

Cambodia New Vision

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Addressing the XIII Non-Aligned Movement Summit



On February 15, 2003, Samdech Hun Sen is warmly welcomed by people during the inauguration of Tachei Buddhist Pagoda, Svay Chrum District, Svay Rieng Province.

It is a great honor and pleasure... to address this 13th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement. I bring you all the warmest greetings of His Majesty Norodom Sihanouk, the King of Cambodia, and the good wishes of the people and the Royal Government of Cambodia. His Majesty the King was one of the main architects of the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement, and he continues to be deeply interested in the Movement's vitality.

... Please allow me to share with you some views on global developments and the Non-Aligned Movement's role in the world order and affairs. Finally, with your permission, I will also provide an update on developments in Cambodia.

At this Summit, we meet to chart a common vision and

path in ensuring the reconstruction and development of the nations of the South. We bear the grave responsibility for soul-searching as we chart our common future. In this context, let us focus on the key essentials that shall set our Movement on its rightful course. We do not need big, long drawn-out and resource-wasting conferences to complete the task before us. Nor do we need volumes of position papers. We need only to trust our immense collective knowledge, and heed our experiences and the lessons of the past as well to understand the common interest of our people now and in the future in order to set the directions, action plans that we must jointly elaborate.

From the outset, Cambodia has been an active member of the Non-Aligned Movement.

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11-14th February 2003

Addressing the Management of Large Rivers Symposium

... It is a great honor... to address the opening session of the Second International Symposium on the Management of Large Rivers for Fisheries - "Sustaining Livelihoods and Biodiversity in the New Millennium".

On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia, and myself, I would like to extend my warmest welcome to all participants and especially those international visitors who have come from every continent and represent all major river systems in the world to Phnom Penh -the fast

changing capital of the Kingdom of Cambodia. This is a global event of great importance in the fields of fisheries and rivers management that has not been held since 1985.

Cambodia is therefore very proud to host such an important event of international co-operation after the successful conclusion of the first GMS Summit, the ASEAN Summit, ASEAN Plus Three and Plus One Summits with China, Japan and South Korea, ASEAN Plus India Summit, ASEAN-South Africa Special

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15 February 2003 [Unofficial Translation]

Inaugurating a Buddhist Temple in Tachei Pagoda of Svay Rieng

During the above event, Samdech Hun Sen made an ad-lib address that covers issues of Buddhism development in Cambodia, achievements scored in Svay Rieng with the assistance of the CPP working team, and remarks on verbal attack by a parliamentarian.

... I have a great pleasure to return today to the province of Svay Rieng after my presence here a few weeks ago in the district of Svay Teap. I also came here in 2000 to deliver flood relief to our people. I am very delightful as today we are taking time to gather together and I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation and deep thanks to the venerable head monk and others, including also HE

Hok Lundy and Madame, in putting together their efforts and resources making this wonderful achievement possible. I have been to many pagodas for the inaugurations of their temples, but none of them is as old as this one. Most of them are between 200 and 100 years. But the Tachei pagoda is, according to historical note, 303 years. It is classified as one of the oldest pagodas in the country... Having said so, despite destructive campaign led by the genocide

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Cambodia is committed to cementing our bonds with other member countries as together we strive to throw off the shackles of economic backwardness and boldly assert our right to be prosperous and dignified nations. Today, at this podium, I once again affirm our commitment to the founding principles of the Movement and reiterate our continuing belief in the validity of the Movement's principles! Cambodia supports the Movement's continuing struggle to build a more humane and equitable world order and to promote the greater democratization of international relations.

A Regrettable Event

Over the past year, the people and Royal Government of Cambodia, with great honor and pride, have hosted a large number of historic international events. These events include: the First Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) Summit, the 8th ASEAN and related Summits - including the ASEAN Plus Three and Plus One Summits, the ASEAN Plus India Summit and the Special ASEAN-South Africa Meeting. Just recently, Cambodia successfully hosted the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF). Soon we will host other major meetings such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

With these events, the message that the Royal Government of Cambodia has sent to the rest of the world is that, first and foremost, Cambodia has undergone a profound transformation from a region of uncertainty, turmoil, war, civil strife, instability and backwardness to become an epicenter of peace, safety and social order,

prosperity, cooperation and progress, achieved by our own strong efforts and determined sacrifice. This is indeed a uniquely historic, highly laudable and noteworthy accomplishment, showing that Cambodia is truly capable of participation on an equal footing in regional and world affairs. Moreover, growing international confidence in Cambodia has reaped benefits through increased trade, investment and tourist inflows. All these developments are crucial for employment creation and income generation for Cambodian workers, thus contributing to poverty reduction and improved welfare among our people.

