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Addressing the 50th Anniversary of the Independence Day



On November 29, Samdech Hun Sen presides over the signing ceremony of two agreements on Economic and Technical Cooperation between the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The Agreement on a grant of fifty million Renminbi Yuan and the Agreement on an interest-free loan of two hundred million Renminbi Yuan were signed respectively by HE Hor Namhong and HE Keat Chhon with HE Ning Fukui, the PRC's Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador to the Kingdom of Cambodia.

"..., People in the entire Cambodia are celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Independence Day (November 9) with greatest honor and pride. This commemorative event is presided over by our most respectable King and Queen, Their Majesties King NORODOM SIHANOUK and Queen NORODOM MONINEATH SIHANOUK.

All of us are greatly delighted, because this event is being organized during the period that our country is enjoying full peace and social and economic stability, while the process of building the rules of law, the implementation of democracy, the respect for human rights and the development are being steadily strengthened and expanded.

Indeed, our efforts to claim full independence of our nation had been made not in one or two days, even

not in one month or two months, or even more not in one year or two years.

The struggle for independence of the nation requires highest level of sacrifices and commitments, and the combination of wisdom and flexible and artful leadership with political and diplomatic means.

In his Royal Letter, dated 14 October 2003, sent to his fellow Cambodian people informing them about his contributions in bringing full independence to Cambodia during 1940-1950s, His Majesty the King has indicated that the realization of independence from France in 1953 was "not only a result of his two year leadership, 1952-1953..."

Indeed, the November 9 represents the date that Cambodia under the wise and determined leadership of

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29 November 2003

Addressing the MRC's Council Meeting

"..., On behalf of the people and the Royal Government of Cambodia, I warmly welcome all the distinguished Ministers and delegates from the MRC (Mekong River Commission) Member States, from Lao PDR, Kingdom of Thailand, Socialist Republic of Vietnam and Kingdom of Cambodia, and the Representatives of the international organizations and civil society.

This 10th Annual Meeting is organized just a few days after Cambodian people across the country celebrated happily and successfully our King NORODOM SIHANOUK's

Birthday, the 50th Anniversary of the National Independence Day and the Water Festivals.

According to records, the Water Festivals are closely linked to water resource and religious beliefs of Cambodian people. I believe such festivities are also celebrated in other riparian countries of the Mekong River. It is indeed a reflection of the role of "water" in the social, economic and cultural, as well in the religious life of our GMS nations.

These events are celebrated in the
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06 November 2003

Marking the Anniversary of the RCAF's Establishment

"..., I am extremely honored and pleased to join all of you to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Establishment of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces.

This event is organized at such the time, coinciding the fully peaceful period our country is enjoying with social and economic stability, while the building of rules of law, the implementation of democracy, the respect for human rights and the development are being steadily strengthened and expanded.

November 9 becomes a great historical event that links to the establishment of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces fifty years ago, for the cause of national independence, integrity and territorial sovereignty, peace and progress of our nation.

The adoption of November 9,

which has been a National Independence Day, as the RCAF's Establishment Day has its special intention. This is to recall the great achievements by our great King, His Majesty NORODOM SIHANOUK, in building the RCAF during his wonderful tenure to demand independence from the French colony in 9 November 1953, when RCAF was established, transforming itself from the then "armed groups of brave Cambodian female soldiers".

We should note that the celebration of the 50 Anniversary of the establishment of the RCAF is organized
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King Sihanouk virtually reached the final and great victory, forcing the Republic of France to give up all power and authorities to the Kingdom of Cambodia, including the civil administration, judiciary, security, military, diplomatic powers and the internal and external politics.

However, the struggle under the high leadership of the King had started in 1945. Thus, his leadership during 1952-1953 was just the final political and diplomatic struggle that led to freeing Cambodia and Cambodian people from French colonization thus achieving full national independence.

Under his bright and wise leadership, King NORODOM SIHANOUK sacrificed his mental and physical strengths in a long struggle before and during his tenure, thus Cambodia could enjoy full independence free from the influence of a great power who had a strong political, military and economic power without loss of people lives and any territorial partition. This is indeed a historically courageous and respectable record for our children to learn and remember, using it as a lesson in their efforts to protect and build our beloved nation in the future.

Thus, it was a great luck for the Royal Government and Cambodian people that the King has let all of us know about his activities and leadership in bringing full independence for Cambodia during 1940-1950s, which was stated in his Royal Letter dated 14 October 2003 to his compatriots.

