

OPENING ADDRESS
BY VECONAC PRESIDENT AT THE 20TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
(Ha Noi, 15th December 2021)

Excellencies Heads of Delegations of VECONAC Member Countries,
Distinguished Guests from Embassies of ASEAN Countries in Ha Noi,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, I have a great pleasure to be together with you to open the VECONAC 20th General Assembly. First of all, I would like to send my warmest greetings and my best wishes of good health to Your Excellencies Vice Presidents of VECONAC, Leaders of VECONAC Member Countries and all delegates present at this video conference. I would like to take this occasion to wish our Confederation to have further development and our 20th General Assembly to be a great success.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On 19 December 1980, the Leaders of five Veterans Associations of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand gathered in Jakarta, with the witness of H.E. Adam Malik, Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia, proclaimed the foundation of the Veterans Confederation of ASEAN Countries. The **objectives** of the Confederation are to focus and promote the efforts of the Veterans Associations of Southeast Asian countries in enhancing the interests of the veterans including the wounded veterans and their families, contributing to peace, stability, harmony and development in the region and the world.

Looking back at its 41-year history of foundation and development, we can be proud to say that VECONAC has been striving untiringly to achieve its noble **goals**. Starting from five members only, VECONAC now is an organization consisting of all ten ASEAN member countries, which is recognized by ASEAN as a social, humanitarian organization taking care of the livelihood and welfare of the veterans and their families. More and more initiatives have been implemented among VECONAC members, such as, delegation exchange, information and knowledge sharing, participating in support and development projects, and thus bringing practical results to the life of the veterans, especially the elderly and the wounded veterans of our respective countries. These activities also have brought our veterans closer together and strengthened the solidarity, friendship and mutual understanding, for peace, security and prosperity in our respective countries and in the region. Because of the above-mentioned achievements, at the Virtual Working Group Meeting on 21st October

2020, all VECONAC Member Countries agreed to submit to the 20th General Assembly the “Draft Resolution on Commemorating the VECONAC Founding Day Annually on December 19”.

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Veterans Association of Viet Nam, which was established on 6th December 1989, is a socio-political organization with the task of gathering and uniting generations of Vietnamese veterans in preserving and promoting the nature and tradition of “Uncle Ho’s Soldiers”. These are former combatants who were tempered in the flames of national resistance wars, fighting valiantly for the independence and freedom of the country. Having membership of 3 million, consisting of veterans and ex-servicemen, the VAVN has made worthy contributions to the cause of national construction and defence. There are many typical examples in the movement of safeguarding the security and political system, building the localities, participating in production, businesses, hunger eradication, poverty alleviation, doing charity work, thus creating a fine image in the Vietnamese society.

As an official member of VECONAC since 1997, the VAVN has actively participated in various activities of the Confederation and had the honour to assume the role of VECONAC Chair twice in 2003 and in 2020 – 2021. At this forum, I would like to extend our sincere thanks to all VECONAC colleagues for the valuable assistance given to the VAVN in fulfilling successfully its roles and responsibilities in the Confederation, contributing to further enhancing the lofty tradition stated in the VECONAC Constitution.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We are living and witnessing a historical period in which peace, cooperation and development constitute the main trend. However, our region and the world still have to face many challenges, especially the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic claiming the loss of life of more than 5 million people, causing major social-economic upheavals and affecting billions of people around the world. Through the joint efforts of our governments, we have succeeded gradually in preventing and controlling the pandemic and recovering the economy. On this occasion, I would like to share our most sincere sympathy over the damage and losses inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic to our people. I also would like to express my high appreciation for the effective cooperation and coordination among our governments and people in the fight against the pandemic.

In 2020, Viet Nam assumed the role of ASEAN Chair. In the term years 2020 – 2021, Viet Nam was a Non-Permanent Member of the United Nations Security Council. The VAVN also has had the honour to assume the role of VECONAC Chair of the 20th General Assembly. I would like to avail myself of this opportunity at this Opening Ceremony of the 20th General Assembly to wish our Confederation further development, making a crucial contribution to the cause of peace, stability and prosperity in South East Asia and the world. May I wish the 20th General Assembly, which is held virtually for the first time in its history, to be a great success.

Your Excellencies

I would like to take this occasion to wish all the Leaders and delegates of our VECONAC Member Countries good health, happiness and success.

VECONAC FOREVER, FOREVER VECONAC

Thank you.