Indeed, Cambodia is marching resolutely into the new century and new millennium with a vibrant peace, ample national reconciliation and strengthened Democracy with intense hopes and expectations for a bright future.

However, there are some discordant and destructive opposition quarters that are not happy with such landmark accomplishments. They continue to haunt us, and continuously attempt to disrupt the nation's peace and stability. A regrettable event occurred in Phnom Penh on 29 January 2003. It was caused by disinformation, propaganda and incitement that led to unrest, racial hatred and even violence that endangered the lives and property of both Cambodians and foreign nationals in the Kingdom of Cambodia. Such a disturbance is contrary to the Royal Government's policy of good neighborliness and our vision and practice of promoting the culture of peace. More importantly, this incident has seriously damaged the national interests of Cambodia and her

people.

Indeed, we need to uphold our independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and to protect our national culture. However, we are also required to maintain good relationships with neighboring countries, as well as with all other countries in the region and the rest of the world. Thus we must also exert our utmost efforts to peacefully resolve any outstanding or emerging issues with our neighboring countries without recourse to force or violence. Especially, we need friendly cooperation with our neighboring ASEAN countries with the view to mutual preserving independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, political stability and the promotion of rapid social and economic development and poverty reduction. This is the official stance of the Royal Government, reflecting the aspirations of our people.

NAM at the Crossroads

We are conscious that NAM is at the crossroads, faced with new political realities. We have witnessed and have in fact participated in the many dramatic changes in the NAM's activities. Of crucial importance is how we are to respond to the changed environment, since it is clear that we cannot adopt a one-suit-all approach in our quest for sustainable development.

We all recognize that, with the impetus and influence of the forces of globalization and regionalism, the world has undergone tremendous and unexpectedly rapid transformation in recent decades. Simultaneously, a new wave of regionalism has gripped many parts of the world, spawning an interlocking array of Free Trade Area arrangements.

Stronger economic integration has fostered more favorable conditions for preventing and solving the lingering strategic and geopolitical problems, yet has raised new challenges in almost all segments of our society and among specific demographic groups.

Governments across the world have responded to these changes by adopting strong measures for better governance, peace and national stability. The ongoing revolution in information and communication technology has transcended traditional barriers and bridged great distances between nations and people, promoting the unprecedented sharing and use of knowledge. Such communication has allowed our peoples to improve their skills and expertise in their difficult pursuit of a higher level of prosperity. Yet we need many more people with advanced education to complete the transition to a knowledge-based economy.

However, there is continuing uncertainty in the world at large, with the winds of war and crisis buffeting many nations. The fulfillment of the basic needs of all continues to be an uphill struggle as we grapple with the interlinked problems of population growth, the digital divide, the specters of disease – particularly HIV/AIDS, terrorism and transnational crimes, the arms race and nuclear proliferation and especially the worsening development disparities both across and within countries.

Therefore, we must forcefully and effectively respond to both the challenges and opportunities facing our peoples. At the least we must fulfill the fundamental responsibility of secur-

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ing peace, security and stability and delivering the basic goods and services they require. And ideally, we must establish the vision and long-term program for the sustainable social and economic development of our countries and the world at large.

The Scourge of Terrorism

The world at large is actively combating terrorism, which is the most outstanding and urgent issue confronting us today and spreading fast to regions hitherto not touched with its highly destructive manifestations. Thus, there is a need for urgent actions. No country, no region and no community can remain safe if terrorists continue their surprise strikes and activities.

We all need to be united in countering and combating terrorism. We must take determined steps to move debate from the forum of violence in the streets and baseless ban of people's travels into the calm dignity of political exchange. Cambodians are only too well aware of the scourge of terrorism and the unquestionable need for peace as the foundation of progress. Prosperity for all cannot be pursued in the absence of peace and security. Therefore we should all pledge here that we will not do anything that could damage fragile social fabrics. Indeed, we must be jointly determined to fight against the practice of terrorist acts that endangers people's lives and our society, regardless of the reasons for the acts committed either in the name of a religion or on the aspiration of any nation. We need to focus on issues in our debates, not on personalities nor on groups. In this sense, we regret that some quarters define terrorism ac-

cording to the special features of a religious sect or an ethnic group.