This Royal Letter will serve as an important historical record for study by our children generations to go.

The Royal Government has also published a brief history of his royal activities in bringing independence to Cambodia in order to dedicate this to

the great achievements of our highly respectable King, His Majesty NORODOM SIHANOUK, provided to our motherland of Cambodia.

We all wish this "national aspiration" of the King's activities be remembered and recalled in the memories and hearts of all Cambodian citizens, for the firm and long-lasting independence, integrity and sovereignty and development in the Kingdom of Cambodia.

On the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Independence Day (November 9), the Royal Government and all Cambodian people wish to express our most gratitude and appreciation to Your Majesty NORODOM SIHANOUK, the King of Cambodia, and to all the Dignitaries and Predecessors for their contributions to the cause of national independence, integrity and territorial sovereignty of Cambodia, sacrificing all their physical and mental strengths.

All of us, the children and grandchildren, would like to wish their Majesties King NORODOM SIHANOUK and Queen NORODOM MONINEATH SIHANOUK the best wishes. We wish you longevity, good health and strength and wisdom. I wish Samdech, Your Royal Highness, Your Excellencies, the Presidents and the Deputies and Members of the Senate and the National Assembly as well as the members of the Royal Government and civil servants at all levels, success in your endeavors to serve the nation and Cambodian people... May the national reconciliation, peace and development remain and last forever in our wonderful land."

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"conjunction" of Mekong at Phnom Penh where a natural phenomenon occurs each year, the reversal of waters flowing back from the Great Lake (Beung Tonle Sap) into the Mekong and Bassac Rivers.

Thus, the celebrations are related to the ebb and flow of the Mekong and Tonle Sap as well as linked to the fish cultivation pattern or the start of fishing season.

Moreover, the water festivities also represent the "expression of thanks" to the "guardian spirits" and the "mother of nature" for their kindness and the rich resource they offer to us, asking for blessings that wealth, good fortune and happiness will come again in the following year.

As I was informed, this year the MRC Secretariat's staff also took part in the boat races. Thus, I personally congratulate and thank for their participation!

The Mekong symbolizes the flow of millions of lives of people in the riparian nations of this great river. I learned from the report by HE Lim Kean Hor, Chairman of the MRC Council, that in this meeting you will discuss a number of critical issues in

your agenda, and the main purpose is to help meet the needs of Mekong and people in the sub-region.

Such great river like Mekong can tell many stories on the needs of people who live and earn their living depending on the riches and kindness of the "mother of water".

The people living in the sub-region need the development of safe transportation and traffics, they need peace and safety free from natural calamities, they need food security as well as tourist sites, entertainment and enjoyment with the nature and cultural wealth along the banks of the river.

The Mekong River, with 4,800 Km in length, is classified as the biggest river in Asia and is the richest with biodiversity (diverse flora and fauna) second after the Amazon in America.

Nevertheless, we all are conscious that, for countries sharing the river together, the poverty reduction remains a top priority in their social, economic and environmental development policies.

As in other tropical rivers, the cease of development in the Mekong's basin is not a good option.

The fast growing population and the current level of poverty will make sense for the development that it is increasingly becoming an important factor.

To sustain the living of people and to provide real hope for their future, the riparian countries of the Mekong River must have the obligation to promote social and economic development in the way that it will effectively ensure the sustainability of the river.

Therefore, we must consider and make decisions together, so that the

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development of the invaluable resource of this great river can go ahead, thus ensuring the maximum benefits we will get for our nation and people, and a minimum level of negative impacts on the river and among our each countries.

Indeed, the lives of millions people depend on appropriate management of the Mekong River and close international cooperation.

This is an important factor to prevent conflicts and guarantee sustainable social and economic development, thus improving the well-being of our people.

Thus, the establishment of MRC in 1995 by signing a new Agreement on Cooperation for Sustainable Development of Mekong River Basin was indeed a new turning point in the history of international cooperation, aimed at sustainable management and sharing of the river's resource with harmony.

The agreement requires all member countries to provide constructive cooperation with mutual benefits in the long-lasting development, management and the conservation of water and other related resources of the Mekong River Basin.

To this date, the MRC has approached its 10 year anniversary, and it becomes more matured and modernized.

I notice that the MRC's Council and its Joint Committees have adopted and set out resolutions, programs and a number of projects to successfully implement the Mekong Agreement and the good practices of cooperation, as we call it the "Mekong Spirit".

