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<th>Media and economic development in Vietnam: opportunities and issues.</th>
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Dear ladies and gentlemen!

It's my pleasure to share some ideas with all of you here, at the conference on media and economic development in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. First of all, I would like to introduce generally to development of the press in Vietnam in recent years.

In terms of quantity, thanks to open door and reform policies to expand exchange of culture and economic relationship, the number of newspapers and publications in Vietnam has sharply increased. At present, the country has about four hundred and fifty organizations publishing newspapers and magazines with total circulation of 564,900,000 a year, 160 of which are dailies and weeklies, rising by 148 from 1991.

The Vietnam News Agency alone has 61 sub-agencies in 61 provinces throughout the country and 18 sub-agencies abroad. There are now over 20 magazines providing external relations information to foreign readers.

The number of journalists is also increasing quickly. So far, about 7,500 journalists have been issued a journalist certificate and around 71% of reporters and editors have a bachelor degree.

In terms of quality, the press continues making its contribution to reform of thinking in various fields, taking part in the struggle against negative phenomena in social life, playing better the role as people's forum, strengthening political stability, creating a democratic sphere and transparency in society, raising people's cultural standard and expanding international cooperation relationship.

The press has met better the readers' demand for diversified information. It is an efficient bridge between people and the government to implement the state's policies and social management.

In Vietnam, economic development can only be realized on a basis of reform. The press has reformed itself, removed subsidization to save itself and created an information market in which the press is the most important responding channel. From saving itself, the press has become a relatively fast developing and diversified business.

Equipped with advanced technology and modern printing techniques, artistic appearance of newspapers has been improved obviously thanks to a special investment. As a result, the designing industry thought still immature has grown fast.

However, the Vietnamese press has still had the following weaknesses:
- Having trends to meet readers' mediocre tastes, publishing sensational news, sexual and superstitious stories or abusing advertisements to make money and distorting the public's aesthetic sense and consumption behaviors.
- Some journalists have broken their professional virtue, provided incorrect or false information without making any correction or with perfunctory corrections, causing adverse effects on the public opinions and on good reputation of the press. However, this violation has not been handled on time by the law.
- Issues newly arisen in the process of integration and economic development have not been studied well by journalists.
- Although the press law has come into effect but the implementation of the law varies in different localities, causing some difficulties for the press activities.
- Training and exchange of experience with foreign counterparts have been enhanced but not yet come up to expectations.

Some challenges to the Vietnamese press
Vietnam has entered the Association of South East Asian Nations and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation and will be admitted to the WTO soon. However, the integration and globalization of the national economy have not been disseminated widely because quite a few journalists have not mastered the market-oriented economies and foreign languages yet. There exists a shortage of journalists who can generalize, analyze and refute some key issues of the reform process, helping bring theories into reality.

Journalists have not undertaken fully their responsibility to the public opinions because there exist some persons of influence and mechanisms, policies which restrict truthfulness.

Market mechanism has made the gap between the poor and the rich widen further, so there is a great difference in people’s right to have and grasp information between social classes, between remote areas and cities.

Advertising has been heavily affected contents of information and journalists’ pen although we have to admit that it is a considerable revenue on which a newspaper can live.

**Recommendations**

- Essential to expand international cooperation relations to gradually modernize technical facilities, satisfying the world’s and region’s demands for information.

- Having a suitable investment in the course of implementation of national strategy for information.

- Improving step by step the system of legal writings concerning information and the press. The press and publishing laws should be supplemented and revised.

- Urgently strengthening a force of journalists who master political knowledge, are experts in key sectors of the market-oriented economy, are proficient in foreign languages and have firm abilities in external relations.

Thank you very much for your attention.