With regard to the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, we must intensify our cooperation to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons. To this end, Cambodia has joined with its fellow ASEAN members and other partners in the establishment of the Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality in Southeast Asia (ZOPFAN) and the Southeast Asia Nuclear Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (SEANWFZ). I think that this problem should be resolved through peaceful means, to ensure the stability of the fragile peace and political and economic stability in the world.

Good governance demands action to protect the security and safety of the population at large. Freedoms and rights of the many should dominate over those of an individual or a few who tend to abuse such rights for provocative propaganda, falsehood, nurturing extremist views. These actions undertaken under apparent guise of free speech and political activity ultimately provide a spawning ground for terrorists with catastrophic results in loss of lives and property as we have witnessed in the past.

Based on this philosophy, Cambodia is determined to protect the security and safety of our people at all costs. In the regional and international framework, Cambodia has actively participated in the preparation and implementation of agreements and declarations to root out terrorism. We call on the NAM to establish a cohesive framework for fighting terrorism through intensified international anti-

terrorist collaboration.

New Development Paradigm

Since our 12th Summit at Durban in 1998, we have sought to push our development agenda forward by focusing on the core issues of development, trade, finance, external debt and technology transfer. We firmly believe that the improvement of the global environment for development through measures such as: increased Official Development Assistance (ODA), preferential tariffs on the exports of developing countries, debt reduction and expanded technology transfer and measures to bridge the digital divide will have tremendously favorable effects on the economies of many developing countries, who are working hard in fighting poverty. Therefore, we must help shape the emerging development paradigm and ensure that the core development issues are negotiated on the basis of common interest and benefit, shared responsibility and genuine interdependence.

Of utmost priority is the eradication of poverty. The gaps between the rich and poor, the mighty and meek, and the haves and have-nots have widened. There are half a billion people in abject poverty even as a few live in conspicuous comfort. The poor, vulnerable and oppressed suffer everywhere through neglect. We must rigorously implement policies to reduce poverty in our respective countries.

For the Royal Government of Cambodia, the war on poverty is not just a policy but a will and passion. In this regard, poverty reduction defines and drives the substance, the content, the heart and soul of our entire strategy of Government.

Moreover, poverty reduction is not just a requirement of social justice, an action of conscience, but also an art of pragmatic economic management. Therefore, our efforts are geared towards ensuring the macroeconomic conditions for rapid growth while promoting equitable distribution of the fruits of growth with a focus on basic human needs. In short, our poverty reduction strategy is based on three key fundamentals: (i) long-term and high economic growth; (ii) equitable distribution of the fruits of this growth through social development and good governance; and (iii) sustainable management and use of the national natural resources.

In this context, I propose that our Movement must devise steps to achieve the eradication of poverty within the next 12 years, with specific benchmarks and indicators for monitoring of progress to achieve the goals of the Millennium Declaration. With genuine sharing among the wealthy and the destitute, internationally, regionally and within countries, poverty eradication can be achievable. Already the industrialized countries or G-8 nations have foregone the past debts of the poorest nations. This trend must be encouraged, particularly via assistance that should largely be through grants rather than loans. Furthermore, we realize that the implementation of pro-poor policy agenda must be linked to the preservation and enhancement of our environment and ecology for the benefits of future generations.

The Royal Government recognizes that common efforts to narrow the digital divide is key to poverty reduction, improvement in the living standards of

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the population and strengthening competitiveness of each nation in the quest for sustainable development in the era of globalization. The development of telecommunication infrastructure, especially of information technology is crucial for narrowing the digital divide. Cambodia is prepared for the liberalization of this sector by strengthening our regulatory capacity while opening up to fair competition. This approach will ensure that state interests are protected while the equal treatment for all telecommunication players or competitors is maintained. Moreover, it is the government's priority to encourage the participation of the private sector in the development of information and communication technology by providing adequate incentives to the companies to import expertise and state-of-the-art technology.

Cambodia's Drive for Development
With full determination, the Kingdom of Cambodia has stepped forward to engage with other partners in such a rapid transformation, firmly moving beyond the shadows of our recent history. The Cambodian people have stepped resolutely into the 21st century, strengthened by vibrant peace, healthy national reconciliation and a vigorous democracy that respects human rights and dignity, fosters free speech and market-based, sustainable socio-economic development. In this regard, please allow me to highlight some episodes of Cambodia's recent history for your appropriate perspective and consideration.

