

Dr Chip Barder's UN Day Speech

October 17, 2008

Vice Minister Cuong from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Director General Dzung of the Ministry of Education and Training's Department of International Cooperation, and our honored guests from the government of Vietnam...Mr. Hendra and the leadership and staff members from all the programs of the United Nations...the highly regarded members of our Hanoi diplomatic community...our own dedicated UNIS Board of Directors...my outstanding colleagues, our esteemed UNIS Faculty and Staff... our supportive parent community....and of course...our wonderful students.

As I thought about what I wanted to say today...my first UN Day at UNIS..I started thinking about my audience...and I became overwhelmed. In the audience today are young people from three years old... to two of our student's grandparents I met yesterday who are in their 70's. I thought of native speakers of English... to people who know very little English. I thought of people who are here because they work here or go to school here... and people who had just enough time to squeeze this event into their busy schedule. So as I thought about speaking to you today...I asked myself "what can I say that would apply to all these different groups represented today?"

And then it came to me...the one thing that came into my mind as I thought about each group of people today...something that jumped right out as I pictured you all here... And as I look around, I feel it even stronger...and what I feel is...Hy Vong – Hy Vong...the Vietnamese word for...hope.

When I think of our honored guests from the government of Vietnam...who represent their predecessors of some 20 years ago...who had the courage to take a risk...to do something that had never been done before here...to support the start of an international school...that gives me hope...hope that just as we have been able to accomplish so much in a relatively short period of time with the support of the Ministry of Education and Training, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Planning and Investment, the Prime Minister's office, all the other ministries in the government, the mayor of Hanoi's office, the Tay Ho District Office, the Phu Thuong Office...Ciputra officials...with this kind of willingness to support our educational endeavour....maybe...just maybe...we will continue to see even more success throughout this wonderful country of Vietnam...and that gives me a lot of Hy Vong...hope.

When I think of the United Nations...who has done so much to support us in rough times...and good times...who have always been there when we needed them...who carefully nurtured our school from a small, mom and pop organization for 15-20 children, to a world class institution of 850 hard-working and high achieving learners...this United Nations organization who recognizes today 63 years of UN day celebrations...this organization that does so much for millions of people not just here in Vietnam...but all over the world...I am filled with Hy Vong...hope.

When I think of our diplomatic community...men and women who dedicate their lives...not just to the service of their own nation...but to mediating conflict, resolving differences, teaching all of us how to respect others no matter where they come from...when I think of this group of diplomats and who they represent...it brings me...Hy Vong... hope.

When I think of our dedicated and passionate faculty and staff...who give of themselves every day...and in the evenings...and even on weekends...when I watch them work their magic with students inside and outside the classroom...and how they inspire students with their skill and collaborative effort...I become inspired...and yes...it brings me much Hy Vong...hope.

And as a parent of three grown children...who were brought up in schools like this one...in communities just like this one...I know how hard it can be to be a good parent...there are no guarantees...parenting is at best a series of good calculated guesses...and I see our parents turn out for so many school activities and functions like this one...I am reminded that we are not alone in this endeavour of educating young people...and it gives me Hy Vong...hope.

And I ask all of you to look with me at this wonderful group of 850 students here today...watch them perform...watch them help each other...watch them achieve and succeed...this is what it is all about...and of course...this is what gives me tremendous Hy Vong...

There are not many adults in the world...who go to work each day...and can say that their work gives them hope...but I can...and I do every day. For I am involved with a wonderful institution and I am humbled to be considered its leader.

Now I do not want to paint a completely rosy picture...we face world challenges today that have an impact on our school...and on our students...real world issues that must be dealt with. And it is our job to help our students to seek solutions and try to help make things right.

We continue to commit countless hours to our community service program because we want students to be a part of the solution, part of changing things for the better. In this way, we are more than just a school...we are a place where students emerge as responsible stewards of our global society and natural environment...as our mission statement so eloquently states.

So today we honor 63 years of UN Day celebrations around the world...we also celebrate the 40th anniversary of the only other United Nations International School in the world besides ours...it is in New York City...and we celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights...as well as the 20th anniversary of our school..a place where we work hard to walk the talk and put into action every day the mission and principles of the United Nations. We in the UN family have a lot of celebrating to do.

Each of you...in some small way...are a part of what is happening here today. And if you leave with nothing else in your hearts...may you leave with the one thing that I believe will make a difference from this day forward...that will keep you close to us for as many years as you can foresee...that one thing that is all around you here...and will make a difference in the world...it is Hy Vong...hope. Thank you.