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ARTICLE 19

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Vietnam: ARTICLE 19 Assists with Drafting Freedom of Information Law

ARTICLE has been working with the Vietnamese Ministry of Justice, which is drafting a right to information law, to help ensure that the draft is as consistent as possible with international standards and best national practice. To this end, ARTICLE 19 has hosted a team of Vietnamese experts in London and participated in meetings in Vietnam, and is providing ongoing technical legal assistance to the drafting team.

The Government of Vietnam has made a high-level commitment to adopt right to information (freedom of information) legislation as a matter of priority and a team lead by the Vietnamese Ministry of Justice has been working on preparing a draft law. The team contacted ARTICLE 19 in January 2009 asking for assistance.

A group of eight members of the drafting team, led by Dr. Hoàng Thế Liên, First Deputy Minister of Justice, was hosted by ARTICLE 19 in the United Kingdom from 15-21 March 2009. The team visited various government departments, the Information Commissioner's Office and the National Archives, as well as various non-governmental organisations and academics. The purpose of the visit was to expose the team to experiences in the United Kingdom on the right to information.

ARTICLE 19 has been providing legal drafting support to the team. A detailed analysis of an early draft of the law (which has since been revised) was produced in April 2009. ARTICLE 19 is providing ongoing legal support to the drafting team, and will continue to do so as new drafts are produced. Finally, Toby Mendel, ARTICLE 19's Senior Legal Counsel, participated in an International Workshop on Drafting a Law on Access to Information in Vietnam from 6-7 May 2009. Participants at the Workshop included government officials, academics and representatives of civil society organisations.

ARTICLE 19 strongly supports the development by Vietnam of a right to information law. We urge the authorities to ensure that the law which is finally adopted is consistent with international standards in this area.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

- The Analysis is available at: <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/analysis/vietnam-memorandum-on-the-draft-law-on-access-to-information.pdf>
- The English outline of the law can be found at: <http://www.article19.org/pdfs/laws/vietnam-law-on-access-to-information.pdf>

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- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.