Cambodia has emerged from the most traumatic tragedy in

any nation's history in less than a quarter-century before. For 12 years following the liberation from the genocidal regime, Cambodia was subject to an international blockade, due to the geo-political factionalism, which is now widely acknowledged as misguided. Yet even in those years of isolation, we strived tirelessly to move the country forward by building up, block by block, the foundations for development. Indeed, our goals at that time were to raise our nation, our people's living standards and economic institutions literally from the ashes at all costs.

With clear vision for rigorously achieving, from the outset, the reconciliation among our people and steady progress, we advanced, step by step, firstly by rehabilitating our agricultural base, the very foundation for our national survival, and then steady progress through the stages of market liberalization.

In 1991, the Paris Peace Accord brought about reconciliation among all the feuding political parties in Cambodia. A new, modern chapter of history was begun with the establishment of a new coalition Royal Government of national reconciliation following the UN-administered general elections of 1993. However, we still continued to face insurgency by the Khmer Rouge. Differences also lingered among the coalition partners. But we totally finished with these two negative elements, following the general elections that Cambodians conducted by themselves and internationally recognized as free and fair. People described it in 1998 in such glowing terms as the "miracle on the Mekong". Indeed, the coalition

government of the second term, led by myself as Prime Minister, was born out of strong, commonly held principles and clear vision for the country's future, which are endorsed by the two major political parties in Cambodia.

Soon after the 1998 elections, we worked out a new political platform – the "Triangular Strategy" which has since underpinned our domestic and foreign policy. The first side of this strategic triangle is building peace, restoring stability and maintaining security for the nation. The second side is Cambodia's rapid integration into the international community, especially into the comity of regional nations, and normalization of our relationships with the international financial institutions. Finally, the third side is to promote development based on the favorable conditions created by the implementation of key reform programs: demobilization, public administration reform, strengthening of the judiciary and legal system, and economic reforms including fiscal and banking reforms, land and fisheries reform and stringent measures to crack down on illegal logging and promote environmental protection.

Through the implementation of the Triangle Strategy, today's Cambodia is firmly rooted in Democracy where the people at large exercise their choice of leadership in a free, fair and open manner through peaceful, regular elections. There is complete freedom of speech, expression and movement in Cambodia. In fact, such freedom is at times abused by people intent on creating dissent and discord in society where people now enjoy peace and stability. The economy is growing rapidly,

with per capita income leaping forward. All macro-economic indicators have been robust and very encouraging from one year to another, although we have successively suffered from natural calamities in the midst of unfavorable political and economic conditions in the region and the world. Yes, Cambodia today is fully transformed and prosperous beyond recognition when compared to its skeletal existence in 1979!

Based on these achievements, Cambodia looks forward with strong confidence. Our strategies are designed to ensure that the first decade of the new millennium will be a period of peace, stability, growth, poverty reduction, social progress and prosperity for Cambodians from all walks of life. Our ambition is to create a socially connected, educationally advanced and culturally vibrant Cambodian society. Our vision is to have democracy deeply rooted in Cambodian society by strengthening the rule of law and practicing good governance and promoting respect for rights and dignity of all Cambodians.

Cambodia as Full Partner in the World Community

Isolation is no longer an option for any nation. Our fates and destinies are intertwined, and our economies cannot grow without exchange and interdependency. We are committed to act together and work tirelessly to achieve the *Millennium Development Goals*, as well as our common objectives agreed upon by at the major international conferences and summits, particularly in Doha, Monterrey and Johannesburg.

The *Monterrey Consensus*,
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Doha Ministerial Agreement and the Johannesburg Implementation Plan, together with the *Millennium Declaration*, provide a comprehensive set of recommendations for a new partnership for sustainable development. With mutual respect and caring collaboration, we will achieve the promise of shared peace and prosperity. We acknowledge that international trade can play a significant role in the promotion of economic development and poverty reduction. We trust that the forthcoming negotiations mandated at Doha will enable the full integration of developing countries into the WTO multilateral trading system. In this process, the interests of the Non-Aligned Countries and other developing countries must be seriously considered. Regional integration is one of the important pillars of the Royal Government's strategy to maintain peace and strengthen security in Cambodia and the region. Proactive, equal participation in regional and world affairs requires that Cambodia take further steps in strengthening its institutions and human resources. These links will further our economic advance, based on expanded and diversified trade and improved productivity and competitiveness.

Cambodia's experiences show that the granting of GSP terms for the exports of developing countries will promote their exports to the more developed countries and attract foreign direct investment. This will help narrow development gaps between the developing and the developed world. Indeed, developing countries should be pro-active in enhancing South-South cooperation by utilizing all internal growth

potentials including cooperation in tourism. At the same time, closer cooperation with the North should be sought on the basis of sharing, mutual respect for sovereignty, equality and mutual benefit.

