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Net Zero in Vietnam-Current situation and solutions for small and medium-sized enterprises in Vietnam

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Abstract
Net greenhouse gas emissions of "zero" by 2050 is a major goal of the Government of Vietnam, to contribute to the global effort to combat climate change. Not just a political commitment, Net Zero has become a new trend in restructuring economies towards low carbon, paralleling economic development and environmental protection. The journey to implement Vietnam's commitment at COP26 to bring net carbon emissions to "zero" by 2050 cannot be without the contribution of the business community. Appreciating the participation of the business community, however, small and medium enterprises still do not appear much in the picture of sustainable development and combating climate change , most small and medium enterprises still stand outside. In this article , the article analyzes the advantages and disadvantages of small and medium-sized enterprises in particular and Vietnamese enterprises in general in the process of implementing Net Zero in Vietnam today, thereby proposing some solutions. to bring businesses closer to their goals and towards sustainable development.

Keywords: Net Zero, Sustainable Development, Small and Medium Enterprises

Introduction

Net Zero by 2050 - this commitment by Vietnam at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Summit (COP26) has become a historical milestone, creating a premise for building a green economy , lasting. For businesses, participating in the Net Zero process is expected to contain many challenges but also bring many opportunities, especially when capturing the green shift trend in the world and Vietnam.

The United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP26) in Glasgow, UK has brought great hope to humanity to keep the average global temperature rise to no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius and achieve zero emissions. net zero by mid-century with promising commitments from global leaders. To date, 137 countries have made commitments to net zero emissions; 77 countries, localities and corporations signed . Global declaration on transition from coal power to clean electricity, 45 countries commit to transition to green, sustainable agricultural investment, many car companies announce to stop producing gasoline-powered vehicles by 2040 at the latest. ; The US and China issued a Joint Declaration on cooperation to combat climate change... Transitioning to clean energy has become a mandatory path for all countries. According to the International Energy Agency's report on the Energy Sector's Roadmap to Zero Net Emissions, by 2030, the scale of wind and solar power will need to increase fourfold, and the number of electric vehicles sold will increase. 18 times, energy efficiency needs to be improved many times compared to 2020. Renewable energy, wind, solar and storage solutions continue to have new technological breakthroughs. The convergence of these breakthroughs will make clean energy cost-competitive and could even become the cheapest energy source by the end of the decade. Global financial resources are also shifting strongly toward clean energy. Countries and multinational corporations are entering the race to win the fastest and largest amount of international climate finance possible to invest in clean energy, electric transportation, and clean industry. As a developing country, Vietnam has affirmed its position as a "pioneer in the fight against global climate change" when making ambitious commitments on the goal of "achieving net zero emissions". 0 (net zero) by 2050" and signed the entire content of the "Global Declaration on the transition from coal power to clean energy" at COP26.

Concept

Net Zero is about achieving balance (to zero) between the amount of greenhouse gases emitted into the atmosphere and the

amount of these gases absorbed at any given stage. To date, about 140 countries have committed to or are working towards the Net Zero goal. Each country sets its own timeline to achieve this goal, most are by 2050, with a few exceptions by 2035 and at the latest by 2070.

Benefit from Net Zero

Increase revenue and competitiveness

Net greenhouse gas emissions of "zero" by 2050 is a major goal of the Government of Vietnam, to contribute to the global effort to combat climate change. Not just a political commitment, Net Zero has become a new trend in restructuring economies towards low carbon, paralleling economic development and environmental protection.

At the annual Vietnam Sustainable Business Forum (VCSF) in 2023 , managers said that , facing the requirements of sustainable development, the business community needs to redefine: Business success. Business is not just about financial numbers but now also includes the ability to adapt, withstand and recover from the unprecedented challenges of climate change. Businesses need to link their success and long-term growth with the sustainable benefits of the community, society and the environment. Sharing about the increasing requirements for environmental factors in production and business for businesses, the Government, after committing to Net Zero with the world, has called on businesses to join in implementing the common goal of nation. 1,912 large emitting enterprises must conduct greenhouse gas inventories and develop emission reduction plans in the coming years. PAN member companies are not in this group, but applying low emission models will help the Group comply with the Government's green development requirements.

