SPEECH OF MR. DIEP KINH TAN - VICE MINISTER OF MARD

AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 3RD MEETING OF GB OF APCAEM

Dear distinguished delegates and international participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, on behalf of Vietnam Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, I would like to express the warmest greetings to the international delegates and participants of the third annual meeting of Governing Board of the Asian and Pacific Center for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery.

Over 15 years of implementation of the renovation policy, Vietnam agriculture has gained many achievements with average yearly growth rate of over 4 per cent. The agriculture has been developed rapidly and steadily in both scale and intensive level, especially in food production. From one of the chronic starveling countries, used to import hundreds of thousands of tonnes of food annually, now the average per-capita output of food has attained over 460 kg and become the first rank among the world rice exporters. By the year 2003, within 15 years, Vietnam has exported more than 40 million tonnes of rice, averaging 2.7 million tonnes per year. In 2004, the rice export would be 4 million tonnes. Cultivation of other crops such as maize, coffee, tea, rubber, sugar-cane, etc. developed significantly. The ratio of industrial crops and fruit trees increased over 20 per cent compared with 1990. The mentioned achievements have contributed to Vietnam economic development and to stabilization of politics and society. One of the important grounds of the success is application of advanced science and technology has been speeded up, including the contribution of agricultural engineering sector and agro-products processing.

Yet, Vietnam agriculture is still facing with many shortcomings and challenges because of high agricultural population; out-of-date mode of production; low productivity, quality, and efficiency. Structure of agricultural economy in the rural areas has been shifted slowly. Infrastructure and services in agriculture are still weak, especially the income of the farmers is too low. All of the above-mentioned factors have affected negatively to the progress of agricultural modernization.

Being a country with 75 per cent of population in rural areas, nearly 58 per cent of labor force serving for agriculture, forestry and fisheries that has produced one-third of annual total domestic products, and more than 40 per cent of export value. Therefore, the agriculture and the rural areas play an important role in the socio-economic development of the country. For this reason, the industrialization in Vietnam should start first from industrialization of agriculture and rural areas.

From now to the year 2010, the development direction of Vietnam agriculture is to establish an economy in agriculture and rural areas with annually sustainable growth rate of 4.0-4.5 per cent a year, based upon advanced technology, suitable mechanism and progressive relationship in production, aiming at reducing intensity of labor, increasing labor productivity and creating more jobs. The ratio of agricultural labor use would lower 50 per cent and the average income in agricultural sector would be up to USD 350 per capita; hence, the life in rural communities will be considerably improved to build up modern rural areas. To gain the above-mentioned targets, it needs very strong struggle. The role of the agricultural engineering sector is to apply effectively machinery, equipment, industrial production methods as well as other industrial organization type for production into agricultural sector. Only by these, would labor productivity be increased in large domain, could commoditive agriculture be established with high productivity and quality in large scale to combine agricultural production with processing industry and export.

In the age of informatics, knowledge-based economy and open economy with the tendency of globalization, the industrialization of agriculture and rural areas of Vietnam has to catch up the development of science, technology and world advanced management. The promotion of world economic integration is the policy of the Vietnam Government and Communist Party.

I am sure that the Asian and Pacific Center for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery, especially the Governing Board of the Center would be an important bridge to help Vietnam and other countries in the region often exchange information, experiences and close cooperation for mutual development to promote the agricultural engineering development up to the world stature.

I wish the members of the GB, the international delegates and participants good health and happiness.

Success to the meeting.

Many thanks to you.

Hanoi, December 2004