Looking Forward

Continuing peace, now deeply rooted in Cambodia, has built up public confidence in reforms and political stability, laying a solid path for Cambodia's drive towards sustainable, long-term economic growth. The Royal Government is resolved and strongly committed to systematically enhance Democracy in the nation. Indeed, we are confident that the forthcoming 2003 general elections will further confirm the Royal Government's irrevocable determination to promote Democracy and respect for people's rights and dignity, keep the peace, further consolidate political stability and generate economic growth toward poverty reduction. So now, as the new millennium unfolds, Cambodia is once again a unified nation. The Cambodian people look to the future with great optimism, borne out of our own achievements through the implementation of government's sound economic and social policies. Our government has laid the foundations for a genuine nationhood, built on the aspirations of our people to improve their lives, to live in harmony and to be common stakeholders in their destiny... We must consider key steps to establish a new world order that will safely govern this fragile planet through the next thousand years...I solemnly declare that Cambodia stands ready to join hands with you all in this global effort.■

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Meeting in early November last year and the recent success of the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF). Through all these important meetings, the Royal Government of Cambodia has made its best effort in moving Cambodia forward and showed the world that Cambodia has transformed from a region of uncertainty, civil strife, backwardness and instability to become a country of peace, prosperity, cooperation and development, strengthened by its growing self-confidence. In this spirit, we would like to reiterate once again that we will never fail and, however, will work much harder to promote the cellular of peace in Cambodian society, and we have also determined that by the end of the first decade of the 21st Century, we will turn Cambodia into an important part of the Greater Mekong Sub-region and become a pole of economic growth and sustainable development.

In this regard, I highly appreciate the efforts of the Cambodian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery, and the Mekong River Commission for jointly preparing and organizing this very important international event dedicating to sustaining livelihoods and biodiversity in this millennium. This topic itself is at the heart of the current policy of the Royal Government of Cambodia for improving the livelihood of its people, and sustainable development.

In the Lower Mekong River Basin, the Mekong River Commission, and its predecessors, namely the international Mekong Committee and Interim Mekong Committee, have played a remarkable role in turning potential conflict into a potential for mutually

beneficial cooperation. They have done this through jointly investigating ways of improving our understanding of this mighty, but then less known river, and planning for harnessing its potentials. These efforts are driven by knowledge of the abundant resources within the Basin, the expectation of its people for improved livelihoods, and the need for access to natural resources so that they can feed their families and provide livelihoods for themselves.

The outcomes of your efforts and deliberations at this symposium will be used to help make better decisions on fisheries management around the world. This knowledge and insight will certainly be of great value to the Mekong River -one of the world greatest rivers -that supports one of the most productive and diverse freshwater eco-systems in the world. For centuries, the river has played an important role in the economic and cultural life of the people living in and depending on the rich natural assets of the Mekong Basin. Covering over 86% of the Cambodian territory, the Mekong River Basin plays a very important role in the socio-economic and cultural life of this country. This symposium will also help to raise public awareness about the ecological, social, cultural, and economic importance of large rivers and the fisheries they support.

Improving the management of natural resources is a key issue for people all over the world, and the Mekong region, and Cambodia are no exception. Our Mekong basin is uniquely blessed, with amazing wealth and diversity in history, culture, geography, flora and

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fauna. I learn that the symposium organizers have also arranged optional tours to Angkor and other fishery trips for you. From those visits, I do hope you will gain more first hand knowledge of the complex hydrological, ecological, social and cultural conditions of this Mekong River and its populations. Back in history, there were great civilizations flourishing along the Mekong River. The glorious Angkor civilization is vivid evidence indicating crucial role of the large river in the development of human environments. Zhou Daguan, a Chinese envoy and historian who lived at Angkor in the late 13th Century, described the Angkor Empire, that dominated most of the present day mainland Southeast Asia from 800 to 1430 AD, as a civilization that flourished on the success of its water and related resources' management. Many spectacular carvings on the walls of many ruined temples of Angkor bear witness to the richness of fishery resources and their importance to people's daily livelihood.

In present day Cambodia, the Tonle Sap Great Lake, Mekong River and flood plains, are still endowed with huge fisheries. There are more than one hundred different fish species, indispensable to the food security, income and employment of the people of the Basin. For Cambodian people, fish is a most important resource for protein and calcium in the diet, a key factor in the growth of young children. MRC's recent studies of fish consumption in the region show that each Cambodian consumes an average of 47 kilograms annually. The Mekong fish resource repre-

sents huge potential for the socio-economic development of Cambodia and other Mekong countries.

