

Cambodia New Vision

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**Address by Samdech Hun Sen to
the Inauguration Ceremony of Cambodia Agricultural
Research and Development Institute (CARDI)
(Phnom Penh, 21 November, 2000)**

**Address by Samdech Prime
Minister HUN SEN to the
Donor's Meeting on CMAC
(Phnom Penh, 16 Nov. 2000)**



Today is the most auspicious day for me to have the great honor to attend the inauguration of the Cambodia Agricultural Research and Development Institute (CARDI), located in Proteah Lang Commune, Dangkor District, Phnom Penh. On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) and myself, I am pleased to have CARDI established in response to the need for national development and poverty alleviation.

I would like to commend the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) for establishing CARDI for today's inaugural ceremony and official launch to allow agricultural technicians to conduct research and experiments with the ultimate goal of developing Cambodia's agricultural sector. I also would like to thank the Australian

Government, through the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), the Cambodia IRRI-Australia Project (CIAP), international organizations and NGOs for providing budgetary support and technical expertise to put in place this institute.

Minister Chea Song has briefed the meeting on the success of the CIAP project, the objectives of establishing CARDI and what have been successfully overcome to get this important achievement. I believe that this is a highly laudable attainment in implementing, with due responsibility, the government policy of ensuring food security, poverty reduction and natural resource and

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It is a great honor for me to be here with you, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, representing the donor countries and institutions and all players at this august meeting to launch a consultative process on mine-related issues in the Kingdom of Cambodia. This is for the first time that my colleagues in charge of mine clearance and I have had the opportunity to meet you all to discuss key issues and look for ways to go together in the future. This is to enhance our partnership in this important mine clearance area. Therefore, I believe that today's meeting will provide us with a rare opportunity to make common assessment of the performance and strenuous efforts undertaken by the Royal Government of Cambodia. At the same time, I am confident that we will be able to draw on the experiences and good lessons from our common efforts, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses, the dexterity and difficulty of mine clearing operations in Cambodia. Against this background, we will be able to propose new measures to expedite mine clearance with stronger determination and a greater pace.

As you are well aware, the mine clearance activities are considered

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environmental protection.

The government's long-term objectives are to develop the country to the level of advanced countries in the region and ensure that the Cambodian people can enjoy a decent living standard and live in dignity, progress, prosperity and happiness. This can be achieved through high economic growth of 6 to 7 percent per year, equitable distribution of the fruits of this economic growth and sustainable utilization of Cambodia's natural resources. To this end, the RGC has put forth the national agenda and endeavored to effectively implement its triangle strategy, the reforms of four sectors and six priorities of national development. The Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (IPRSP) has recently been approved, while the Second Five-Year Plan is being prepared by the RGC. These are important government documents, which provide guidelines and directions for development and poverty reduction in Cambodia. Having displayed a strong commitment to poverty alleviation, the RGC considers that increasing agricultural productivity and production as a top priority, as 85 percent of the Cambodian population live in rural areas and their livelihoods depend mainly on agriculture. Therefore, the strategy for poverty reduction should focus mainly on integrated development programs, especially geared toward improving agricultural productivity. This is can be achieved through improved research on rice, subsidiary and industrial crops, infrastructure development, rigorous implementation of water policy, studies on the status land tenure and the possibility of distributing the available land to the rural people, bearing in mind the need for ensuring a proper land use and environmental protection. To achieve the above objectives, CARDI is required to play a crucial role to contribute to improve productivity through research, extension and transfer of seeds, tech-

niques and agricultural technology to farmers.

CARDI is Cambodia's first administrative public enterprise with its own legal status and financial autonomy, since so far there is no rice research and development institute. Only experimentation stations, agricultural development centers and farms have been established in a number of provinces and municipalities and often with obsolete technical and scientific facilities. After 1979, once again attention was given to agricultural research and experimentation. A number of research and experimentation stations were put in place and operated under the aegis of the MAFF. However, their performance did not live up to expectations, due to the lack of funds, expertise and agricultural facilities. CARDI objectives are to ensure sustainable agricultural development in Cambodia in order to ensure food security for meeting domestic needs and for generating surpluses for exports, through crop diversification, in particular the improvement in quality standards of agricultural products to meet the requirements of international markets.

