachers’ professional development and networking.  |  |

We all know very well that regional and global integration is an inevitable trend in the 21st century. The integration will encompass not only the economic but also educational, social, cultural, science and technology sectors. The integration will present numerous opportunities, but at the same time, it also creates huge challenges for most countries. Among the challenges, language barrier is often viewed as critical, because language, particularly English, capacity is seen as a key factor in the accomplishment of this integration.

Different countries have different strategies to respond to the challenge of the language barrier. In Vietnam, the Decision No. 1400/QD-TTg, entitled Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages in the National Educational System, Period 2008-2020, issued by the Prime Minister in 2008 is one of the solutions to foreign language capacity. The National Foreign Languages 2020 Project has been established to implement the Decision. Among the foreign languages taught in Vietnam, emphasis is placed on English and the Project 2020 aims to develop the English capacity of Vietnam’s workforce and increase its ability to engage in an integrated world. It is expected that by 2020, most Vietnamese students graduating from secondary and vocational schools, colleges, and universities will be able to use a foreign language, namely English, in their daily communication.

Similarly to the situations in other countries in the region and beyond, English education in Vietnam receives strong commitment from the government, and is inspired by a great demand from families, enterprises and society and by robust international cooperation. It is also significantly facilitated by speedy development of technology and ICT. However, administrators, teachers and students in Vietnam, and I believe in other countries as well, are facing with numerous challenges and difficulties such as teachers’ low English proficiency and teaching competence, problems of curriculum design and teaching material development, lack of student motivation, large classes, and so on.

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I notice that the theme of the conference *“English language teaching in the 21st century: challenges and opportunities”* is of common concern of language educators, researchers and administrators. The conference brings us here as representatives of different institutions and countries to share our experiences and good practices with one another and discuss hot issues in language education. I strongly believe that during the two days of the conference, with more than 50 presentations including plenary and parallel sessions, workshops, and poster presentations, we will have opportunities to get better insight into opportunities and challenges of English language teaching in different contexts, and in various aspects of teaching, learning and management; and identify practical and strategic solutions to the problems. I also hope that this is a chance for us to get connected and to build up a network and cooperation so that we can learn from and help one another for professional development.

May I wish you a great time at the conference and thank you very much for your kind attention?