The pressure from customers to be greener and cleaner is also quite large. Typically, many customers from the EU attach great importance to carbon tracing on products. Thus, suppliers must carry out carbon inventories and solutions to reduce the carbon footprint of their products.

Besides, businesses themselves also have a need for efficiency in production and business such as needing to reduce costs, save resources and optimize the production process. This is also a motivation for businesses to apply low-emission economic models.

The benefits businesses will see immediately when applying solutions at the factory level are cost savings and emissions reduction. Thanks to optimizing resources, reducing fertilizer and water in agricultural cultivation, using renewable energy and increasing equipment efficiency, PAN can save tens of billions of dong each year.

Besides, revenue and profit both increased due to two reasons. First, brand value increases when launching products into international markets and being able to penetrate higher value markets. Second, utilizing waste products and by-products also brings great revenue. For example, every year, PAN's company has thousands of tons of processed shrimp shells. Instead of spending processing costs, the Group cooperates with other companies to process it into animal feed, and earns an additional revenue of about 15 billion VND per year.

Attract green investment capital

Another big benefit from the company's compliance with environmental and social regulations is that businesses can attract investors for production and business activities. Green capital is currently quite abundant but investment opportunities in Vietnam are not many. The problem is that businesses have not provided their sources of information and data on sustainable development, such as disclosing information on product labels about raw material sources. When investment funds approach, they have no basis to know whether the business operates in accordance with green investment criteria or not.

Currently, only large businesses can do this, small businesses can do it on a simpler scale. Businesses need to review how their business sector impacts sustainable development, both positive and negative. With negative impacts, what solutions will there be? From there, there is an orientation to record and update necessary information and data, such as greenhouse gas inventory information. Businesses that do a good job of inventorying, storing and disclosing information will have a greater advantage.

Over time, difficulties in technology and resources will gradually be resolved. Currently, VNEEC is coordinating with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to organize training courses on greenhouse gas inventory to help businesses prepare to participate in the carbon market. Regarding the new EU regulations on carbon tracing, the EU has also opened an information portal for businesses subject to this regulation and has training courses, with detailed instructions on how to import and export to Vietnam. EU.

In terms of resources, there will be many new opportunities through global green investment funds and from new State policies to promote green capital, investment in emission reduction and Net Zero. Converting new technology, in addition to improving competitiveness, also helps businesses earn more revenue from carbon credits, contributing to the country's overall emission reduction goal. Representatives of businesses and investors all said that the State needs to play a leading role and become a foundation for businesses. Specifically, there are policies and guidelines on reducing emissions, supporting technical capacity building and accessing capital sources. At the same time, building a stable policy system, especially in the energy sector , is a prerequisite for the success of the process of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Net zero situation at businesses

In early 2022, VSIP 3 industrial park was officially started. As the 3rd VSIP industrial park in Binh Duong and the 11th in Vietnam, VSIP 3 is built to prioritize the use of solar energy, apply emission monitoring systems, and industrial symbiosis according to the model. circular economy.

Right after construction began, this industrial park was chosen as the location for Lego Group's first carbon neutral factory, with a total investment of up to 1 billion USD. VSIP 3 is not the only industrial park built in an ecological and circular direction in Vietnam. In the North, industrial parks such as Deep C and Nam Cau Kien have also implemented many initiatives towards industrial symbiosis to limit emissions and use renewable energy.

Not only industrial parks but in many other fields, Vietnamese businesses are having active activities towards sustainable development. In 2019, leading giants in the fast-moving consumer goods industry joined hands to establish the Vietnam Packaging Recycling Alliance (PRO Vietnam), with the goal of closing the circular loop for the packaging industry. In the same year, leaders of many large businesses,

research units and non-profit organizations established the Climate Action Alliance (VCCA), committed to promoting low-carbon solutions applied to activities. production, business as well as life.

The Vietnamese business community is taking active activities towards reducing emissions and sustainable development. The reason is that environmental pollution and climate change lead to increasing extreme weather events, causing heavy damage not only to socio-economic life but also to production activities. , business.

VCCI's survey shows that most businesses agree that unusual weather developments are harmful to businesses, especially phenomena such as prolonged heat; Increased winter temperatures or unusual floods.