I am confident that CARDI will be instrumental in raising public awareness on the benefits of research. More importantly the institute will play a crucial role in linking up researchers, extension workers and farmers, an important factor in agricultural modernization in Cambodia. Agricultural experts and extension specialists trained by CARDI will be obliged to transfer the acquired agricultural technology, knowledge and know-how to farmers in rural areas with the view to improving agricultural productivity and product quality. Moreover, CARDI should also have an important role to play in networking with regional and international research institutes and centers to strengthen the cooperation in research and exchange of experiences, outcomes and technical information of scien-

tific value.

In the areas mentioned earlier, CARDI, which has taken over the Australia-funded CIAP, has considerable potential to tremendously benefit Cambodia and Cambodian farmers. Taking into consideration this factor, the RGC considers that maintaining continuity and sustainability of CARDI's efforts is a priority, deserving special attention and encouragement. This is reflected in government's full support for CARDI since its inception in terms of moral and financial assistance to the extent that the budgetary resources permit. In addition, the RGC will assist CARDI in seeking donor's support to ensure its smooth operations.

As I have stated earlier, research is a good undertaking. However, special attention should also be given to the dissemination of the research results and outcomes among farmers to accommodate to their needs. Therefore, close cooperation between specialists and extension workers is crucial in the dissemination and transfer of technology and research outcomes to the farmers. I mean the MAFF should always implement as efficiently as possible the research policies and carry out the dissemination of techniques and the transfer of technology, comprehensive knowledge and know-how, geared toward improvement in productivity, in response to farmers' needs and the requirement for the modernization of Cambodia's agricultural sector. Moreover, I would like to urge the MAFF, as CARDI's technical supervisory agency, to enhance and rigorously implement the Agricultural Development Plan by strengthening institutional capacity, training the managers and officers and providing equipment and expertise. At the same time, I would like to urge the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) to give more attention to improve budget dis-

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by the RGC as our top priority in the rehabilitation and development of the country, in particular in light of achieving poverty reduction in Cambodia. Mine clearance is not merely a matter of social security, but it also relevant to economic issues and development in general, especially in terms of providing land and safety of livelihoods of poor farming households in remote out-back areas. Recognizing the importance of this agenda, Cambodia has wholeheartedly become a signatory to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Storage and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Landmines and the Destruction of All Kinds of Landmines on 3 December 1997 in Ottawa. Our past actions reflected clearly the government's determination in implementing this convention. Indeed, Cambodia's most important achievements in this sector are inextricably linked to the generous and invaluable assistance provided by all our development partners. Taking this opportunity, I would like to express to all our donors and partners our sincere gratitude for assisting with mine clearance activities in Cambodia, notably our thanks are extended to Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, European Union, Finland, Federal Republic of Germany, the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR and a number of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Thanks to this common, determined efforts, the national and international mine clearance operators in the Kingdom of Cambodia have ex-

panded and taken deep roots. CMAC's structure has been modified and considerably improved during the last seven years. The RGC is determined to do its utmost to strengthen CMAC to enable it to carry out the responsibility of a national mine clearance body and provide a mechanism to implement efficiently Cambodia's responsibility under the Ottawa Convention. This also includes the amendment to the CMAC by-law in order to enhance the ownership of the national mine clearance authority and to improve its ability to successfully implement government policies and priority objectives.

