## EU pledges $736m in ODA for 2014

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内容：HA- NO-I - The European Union (EU) would continue supporting Vie-t Nam with assistance of US$736.7 million in 2014. The level of aid would also be maintained for the coming years. This was confirmed by Dr Franz Jessen, AmbassadorHead of the Delegation of the EU to Vie-t Nam, yesterday at a ceremony to launch the Blue Book 2014, an annual report on the EU development cooperation in Vie-t Nam. The EU would also sign the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Vie-t Nam before the end of this year as a way of supporting the country to develop its trade ambitions and international commitments. The FTA negotiations were expected to be concluded by autumn this year. The EU has remained the leading providers of development as sistance to Vie-t Nam, with a total of $619.8 million of disbursement in 2013, he said. The Ambassador said the organisation had met some barriers accessing relevant authorities and sectors and solving... ... disbursement procedures, so the disbursement figure was low compared to the pledged aid. Apart from giving non refundable aid to Vie-t Nam, the EU focused on commercial co operation with the country to help it stabilise the economy. He said that the tense standoff between China and Vie-t Nam on the East Sea and the Japanese Government stopping ODA to Vie-t Nam due to alleged bribery on railway projects would not affect the EU - s aid to Vie-t Nam in the next years. The EU has been Vie-t Nam-s largest trade partner in recent years, with the country-s export turnover to the EU reaching $ 25 billion last year. This year, the EU has focused on eradicating poverty among ethnic minorities, which was featured in the Blue Book 2014. Although important progress have been achieved in reducing poverty among ethnic minorities, the percentage of poor people is still much higher than the rest of the nation. The book included some of the challenges the Vietnamese Government faces, and suggestions to overcome them. In 2013, the EU and its members disbursed Euro 56.5 billion ($ 76.8 billion) globally as the world - s largest ODA provider, despite being seriously affected by the economic crisis. -