According to estimates by the World Bank (WB), damage due to climate change in Vietnam is equivalent to about 1.5 - 3% of GDP, which is about 4 - 8 billion USD per year. Mr. Nam commented that if this huge source of capital were not lost but reinvested, the economy would grow much stronger.

In addition, legal regulations as well as requirements from the market, customers, and partners are also making standards on environmental protection and responsibility to the community become mandatory.

Specifically, in 2022, the 2020 Environmental Protection Law officially takes effect, with a series of regulations to enhance corporate responsibility such as extended producer responsibility (EPR); Compulsory wastewater monitoring... Along with that, a series of decrees and projects on circular economy and climate change prevention have been issued, shaping the environmental policy framework in an increasingly strict direction.

On the market side, many large markets such as the US, Japan, Europe and even China are gradually raising standards for imported goods. Not only ensuring technical standards, goods exported to these markets require being produced in a green supply chain, limiting carbon emissions. Also, from the requirements of large markets, international investors when choosing partners or investment destinations also place emphasis on requirements related to the use of renewable energy, traceability or circular economy. complete.

Another motivation for businesses to make environmental commitments, according to Mr. Nam, comes from the opportunities opened up from sustainable development. It is an opportunity to access green finance from the world's leading development organizations and credit institutions such as WB, HSBC...

On the other hand, sustainable production and business require the application of new processes and technologies. This is an important basis for businesses to invest in research and development (R&D) or boldly innovate production processes and models.

Sustainable brand positioning is also something the business community aims for when implementing environmental and community commitments. Many reputable surveys show that consumers are increasingly willing to spend money on sustainable products and services provided by responsible businesses.

The biggest benefit is the sustainable development of the business. This sustainable development gives businesses vitality and strong resilience, which can be clearly seen through the test of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Appreciating the participation of the business community, however, according to Mr. Nam, small and medium enterprises still do not appear much in the picture of sustainable development and combating climate change.

However, most small and medium enterprises are still on the sidelines - this is a big shortcoming, because although there is no official research, it can be confirmed that small and medium enterprises are "contributing" significantly to the pollution situation. environment. Accordingly, the group of small and medium enterprises accounts for 96.7% of the total number of enterprises. These businesses face limitations in both finance and human resources, so they often still use old technology, inefficient production models, and do not pay enough attention to the environment. Greater efforts from the policy side are needed to encourage small and medium-sized enterprises to participate more actively in the fight against climate change. This is a particularly important force that can create breakthrough changes.

Some typical businesses

Vinamilk

Cuts

At a typical enterprise of sustainable development - Vinamilk, the implementation of a circular economy model aiming at "nothing thrown away" has been strongly promoted to contribute to "cutting" emissions. .

Circular economy is understood as a circular cycle so that the output of one process can be the input of another process, thereby reducing resource exploitation, waste treatment costs and reducing environmental pollution.

At Vinamilk Green Farm Tay Ninh, part of the company's 13-farm system, every day a herd of 8,000 dairy cows produces 30 tons of manure. Waste is then collected using a modern system and treated with Biogas composting technology. The "outputs" of this process are fertilizer, water, and gas, which become the "inputs" of a new, closed cycle. Thanks to that, each year the farm can save more than 2 billion VND in electricity costs and also help significantly reduce CO_2 emissions .

At another stage of the value chain, production, Vinamilk's Vietnamese super dairy factory with a capacity of 800 million liters of milk/year also reduces emissions by up to 10,000 tons of CO_2 /year. The heat recovery and reuse system help recover up to 92% of heat, reducing energy input, operating costs as well as negative impacts on the environment.

$_2$ emissions compared to traditional forklifts because it saves energy and can calculate the shortest route to travel.

Experts at the British Standards Institute in Vietnam (BSI Vietnam) - the leading national standards unit in the world - commented that a sustainable Net Zero transition process needs to be based on a foundation of greenhouse gas reduction. . “Currently, many Vietnamese businesses have begun to measure emissions, thereby applying many effective and long-term CO_2 emission reduction methods. Vinamilk is a business that has done this well," said Ms. Nguyen Dinh Minh Tam, Director of Compliance and Risk Management Operations of BSI Vietnam.