Unfortunately, CMAC has gone through a serious typhoon for more than one year. In the spirit of taking ownership of this national priority, the RGC has done its part of the shared responsibility to rescue CMAC and strengthen this institution, including strengthening the Board of Directors, the management and organizational structures and providing counterpart funds for running mine clearance activities. The RGC is conscious that improving CMAC performance, including financial management and technical operations, is key to instill donors' confidence, and consequently to seek their continued support. At the same time, with the newly established "Cambodia Authority for Mine Action Management and Assistance to Mine Victims", the RGC has displayed its genuine determination in strengthening the structure of this regulatory body. This is to ensure the continued coordination and cooperation among all operators and the control of mine clearance activities in general. Therefore, the management of mine clearance activities

in Cambodia is clearly separated. The "Cambodia Authority for Mine Action Management and Assistance to Mine Victims" is both a regulator and government's focal point for designing policies, plans and programs and establishing a necessary legal framework governing mine related issues, while CMAC will a state-owned enterprise responsible for mine clearance.

Notwithstanding, Cambodia will not be able to shoulder this heavy burden on its own. CMAC was forced to downsize its operating staff by approximately 2,000 people, due to budget constraints. In my capacity as a caretaker, I regret very much that this has happened. We however don't have any other choice. In fact, we are in a dire need for any kind of both financial and technical assistance to fulfil this daunting task. It is at this crucial juncture, that the RGC want to see a real spirit of partnership with all its close friends. Strengthening partnership at this moment is key to resolving mine clearance issues in Cambodia. Closing CMAC's door at this moment will be a great tragedy, which we should not allow to happen. Cambodia is not a producer of landmines. On the contrary, our people have fell prey to the flame of hot wars, fueled by the cold war from outside, which had broken out and protracted for many decades. Cambodia could not afford to buy weapons, ammunitions and landmines to wage the wars without external assistance. At this time, we also need assistance from our external partners for military demobilization, disarmament, mine clearance and assistance to all innocent victims of wars and landmines. Cambodia should be encour-

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**Keynote Address by Samdech Hun Sen
To the Opening Ceremony of the International Conference
on “Development and Governance in
the Greater Mekong Sub-region”
(Phnom Penh, November 1, 2000)**

It is a great honor for me to address the opening ceremony of the Second International Conference on the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS). Once again, I would like to commend the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP) and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung for jointly organizing this important international conference. I wish to take the opportunity provided by this conference to share with you some ideas, which fit in the vision for a shared future in the GMS. You may have been familiar with the issues that I am about to raise. I believe that this is very important, thus deserves reiterated deliberations.

Cambodia gives considerable importance to the development and cooperation within the GMS framework. In the sense of development and governance, the importance of cooperation within the GMS framework has been attributable to the following main factors:

First, the GMS countries are endowed with valuable natural resources and energetic, skilled and dedicated human capital. The Mekong River provides great potentials for power and sources of priceless natural resources. The GMS has great potentials for agriculture, forestry and fisheries, and is renowned for its historical monuments, forests, mountains and lakes with beautiful scenery, the most important attractions to international tourists. Moreover, this huge region, with approximately 2.3 million square kilometers and population of some 240 million inhabitants, represents a huge market. In this sense, the GMS comprises countries with comple-

mentary endowments in terms of natural resources, human capital and historical sites. Should they have adequate capital and make wise investment, this subregion could generate rapid, sustainable economic growth.

Second, the GMS, comprised of five ASEAN members—Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam—, and the Yunnan Province of the People's Republic of China (PRC), is a region with great potentials for economic growth and development. In this sense, the GMS is an important "economic gateway", linking Southeast Asia to China, a political and economic superpower in East Asia.

Third, GMS countries are mainly new ASEAN members with lower level of economic development, compared to more developed old members. This represents a big challenge for ASEAN as a regional grouping, i.e. the economic disparities between old and new members, which are the main cause and the impediments to regional economic integration. Therefore, concerted efforts in promoting the development in the GMS are the only effective resolution in addressing the problem of economic gaps within ASEAN and capacity building for new members. It will pave the way for economic integration in the region.