Sustainable and equitable management of this important natural resource constitutes an important part in the Royal Cambodian Government's Policies. In late 2000, I initiated a bold plan to ensure proper management of the fishery sector, by ensuring greater levels of access to this resource by the poor through the development of various community-based fisheries, co-management, and reallocating and reducing the commercial fishing lots. Capacity and institutional building in this sector is also high on our agenda. Greater efforts have been made in developing more appropriate fishery legislation and regulation. The first Inland Fishery Research and Development Institute set-up with the assistance of the Danish Government through MRC Fisheries Programme is ready for opening. I hope that Institute will assist in developing a new generation of fishery officers and improving information and knowledge sharing.

The Royal Government of Cambodia is actively pursuing policies for poverty reduction for its people at present, most of whom are living with and relying on the rich resources of the Mekong River Basin. We are doing this through sustainable development of water and its related natural resources. Hence, the sustainable development of natural resources is a key element of the strategy of the Royal Government of Cambodia and we place great emphasis on consultations between government, civil society organizations, and other interested parties over the management of resources.

This symposium will contribute to the ongoing debate in our country, as in others, on how best to use and develop the resources of our nation today while safeguarding the right of future generations to enjoy them tomorrow. Allow me to take a few minutes to brief you on the Royal government of Cambodia's decisive efforts to ensure proper management of this invaluable natural asset -fishery. Our top priority in ensuring environmental cooperation within the region is the management of the Mekong River.

As riparian nations, our histories and livelihoods are linked to the ebb and flow of the Mekong. We may suffer from the Mekong's abnormal floods, yet the rich soil it distributes and the fish it nurtures sustain us. Because of our common dependence on its riches, the Mekong River is now under increasing pressure. We see the signs of such stress in erosion, siltation and changes in water currents. Also observed has been some reduction in fishery resources, impediments to river transportation and exceptional flooding.

Coming to this point, may I draw participants' attention to a vital issue regarding the flow regime of the Mekong River. Given that the change of flow regime is a critical factor in the annual flood levels that sustain the region's fisheries, traditional livelihoods and biodiversity, the Upstream countries' projects in the Mekong River, namely the continued dam constructions and commercial navigation plan, have become a major concern for the downstream countries including Cambodia. The possible impacts for Cambodia that many have foreseen are: The Tonle Sap could dry up, end-

ing the famous river fishing industry and causing widespread flooding; and eventually the home of endangered fish would be destroyed. The dry of the Tonle Sap, believe me, will not just affect Cambodia but the whole region. A study to look at the downstream impacts is urgently needed for the sustainability of resources management in the Mekong.

All these concerns urgently require our unified attention. The efforts of all agencies concerned with the development of the Mekong River Basin need to be well-coordinated and strengthened. To that end the Mekong River Commission is playing a very important role. For the sake of our common futures, we must implement a Mekong management strategy that ensures sustainability. At the same time, the work of the Mekong River Commission and the GMS program should be a synergy for the sustainable development of the Mekong given that the management of the Mekong River, including fisheries are of highest priority within the GMS strategic framework.

It is critical that we raise the level of understanding of river resources and how to manage them. The symposium will help people from all major river systems to learn from each other, including from people working in fisheries in more developed rivers. We can learn from their experiences, their successes and their mistakes. In Cambodia, as in other less developed countries, we put a great focus on building the capacity of our people. Symposia such as these enable our people to gather new knowledge and experience that

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is very valuable to the development of Cambodia. Also, Cambodia has one of the world's most productive fisheries in the Tonle Sap and we believe that people from other regions can learn valuable lessons from the experiences we have had in managing our fishery. Before I conclude I would like to take this opportunity to thank once again the Cambodian Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and the Mekong River Commission for convening this symposium.

The agenda of this symposium is an ambitious one: to bring together and share the latest cutting edge research on the status and management of large rivers, thereby contributing to the sustainable management of these critical natural resources. However, I have great faith that with the collective expertise of the world's leading fisheries and rivers specialists, this symposium will be a great success.