Convert

Despite quick actions, businesses also need to determine that the journey towards Net Zero will be long-term. Many major strategies need change and investment, especially in processes, management and people. To do this, each business needs leaders to understand and monitor the entire process, moving towards upgrading voluntary Sustainable

Development practices to a management and strategic level.
At Vinamilk, the business also takes the first steps with a consistent orientation on sustainable development. From the principle of compliance with environmental laws and regulations to the proactive practice of sustainable development reporting more than 12 years ago.
Quite early, Vinamilk has converted to many advanced, environmentally friendly technologies such as using green energy, renewable energy... With a total installed capacity of 72.55 MWP, according to calculations and solutions. Solar energy helps reduce nearly 85,000 tons of CO_2 /year, equivalent to 4.6 million trees planted. In addition, the combination of using compressed natural gas (CNG), Biomass... to replace gasoline, DO/FO oil... helps the rate of green energy use in production activities at Vinamilk currently reach nearly 87%. , contributing positively to the goal of reducing $CO_{2\ emissions}$.

Absorb
When cutting and converting to the maximum, "absorption" is an important step towards the goal of balance, Net Zero. Currently, businesses have made efforts to plant many trees to absorb and offset the amount of $CO2_{emitted}$ by the production process.
The green area at Vinamilk Green Farm farms maintains a coverage rate of over 70%. Trees are planted around to create a biological belt, protect the ecosystem and limit impacts from the outside environment.
From 2012 to 2020, Vinamilk and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment coordinated to implement the 1 million green trees fund for Vietnam at 56 locations in 20 provinces and cities. Recently, Vinamilk also continued to sign a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment on implementing tree planting activities to neutralize carbon towards Net Zero in the 5-year period from 2023 to 2027.
This green tree fund will directly contribute to "absorbing" CO_2 for the business itself, helping to balance future emissions and also creating many added values such as people's livelihoods, improving ecology and landscape. , environment…
Sustainable development is increasingly promoted and promoted by the Government, society and the business community, meaning there will be strong and comprehensive transformations. It is important that businesses need to build a systematic roadmap from management, implementation to control. And it is indispensable to have a strong and consistent commitment to large, long-term goals like Net Zero.
After the Vietnamese Government's commitment to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 at COP-26 and new generation trade agreements, sustainable development is increasingly recognized by the business community. care about.
In many different forms, businesses are actively accompanying the Government in implementing commitments, while considering sustainable development as a new advantage in the increasingly fierce competition in the market.

TTC AgriS
Zero-waste production process
Sharing at the recent Sustainable Development 2023 conference organized by Forbes Vietnam, Thanh Thanh Cong - Bien Hoa Joint Stock Company (TTC AgriS) said that as a company in the agricultural sector, TTC AgriS is involved intimate with the environment. Therefore, the company takes the "green" business strategy as the foundation for development, creating competitive advantage and providing the market with solutions for agricultural products of sustainable origin.
Accordingly, TTC AgriS has optimized the value chain of agricultural crops such as sugarcane, coconut, banana,... right from the first stages, contributing to balancing the emission and absorption of greenhouse gases such as CO2. . According to Ms. Dang Huynh Uc My, there are currently more than 200 products from coconut trees, and sugar cane also has more than 130 products. Therefore, the company always promotes the application of processing technology to diversify the value chain of products from agricultural crops. In addition, priority should be given to using biomass fuel and biofuels in the production process, and applying carbonation technology to take advantage of the amount of CO2 generated in the boiler for reuse in refining production. ... TTC AgriS's goal in the period 2025 - 2030 is to put into operation a sugarcane juice factory with a capacity of 72 million liters/year with zero discharge technology, using 100% biomass as fuel. fuel at all factories and successfully develop paper packaging from sugarcane bagasse using biotechnology by 2025, moving towards the goal of achieving Net Zero carbon by 2035.