Given the potential and importance of such endeavors, we are quite optimistic about the bright future of

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bursement for agricultural development, one of the four priority sectors (apart from Health, Education and Rural Development) eligible for increased budgetary appropriations.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to appeal to the donor community and Cambodia's development partners to provide continued support for us in strengthening Cambodia research capacity and developing the agricultural sector, which is the backbone of the government's economic development policy and poverty reduction strategy. I would like to express once again our gratitude to all donors, international organizations and NGOs for assisting Cambodia in research and development of the agricultural sector. Having funded Cambodia-IRRI-Australia Project, AusAID is the largest donor to Cambodia in agricultural research. I would like to urge Australia to continue to play a leading role in this area. I also would like to appeal to the governments of other donors, relevant international organizations and NGOs to double their efforts in ensuring sustainable operations of CARDI... ■

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this subregion. In my closing address to the first international conference on the GMS last year, I highlighted the following three main features, which will lead to the development of the GMS in the 21st century of this new millennium:

- The first feature is the transformation of a region, stricken by internal conflicts and instability, to an oasis of peace, security, stability and cooperation.
- The second feature is to transform a under-developed region into a comprehensive and sustainable development center.
- Third feature is that the GMS in the 21st century would be characterized by the transition from a region stricken by poverty to a center of prosperity.

There is a wealth of evidences, which attests to the fact that we have achieved much progress in this endeavor. If we look beyond the GMS, we can see that the vision of a united Southeast Asia has become a reality with the accomplishment of the ASEAN-10 before the beginning of the new millenium. Moreover, the concept of cooperation in the GMS is another important mechanism engaging China as a direct partner in the cooperation with other small, riparian countries. To this end, as I have mentioned earlier, the GMS is a strategic gateway for Southeast Asia to China. Many initiatives have been launched with a view to developing this subregion under the umbrella of numerous organizations and institutions, including the Mekong River Commission (MRC), which was initiated with the assistance of the UN, the ASEAN-Mekong Basin Development Cooperation, proposed by the ASEAN leaders and the Greater Mekong

Subregion, launched by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to promote cooperation in the Subregion, which comprises six riparian countries: five ASEAN states and the Yunnan Province of the People's Republic of China. Consultations between and among countries concerned with the GMS cooperation project have resulted in the development of more than 100 projects in seven important sectors, such as transport, power, telecommunications, tourism, environment, human resource development, trade and investment. Furthermore, many more projects were proposed by major donors and countries in the region.

Facing this situation, I believe that the main challenge to be addressed in the immediate future is how to coordinate between and among various GMS cooperation initiatives and projects. We have invested considerable capital and resources in conducting studies and designing projects. Therefore, most importantly is to ensure that all proposed cooperation projects and initiatives are complementary, rather than contradictory or competitive. The crucial factor in this is to ensure effective coordination among cooperating countries with a view to maximizing the complementarities and ensuring the ownership of various projects and initiatives, rather than leave these projects and initiatives to the discretion of donors.

In this spirit, I have proposed the establishment of a joint working group consisting of members from ASEAN countries, China, Japan, ADB, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and other donors to evaluate all initiatives, studies and projects and draw up a comprehensive master plan to set the direction for cooperation and development in the GMS over 20 to 25 years. Indeed,

we need a realistic development plan, which focuses on concrete projects, well-determined priorities, resource mobilization measures and investment programs.

To this end, attention should be given to institutional capacity building at both national and subregional level to strengthen coordination. I wish to appeal to all donors to support and cooperate with us in this matter. We should properly prioritize the GMS development projects, ensure a division of labor and mobilize our energy, resources and expertise to implement those agreed upon priority projects.

Indeed, these development projects cover many sectors and sub-sectors and require large-scaled investment to the extent that outstrips the capacity of the countries in the region. Given these colossal needs, the major challenge to promote development of the GMS countries is to identify investment sources. This challenge can be met through the strengthening of partnerships among and between regional countries and donors, especially the international and regional financial institutions. In my view, first of all, the governments participating in this cooperation should establish a national list of priority projects, which are drawn from the framework of subregional development projects. Indeed, close coordination among parties concerned is required, at both policy-making and technical levels.

