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*Le Président*  
The President

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**Minister of Justice of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam  
25A Cat Linh Street  
Hanoi - Vietnam**

**Re: Concerns regarding the seven-year prison and three year house arrest sentences of Mr Cu Huy Ha Vu, human rights lawyer**

Your Excellency

I am writing to you on behalf of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), which, through the national Bars and Law Societies of the Member States of the European Union and the European Economic Area, represents more than 1 million European lawyers. In addition to membership from EU bars, it has also observer representatives from a further eleven European countries' bars.

The CCBE, through its Human Rights Committee, places great emphasis on respect for human rights and the rule of law. The CCBE is particularly concerned by the situation of human rights defenders in the world.

The CCBE writes to express its serious concerns over the arrest of human rights lawyer, Mr Cu Huy Ha Vu, who is known for his involvement in the protection of both human and environmental rights.

Especially worrisome is that this is Mr Cu Huy Ha Vu's second arrest for his work challenging the Vietnamese government on human rights, or environmental issues. The CCBE is informed that his initial arrest occurred on 5 November 2010 just before the five-year congress of the Communist Party.

It is reported that on 4 April 2011, the People's Court of Hanoi announced a sentence of seven years' imprisonment plus another three years' house arrest, stating that Cu Huy Ha Vu had been conducting "propaganda against the State". During the hearing, one of his defence lawyers was ejected by the judge and his other lawyers walked out in protest after the judge refused to produce documents.

In this context, the CCBE wishes to draw to your attention the following Articles of the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers (1990):

Article 16 states that:

*Governments shall ensure that lawyers (a) are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference; (b) are able to travel and to consult with their clients freely both within their own country and abroad; and (c) shall not suffer, or be threatened with, prosecution or administrative, economics or other sanctions for any action taken in accordance with recognized professional duties, standards and ethics.*

Furthermore, Article 23 states that:

*Lawyers like other citizens are entitled to freedom of expression, belief, association and assembly. In particular, they shall have the rights to take part in public discussion of matters concerning the law, the administration of justice and the promotion and protection of human rights and to join or form local, national or international organisations and attend their meetings, without suffering professional restrictions by reason of their lawful action or their membership in a lawful organisation. In exercising*

*these rights, lawyers shall always conduct themselves in accordance with the law and the recognised standards and ethics of the legal profession.*

In view of the above, the CCBE respectfully urges you to take immediate and effective steps to release Mr Cu Huy Ha Vu unconditionally. The CCBE also requests that you immediately intercede with the Vietnamese authorities so that they cease all acts of intimidation of Vietnamese lawyers, thus ensuring the free exercise, independence and integrity of the legal profession and administration of justice in Vietnam.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Dal', with a long horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.

GEORGES-ALBERT DAL

President