Nestlé Vietnam
At Nestlé Vietnam Company, with the purchase of 25% of Vietnamese coffee production, Nestlé Vietnam has introduced the concept of circularity into the sustainable coffee value chain through promoting responsible farming and supply. . This has brought about a number of achievements such as rejuvenating 63,000 hectares of aging coffee and organizing 330,000 training sessions on sustainable coffee farming. Thanks to that, farmers' income increased by 30-100% thanks to the application of reasonable intercropping models.
Nestlé Vietnam also invested in research to produce coffee varieties that when planted can save 40-60% of irrigation water, 20% of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and a higher carbon absorption rate of the tree but give lower emissions. Mr. Binu Jacob said that since 2015, Nestlé Vietnam has committed to responsible production with the "Zero landfill waste" program. Accordingly, 65% of wastewater is recycled and meets drinking water quality standards, the volume of recycled water reaches 112,000 m3/year. Currently, 100% of Nestlé Vietnam's post-production coffee grounds are reused as biomass raw materials, helping to reduce gas consumption and CO2 emissions. Non-hazardous sludge from production activities, after being treated, is also used to produce fertilizer; Waste sand from the boiler is provided to local unburnt brick manufacturers for construction projects. Nestlé Vietnam also improved production technology by switching from multi-layer packaging to single-layer packaging. At the same time, it also converted 40% of production power sources to renewable energy, reduced 30% of water used for production and reduced emissions of more than 12,600 tons of CO2/year.

Thien Long Group
Thien Long has built a design team within the company.

Accordingly, product manufacturing is always researched to use less material by creating thinner products, reducing redundant details and using biological materials. The company also has solutions to extend the product life cycle, such as when the whiteboard marker runs out of ink, there will be an ink cartridge for customers to easily refill. Thien Long's playdough products also have wheat flour as the main ingredient, meeting domestic safety standards as well as those of Europe and America... In addition, Thien Long is researching wood plastic products made from rice husks to reduce Minimize the amount of plastic used. In the goal of reducing plastic waste in the next 5 years, Thien Long will expand environmentally friendly product lines such as producing pens from plastic bottles. Production and business processes are also continuously re-evaluated to find what can be optimized. In addition, the company also conveys information about sustainable development to students through the program "For a green school roof" to spread awareness of responsible consumption.

Similarly, Nestlé Vietnam also researches to improve the design to eliminate unnecessary packaging, reduce the use of virgin plastic, and replace it with environmentally friendly materials. Thanks to that, in the 2 years 2021-2022, this enterprise has reduced nearly 2,500 tons of plastic packaging. Currently, about 94% of the company's product packaging is designed to be recyclable and reusable.

Meanwhile, Duy Tan Recycling Plastic Company with a factory capacity of 30,000 tons/year has collected domestic plastic bottles and recycled them into plastic pellets. Mr. Le Anh, Director of Sustainable Development of Duy Tan Recycled Plastic Company, said that currently the company's products have met 15 standards in the world, including those of the Food and Drug Administration. United States (FDA). In 2022, this business exported 4,200 tons of recycled plastic beads, equivalent to 300 million recycled plastic bottles, to 12 countries, including Europe and the United States. There are products that can be recycled up to 20 times. This contributes very positively to reducing plastic waste into the environment, creating a new life cycle for products and bringing great benefits to the environment.

Some solutions to promote Net Zero in Vietnamese small and medium-sized enterprises

Solutions need to be implemented synchronously, that is to apply solutions on management, technology, equipment, and techniques for economical and effective use of energy to save input energy costs, reduce production costs, increase business efficiency, At the same time, reducing greenhouse gas emissions due to reducing the need to use fossil-based energy sources - the main cause of greenhouse gas emissions today.

These solutions have been institutionalized in the Law on Economical and Efficient Use of Energy in 2010 and are supported by the Government to implement the business community and people through National Target Programs and National Programs. participating in economical and efficient use of energy from 2006 to present and continuing until 2030.

The second is to exploit and use new energy sources, renewable energy, clean energy - considered to have "zero" greenhouse gas emissions such as solar energy, wind energy, hydroelectricity, Geothermal, biomass, Hydrogen... The increased use of these energy sources also reduces the current need to use fossil energy sources.

To support the implementation of these solutions, the Government has issued many mechanisms to encourage and support the development of various types of renewable energy from solar energy, wind energy, biomass energy, and solar energy. from waste…

The third solution is to apply comprehensive solutions for management, exploitation, and economical and effective use of resources and raw materials and fuel inputs in production activities. Minimize waste into the environment and make the most of opportunities to apply circular economy models, sharing economy... towards a sustainable production model for businesses.

