

**Remarks by Ambassador Cáit Moran
Opening of Vietnam 40 Photographic Exhibition,
Quang Tri, 22 June, 2016**

It is an enormous pleasure for me to open the Irish Photographic Exhibition, Vietnam 40, here in Quang Tri.

I want to thank Mr Mai Thúc, Vice Chairman of Quang Tri People's Committee, for his hospitality and the hospitality of the Provincial leadership during our visit to Quang Tri.

Quang Tri is a priority province for Ireland's development cooperation programme. Over the past number of years, Ireland has provided support to people with disabilities, UXO clearance, mine action education, safe-schools for boys and girls, and poverty reduction among ethnic minority communities. Yesterday I was able to see some of these programmes myself and was very impressed by the partners and people we are working with to make a difference in people's lives.

2016 is a significant year for Ireland-Vietnam relations as we mark the 20th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries. The Vietnam 40 Exhibition is part of a year-long programme of events to celebrate and deepen further relations between Ireland and Vietnam which has been supported by the Embassy of Ireland and Culture Ireland, our national Cultural promotion body.

"Vietnam - 40 Years after the War" is a project by Irish photographer, Ian Thuillier, who spent three months travelling from Ho Chi Minh city to Hanoi last year. During his journey, he passed through many cities and villages, stopping along the way to capture life in Vietnam forty years on from the war.

Vietnam 40 was first exhibited in Dublin on 10 December. We are so pleased to have Ian back in Vietnam to exhibit his work. I want to congratulate him on a wonderful collection of images. The photos are now compiled in a new book, Vietnam 40, which has seen him shortlisted out of over 100,000 photographers worldwide, for this year's Sony World Photography Awards.

For me, Ian's images capture the beauty, richness and character of Vietnamese life and the strength and resilience of Vietnamese people. I know that Ian was deeply touched by what he

saw and by the people he met, not just by the lethal legacy of the war, but by the beautiful landscapes and this country's people who are so forgiving of the past.

I want to pay particular tribute to the Mine Action Visitors' Centre which are such generous and fitting hosts for this exhibition. This exhibition include photos of survivors of the war, some of them elderly, having lived through the horror of it, and some of them young but living with the legacy. Some were affected by landmines or were victims of Agent Orange.

One of the survivors, Mr. Nguyen Xuan Tuan, in the photos displayed today is from Quang Tri province. Despite being injured by unexploded ordnance, Mr. Tuan has gone on, not just to live his life, by becoming an ICT student at Quang Tri Vocational College, but to give back to others, through his collaboration with the Mine Risk Education programme of Project RENEW. The work that Project Renew does saves lives. It is also dangerous work – despite the safety precautions. I want to stop and remember the contribution of Mr. Ngo Thien Khiet, who lost his own life while attempting to make safe an unexploded device just last month. I know that Khiet's family and his friends and colleagues here at Project Renew must miss him dearly. I also want to pay tribute to Khiet's colleague, Mr Nguyen Van Hao, who was injured in the accident and to wish him well in his recovery. I want to applaud the vital work that the whole Project Renew team does to make this province a safer place.

And so in conclusion, I am delighted to officially open the Vietnam 40 Exhibition in Quang Tri. It is a special exhibition which marks the important and lasting relationship between Ireland and Quang Tri.

ENDS.