To follow the above comments that I have made, I have the honor to declare the Second International Symposium on the Management of Large Rivers for Fisheries open from now on. May I extend to you all my best wishes for an excellent outcome in your deliberations and I also hope you will have a good time and sweet memory during your safe stay in Cambodia. I sincerely thank all of you for your attention. ■

13th February 2003 [Unofficial Translation]
Inaugurating a Buddhist Temple in Udom Kiri Pagoda, Kong Pisey of Kompong Speu

"... I am glad that I have a chance to return to the commune of Snam Kropeu, Kong-pisey district of Kompong Speu once again – a land where I name in one of my song "the heritage of my son," in which US\$ 10,000 and US\$ 5,000 were donated from my son's account for the constructions of the Buddhist Temple of the Salproeuk Pagoda and the flooring of the pagoda of Svay Ken, plus a school building... Just now HE Hem Khan handed me a piece of proverb in poetry that was given to him by one of our people here and I read: "Mistakes belong to those who are active, and not to those who are inactive. Those who are active have got things done, but they never enter in the mind of those who sit on the fence." I find it true because take my case for instance no matter how much I have done for the sake of our country and people, a number of ill-thought persons find my devotion and action irrelevant. So we should not be concerned with their reactions but to continue to do what we think is right step by step... We have so many problems that need to be resolved but by prioritizing them we have eight imbalances to redress.

1) *Demand and supply. As demand goes greater our capacity to supply is limited. We have to mobilize our possibility to resolve food, water, education, clothing, residence, transport means as the main priority.*

2) *Income and expense of the national budget. If we were to overspend while we would have small income it would damage our macroeconomic stability. To increase income by taxing on land of our poor farmers I would not do that at*

all. I wish to solemnly declare that if I were to stay on as Prime Minister I would continue with my policy of imposing no tax on farmland... But tax will be imposed on land in cities when they are purchased and left with no action.

3) *Exports and Imports. Our country exported in 2000 a sum of US\$ 1 billion. But this amount is not recoverable to our large imports. This is what we call the external trade deficit.*

4) *Currency and goods. We have done a great job in the last four or five years. We have retained the purchasing power of the Riel currency.*

5) *Salary and the living standard of the Government officials, the armed forces. For a stable living condition, there needs to have a reasonably high salary. The Government, despitess all the difficulties I mentioned earlier in relation to imposing no tax on farmland, will try to roll on.*

6) *Growth of labour force and demand for jobs. People that turn 18 years old have grown in numbers, and many more are born everyday. We have to attract foreign investments so as to create jobs for our people and to increase exports.*

7) *Demand for development and human resource training. As we all know that this world is in the stage of intellectual and knowledge economy. The whole world has gone into digitalization so the need for human resource training is in high demand. We currently have up to 3,000 foreign experts working in Cambodia in jobs and positions that the local human resources could not provide. That is why it is very important to absorb children of schooling age into education and gender equity should be taken into practice.*

8) *Demand of development pace and the lack of infrastructure. Our development pace is gaining momentum, its size is getting larger and we have infrastructure to be improved to cope with. Take for instance our people are lacking of land but this could not be fulfilled because we have no road access to new land areas...*

... In the last three years for instance a large amount of money has been invested in the capital city of Phnom Penh... As I am talking about the Phnom Penh, maybe I should say a few things as there have been extreme and inappropriate comments on the change of position of the Governor of Phnom Penh. It is a normal working procedure of a Government. If I felt necessary, heads of police or military would also be changed. This is the power invested in the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister could assign as well as remove someone from a position... There have been for instance comments that HE Chea Sophara is a potential candidate (for the post of Prime Minister). I know that HE Governor never has the idea of challenging me in this post or HE Sar Kheng in the post of Interior as well. But if he were to wish so, I have to make it clear today as well that it is not his time yet because we have more people in the line – HE Sar Kheng, HE Say Chhum... I told HE Chea Sophara that "travelling on a long distance, some breaks are necessary" ... ■

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regime of Pol Pot during which period no religion, no monk, and no custom and tradition were allowed and practised, Buddhism has deeply rooted in our country. Tachei (or grandpa named Chei) had made a significant contribution for the Buddhism as he had provided this plot of land for the construction of the pagoda. After 1979, the pagoda was rebuilt in a slow pace and today we have this wonderful temple in sight. The remaining parts to be finished, I think we all will share our resources and efforts to complete this Buddhist place.