Having looked at the proposed projects, I give full support for the initiative of establishing the West-East Corridor (WEC) in the GMS. This is a realistic concept, which aims at developing a network of physical infrastructure linking regional countries and turn them into agricultural, industrial, trade and investment de-

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velopment zones. The ADB has provided some funding for the regional road network in this subregion. The next step to materialize this concept is to mobilize energy and resources to invest in other forms of infrastructure, such as telecommunications, water supply and electricity, as well as other ancillary facilities and social and legal infrastructure in order to boost economic activities in the areas along this road network. We should also conduct a feasibility study on establishing Special Economic Promotion Zones at the main border checkpoints.

All these endeavors will create a favorable environment for private sector development, which should be an engine of economic growth in the region. The private sector's financial resources, expertise, management skill and modern technology constitute necessary ingredients to create and accelerate the dynamism for growth and development in the region and in each country. Therefore, the top priority for all governments in the region is to engage the participation of the private sector into this important endeavor.

Allow me to draw your attention to the immediate priority in ensuring cooperation within the GMS framework. I think that the GMS cooperation should start with the Mekong River itself. The peoples of all riparian countries make their living from the same source, the Mekong River. The histories and livelihoods of the people in this region are more or less linked to the Mekong River. We all drink water from the same source. Anything that happens to the Mekong River will pertain to all our countries. Even at present all our countries and people have suffered from the floods in the Mekong River basin. Therefore, the management of water and other natural resources of the Mekong River, including fisher-

ies, are of highest priority for all countries and people in this GMS. At present the Mekong River is faced with an impending danger, which is especially reflected in the developments in Cambodia. The pressing issues are siltation of the Mekong River, landslide problems along the riverbank and the change in water current. This situation has resulted in the loss of fisheries resources, increased impediments to river transportation, resettlement of the population, the loss of land for the people living on the riverbank and irregular floods. These issues need our urgent attention and require us to put in place immediately a plan to ensure the sustainability of our Mekong River. Another challenge requiring preventive actions is to avoid the squandered and unwise utilization of the Mekong River for economic and strategic purposes. This can effect the livelihoods of the people and socio-economic stability of all countries in the GMS.

Nevertheless, I am optimistic that all countries in the GMS are qualified for realizing the ambition of turning this subregion from a region, stricken by internal conflicts and poverty, to an oasis of cooperation and prosperity. It is true that the recent economic and financial turmoil, as well as the current severe floods, have threatened the sustainability of economic growth and development in the region. However, the crisis and the natural disasters are not in the position to break the will of the governments and people in the GMS. In fact, all the economies of the GMS and ASEAN are well on track of recovery, which is an indication of resilience of these economies. At the same time, we should recognize that realizing these ambitious visions requires strong will, collaboration and cooperation in development, enhanced partnership between all parties concerned... ■

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aged and assisted to the fullest and timeliest possible to achieve this highly commendable goals.

In the area of mine clearance, I understand that the ball is in the court of Cambodia's donors. We are waiting for your decision on the strengthening of our partnership in the future. I would like to urge all my colleagues in the government present here and our external partners to continue our traditionally close partnership and deliberate in a frank and candid manner on the issues and challenges related to today's agenda. As I have reiterated on many occasions, the RGC welcomes any well-thought recommendations from all its partners and considers them as a concern by the development partners for the difficulty, dexterity and the performance of the counterpart.

I am deeply touched by the presence of many representatives of donor countries and institutions, NGOs at today's meeting. This testifies to the considerable attention given by all development partners to government's efforts in speeding up the rehabilitation and development of the country with a view to reducing poverty and pulling the people of Cambodia from the shackles of hunger, poverty and sufferings. I am confident in the cooperative spirit of all participants and hope that the meeting will use this whole day to consult and fruitfully exchange views in the high interest of mine clearance activities in the Kingdom of Cambodia... ■