

## Press Release

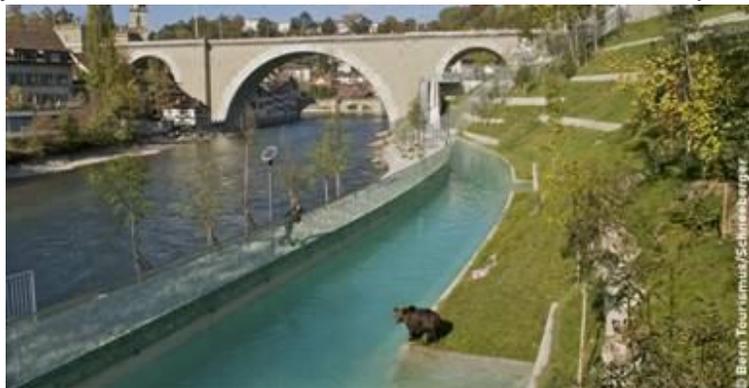
### Mayor of the City of Bern honors member of the National Assembly of Vietnam

**Hanoi, April 20, 2010** - The Swiss Embassy in Vietnam in cooperation with Education for Nature-Vietnam (ENV) organized an Award Presentation Ceremony for Mr. Nguyen Dinh Xuan, a member of the National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam at the Press Club in Hanoi. The award was given by the Mayor of the City of Bern to honor Mr. Xuan's outstanding contributions to the protection of Vietnam's bears.

The National Assembly member Mr. Nguyen Dinh Xuan, serving Director of the Lo Go Xa Mat National Park in Tay Ninh Province, and a member of the National Assembly Committee on Environment, Science and Technology, has significantly contributed to nature and environment preservation, in particular the protection of bears and other endangered wild animals. Mr. Xuan is actively involved in efforts to address illegal bear tourism in Ha Long City, Quang Ninh province. On May 2009, he accompanied the Environmental Police and ENV officers on an inspection of some of the bear farms in Ha Long City in order to assess this situation. Following the inspection, he requested that the relevant authorities in Vietnam investigate and deal with violations, which helped lead to the successful raid by Quang Ninh Environmental Police on a bear farm in Ha Long in October 2009 ([Link](#)). In addition, Mr. Xuan has made considerable efforts in raising awareness amongst Korean tourists about Vietnamese laws regarding the protection of bears by fostering cooperation between the Korean Government, the Korean Embassy, CITES and the Environment Ministry. He is also continually raising the matter of illegal bear tourism and other endangered wildlife issues with the mass media, fellow National Assembly members and decision-makers and requesting their support to resolve the issues.

The City of Berne has a long history with bears. It not only carries the bear on its flag, features a bear on its coat of arms and derives its name from the animal, but is known internationally for its bear park in the city's outskirts. By invitation from the Chairman of the Hanoi People's Committee, Mr. Alexander

Tschaepaet, Mayor of the City of Bern, paid an official visit to the city of Hanoi from the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> of April. Through ENV's introduction, Mr. Xuan's outstanding contributions and dedication to Vietnam's bears were brought to the Mayor's attention. Mayor Tschaepaet wanted to recognize Mr. Xuan's dedication with an award in the hope that the work to protect Vietnam's bears will receive more public attention and provide further momentum to the cause.



ENV works hard to achieve an end to crimes against bears by carrying out many activities relating to bear protection, such as investigations and surveys of bear farms and tracking cases involving bears or bear products. ENV also works with government and authorities to build support amongst key government decision-makers and leaders to improve policy and legislation protecting Vietnam's bears and ensure current laws are enforced. Regular campaigns are conducted with the aim of raising public awareness about Vietnam's bears and reducing the consumption and use of bear bile and bear products. Recent advertising campaigns include billboards on major highways, bus and magazine advertisements and Public Service Announcements (PSA) on television and radio.



According to government figures, there are about 4,000 bears in captivity in Vietnam. All but a few of these captive bears were illegally captured from the wild. The demand for bear bile poses a major threat to Vietnam's bears. Bears are hunted in the wild and sold live to commercial farms, where they are exploited for their bile to meet consumer demand. Another development in the illegal bear bile industry is bear tourism in Quang Ninh and other provinces. During visits, tourists witness bile being extracted, taste bear bile wine, and purchase bear bile products. These are all illegal

activities under Vietnam's laws. Bears in Vietnam are also hunted for their meat and body parts, kept as pets, or displayed at business establishments to attract customers.

*"We highly appreciate Mr. Xuan's efforts and contributions to bear protection in particular, and wildlife conservation in general,"* said Mrs. Nguyen Thi Van Anh, ENV's Wildlife Trade Program Coordinator. *"Although illegal bear tourism in Quang Ninh hasn't yet been resolved, Mr. Xuan's efforts resulted in positive changes of public attitudes toward the issues and activities of enforcement authorities. Through this Award Ceremony, we hope for further contributions from law enforcement agencies and decision-makers to wildlife and nature conservation in the years to come."*

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### ***About the city of Bern***

The City of Bern was founded by Count Berchtold V of Zahringia in 1160. According to legend, the city was named after a large bear during its construction. In 1224, the bear was officially chosen as the heraldic animal of the city. For the first time, the seal of Bern shows a bear in connection with the word Bern. In 1513, the first Bear Pit in Bern was born and was probably the most famous symbol of the City of Bern. Since October 25, 2009, the City of Bern has had a new landmark: a Bear Park in the outskirts of the city.

### ***About Education for Nature - Vietnam***

Education for Nature-Vietnam (ENV) was established in 2000 as Vietnam's first non-governmental organization focused on conservation of nature and the environment. Our mission is to foster greater understanding amongst the Vietnamese public about environmental issues of local, national and global significance, ranging from protection of wildlife and natural ecosystems to climate change. We employ creative and innovative strategies to influence attitudes and behavior, not only highlighting the need to protect Vietnam's rich natural heritage and the living world around us, but also encouraging greater public participation in achieving this important and challenging task.

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