... I am glad today to have met HE Nhek Huon, who used to be with me in times of hardship especially we were imprisoned for twenty two days (in Vietnam) together when we crossed the border (into Vietnam) to carry out struggle (against the Khmer Rouge regime). I wish also to recall that HE Uk Rabun, who currently is the Secretary of State for Economy and Finance, was a teacher himself in the Tachei School when the coup on March 18, 1070 broke out. He then later became a professor in the College of Tep Promom. Svay Rieng suffered serious destruction because it was a twin area of region 23 and 24 of Prey Veng. After the head of region 23 and 24 were arrested, the two areas were combined as twin administration. Because the local people suffered a great deal, so they turned out to be the most rebellious. It was for this reason that we have so many heads of police and military who are natives of Svay Rieng. They came from here to meet me on the other side, and we came back and liberated Svay Rieng on January 4 together with some others... I wish to take

this occasion to thank the (CPP) working group led by HE Men Sam An, together with some parliamentarians, for the efforts they made to rescue our people in combatting hardships that were affecting them in 2000 and 2001. I have also listened to HE Governor's report in which he cited various canals, big and small, rural roads and other achievements being realized – with helps of donors or generous people. Samdech Chea Sim, Samdech Heng Samrin and HE Sar Kheng are also providing assistance to their areas. I am glad that 150 tons of rice, and I have just provided another 150 tons, were being made use in realizing some of those achievements and tackling the food shortage issue here. Not far from here I donated the O Smach Bridge, Ta Yeap Bridge, Romeas Hek Bridge and Toeuk Vil Bridge... Everywhere in our country, no matter where we are, we all are listening to the Buddhist preaching and music in place of armed conflicts. I am glad to have heard from the report of HE Governor that 94% of eligible voters have already registered and grateful to the National Election Committee for the decision to extend some more time for communes that have yet to have their eligible voters registered. Taking this opportunity may I appeal to all eligible voters, especially those who just turn eligible to register so that they could cast their votes, as doing so is to fulfil one's obligation and to get register one's identity clearly. It is true that the process is time consuming and complicated, but it is a normal procedure to get this implemented... I wish to take note that in politics, sometimes it is one's internal conflict, but it was brought to me to help remove (this or that officials

from the Government). When I did not do as they said, they opened attacks on me. I used to repeat a Cambodian saying that goes "don't be angry once you accept to play a game, or you do not play at all." I was attacked for so long and when I return a few words, The Cambodia Daily published an article of the person's over-reaction. Let me warn again that the higher you climb, the greater pain you have from falling. Let me tell you that there have been so many files, in addition to this issue of "Neak Neang" (instead of princess). As I used the term neak neang (or lady) is not at all a nuisance but rather a polite term for the provocation one has caused (upon me.) I said already whatever we do together we have to be faithful with each other, as for if I have anything to tell I would get it all out of my stomach. Let me warn that one may lose support when s/he behaves well only before everyone's eyes, but stabbing from the back at the same time. Our people could not give us trust anymore... What I have said is in fact not an advice to anyone at all but they may have to think about it. When I saw the reaction in The Cambodia Daily, I said to HE Uk Rabun that the fish is enjoying the bait. I have ordered this morning to copy the tape of February-14 Cabinet Meeting and also to file relevant documents from last year onwards. I was accused of threatening to send the person to Prey Sar prison, while the said person had gone oneself to the prison to see and to interview the prisoners. When I propose to send representatives of the Royal Government to the National Assembly (in response for call for an explanation on what was happening on the January-29 incident), they turn them

away on ground that they are lower Government officials. What does representative mean? I would send anyone I think appropriate as my representative. So I wish to remind the person of a reversal effect.

... I have got a few political things explained and this is just a message. What I wish to reiterate is that we have to be frank and faithful to one another so that our country will prosper in peace. Take for instance because we all are frank and faithful with one another we could mobilize efforts and resources to build such a wonderful temple.

Samdech Hun Sen in that occasion offered to asphalt 50% of the requested road from the Ta Oeum Bridge to the Commune of Samraong, and the remaining part should be asphalted by end of 2003 or in 2004, to provide the Tachei pagoda Riel 66 million and US\$ 16,370 to cover the remaining cost of finishing the constructions and to build three school buildings with six classrooms each. Samdech also offered to two school buildings and a sewing training building to be equipped with 50 sewing machines and two computers and one printer to the college of Hun Sen-Svay Chrum. A Bailey bridge of 72 meters was also offered to be built in place of Tahao Bridge across the Vaico River, and the flooring of the Hun Sen-Vaico Bridge to be replaced. Samdech Hun Sen approves the study for the renovation of a rural road of 16 Kilometres and a Bailey bridge of 120 metres for the people in the district of Svay Chrum, provides 72 tons of rice for the renovation of three roads in the commune of Kompong Chamlong...■