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A boy in Nam Dinh, Vietnam, cycles in front of a church Dec. 6, 2020. (CNS photo/Kham, Reut

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by Catholic News Service

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HANOI, Vietnam — A Vatican delegation traveled to Vietnam, hoping to accelerate a process for enhancing diplomatic ties between the Holy See and Vietnam.

On April 20, the three-member delegation, led by Msgr. Miroslaw Wachowski, the Vatican's undersecretary for relations with states, arrived in Hanoi to start a seven-day working visit, reported ucanews.com. Other delegates are Vietnamese Msgr. Francis Cao Minh Dung and Korean Father Han Hyun-taek.

The delegates were warmly welcomed by Singapore-based Archbishop Marek Zalewski, nonresident pontifical representative to Vietnam, Archbishop Joseph Vu Van Thien of Hanoi, three priests and officials from Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Government Committee for Religious Affairs.

Jesuit Father Joseph Dao Nguyen Vu, head of the office of the Catholic bishops' conference of Vietnam, said the Vatican delegates were to attend the ninth meeting of the Vietnam-Holy See Joint Working Group April 21-22 to discuss ways to set up an office of a permanent papal representative in the country.

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UCA News reported the group started to work toward agreements to improve bilateral relationships in 2009, but no meetings have been held during the past two years due to the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic.

Father Vu said the delegation also would pay courtesy calls on Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, the Home Affairs Ministry, and the Government Committee for Religious Affairs, which controls all religious activities in the country.

The priest said the Vatican visitors would celebrate a special Mass at Hanoi Cathedral April 23.

During their visit, they also plan to attend the bishops' meeting held in the Bishop's House of Thai Binh. They will visit religious sites and meet local Catholics.

The Vatican has had no diplomatic relations with Vietnam since the last Vatican envoy was expelled from the country in 1976 after the communists took control of South Vietnam.