To support this solution, the Government has issued the Cleaner Production Strategy in Industry since 2009 and has upgraded and supplemented implementation content into the National Action Program on Sustainable Production and Consumption. sustainable period 2021 - 2030 is being implemented by the Ministry of Industry and Trade according to Decision No. 889/QD-TTg dated June 24, 2020 of the Prime Minister.

To achieve the Net Zero goal, in addition to the three groups of technical solutions mentioned above, the 2020 Environmental Protection Law also clearly stipulates the roles and responsibilities of the business community to participate in reducing gas emissions. greenhouse according to the roadmap . Accordingly, regulations on greenhouse gas emissions inventory must be implemented from 2023; develop plans and implement self-implemented greenhouse gas emission mitigation measures until 2025 and enforce implementation according to allocated quotas from 2026 onwards; Mechanisms to support the implementation of emission reduction obligations through the carbon credit exchange, carbon credit offset mechanism... will be applied on a trial basis from 2025.

Next, the State needs to implement synchronous and long-term national policies and strategies. The Prime Minister has issued the National Strategy on Green Growth for the period 2021-2030, vision 2050, which sets out 10 strategic directions for industries and fields and 8 groups of solutions. The National Action Plan on Green Growth for the period 2021-2030 was also approved by the Prime Minister with 18 topics, 57 task groups and 134 specific activities. The proposed tasks and solutions are calculated based on high green growth scenarios and take into account technical feasibility, which emphasizes priority solutions, feasibility, resource availability, co-benefits and the ability to spread instead of options that are only economically feasible.

Besides, another highlight of green growth is the balance and harmony between the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions with the goal of socio-economic development towards sustainable development, especially contributing to restructuring the economy. economy and innovating growth models. This is also the highlight of this Strategy; These are long-term benefits and the sooner we do it, the more effective it is and the lower the risks and limitations will be.

Besides, to limit emissions while we promote rapid growth, it is necessary to have technological innovation solutions, structural and non-structural solutions, the Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment emphasized.

Regarding investment incentives and investment support, especially activities related to inspection and supervision need to be appropriately adjusted. For technological innovation, adopting initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas

emissions requires financial incentives. Especially the responsibility of the community of people and businesses.
On the state management side, supporting initial investment incentives to encourage businesses to innovate and reduce greenhouse gas emissions is necessary, contributing to improving the competitiveness of the economy. This is also the driving force to help the economy develop, aiming for a higher position in the production chain.

Conclude

When developing the Green Growth Strategy, one of the consistent points of view is that the benefits and orientation of green growth are not the national position but the short-term and long-term benefits for each citizen. . The goal of green growth is equality and inclusion, leaving no one behind; Everyone has the opportunity to access and implement green growth, bringing benefits to all subjects, in which disadvantaged groups will benefit most. Therefore, it is necessary to have the participation of the whole community, people and businesses. The current green growth strategy is adjusted to match Vietnam's commitments. A series of green growth mechanisms and policies have begun to take shape. Communication work also plays an important role in determining the success of this Green Growth Strategy. Regarding the set of scientific criteria for national green classification, in order to implement the National Green Growth Strategy, there needs to be a set of criteria, clarifying what green connotation is on a national level and on the level of each industry and field. to serve as a basis for implementation. By 2022, 30 countries will have developed a set of green criteria.
For Vietnam, the Ministry of Planning and Investment is researching and developing a set of scientific criteria for national green classification in harmony with international practices, which is an important basis for selecting green investment projects. ; an important foundation for mobilizing domestic and international resources; helps quantify and evaluate progress in implementing green growth in Vietnam. Through this set of criteria, green projects have access to domestic and international green finance sources, preferential policies, and new investment support for green projects. The most important point of the set of criteria is that it is comprehensive, inclusive and consistent with international practices, otherwise it will be very difficult to mobilize resources, especially international resources. In the coming time, the Ministry of Planning and Investment expects to issue a detailed list of industries, fields and projects suitable for green growth orientation. These are general technical orientations and standards in accordance with international practices. On this basis, ministries and branches will develop a specific set of criteria for each ministry and branch.

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