According the recently-published MRC's report on the status of the river basin, I have noticed that the environmental condition of the Me-

kong River is relatively good compared to other big rivers.

A number of studies and researches indicated and restated that the Great Lake "Tonle Sap", the heart of the Mekong River's system and Cambodia, would not dry up very soon as declared in several reports.

This case proves how important the information and studies are in the planning, monitoring and decision-making process, which have to be based on appropriate and specific technologies.

In this respect, so far I observed that there has been a lack of appropriate information communication and technological grounds that has caused wrong conclusions and misunderstandings as well as lots of controversies.

Thus, I appreciate in particular the efforts made by MRC in the establishment of a decision-supporting system based on sound knowledge and specific data, as well as in the promotion of cooperation at technical level through exchange of information and data among member countries, China and Myanmar, which are the most important partners of the four lower stream countries.

As we all realize, Southeast Asia, especially the GMS, has moved to a more favorable stage of economic integration and regional cooperation in all sectors.

The six nations, the common masters of Mekong River, have been living together in peace and committed to cooperation for mutual benefits.

Indeed, peace in the GMS sub-region would provide us with ample opportunity in bringing our countries closer toward realizing the GMS

vision, - the region of prosperity and equity.

In this context, the MRC, one of the various international organizations/programs was established to promote regional cooperation in the development of Mekong basin.

With good progress in the sub-regional cooperation, moving away from the negotiation and planning process toward cooperation in implementation the MRC has set out and implemented the sound legal framework and technical and scientific institutions, including the "1995 Mekong Agreement" and the permanent mechanism for constant dialogues and joint actions at the political and technical levels. All these are the strengths of the MRC.

At the same time, with increased number of forums and institutions for the development of Mekong River's basin, the needs for cooperation and coordination among various mechanisms and programs are increasingly more important.

Thus, I think the presence of representatives from ADB, ASEAN and other organizations has shown the recognition by all stakeholders of the importance and the need for the cooperation and coordination. Therefore, may I express my warmest welcome of the spirit of a highly responsible cooperation.

... , on behalf of Cambodian people and the Royal Government of Cambodia, I would like to express our firm commitment to supporting and enhancing regional and international cooperation, especially the cooperation among countries of the Mekong's basin in all sectors.

Once again, I wish you all fruitful discussions and a wonderful and unforgettable stay in Cambodia, especially wonderful visit to Tonle Sap and other sites in our land of miraculous Angkor Wat.

The Mekong, the long lasting ties of our nations! Working together for common progress. With this spirit, may I declare the opening of the 10th MRC Ministerial Council Meeting!

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at the time, coinciding with our Traditional Water Festival and the Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Independence Day (November 9) which will follow one another from 7 to 9 November.

In particular, the armed forces and all Cambodian people express their strong support and congratulation for the positive results of the meeting between the three political parties, seeking political solutions involving the functioning of the National Assembly and the formulation of the new Royal Government for its third mandate, which was presided over by His Majesty NORODOM S-HANOUK, the King of Cambodia in the yesterday morning of 5 November 2003.

With this appreciation and active support, we look forward with enthusiasm to the soonest commencement of the work of an effective and highly responsible national assembly and the new third mandate Royal Government.

Taking also this opportunity, on behalf of the Royal Government and my own self, may I express my gratitude and sincere congratulation to our RCAF's officers and men for their great sacrifices and efforts to overcome all kinds of difficulties and challenges for the cause of national reconciliation and peace provided to our people and the nation.

RCAF has also contributed to the successful implementation of the Royal Government's policy and reform programs, as well as to the five year plan of the reform of RCAF.

I have listened with interest to the speeches made by HE Tea Banh, Senior Minister and Co-Minister of Defense and HE General Ke Kim Yan, the Chief of the RCAF's General Staff, reflecting the establishment of RCAF and the brave per-

formance of its historical missions for the cause of independence, integrity and territorial sovereignty, peace and development for the nation and our motherland.

On behalf of RGC and my own self, I would like to express my utmost and sincere appreciation to all our officers and soldiers of the RCAF for the great sacrifices they have made.

Moreover, I wish to express my deep gratitude to all our countrymen who have sacrificed their beloved children, spouses and relatives to serve in the RCAF to protect the country throughout generations.

May I convey my warmest regards, love and gratitude to those families of deceased, disable and demobilized soldiers, as well as to those of injured ones staying in the hospitals, and wish them quick recovery and good health!

As you all may know, decades of internal conflicts and protracted civil wars have rooted out the RCAF to complete destruction. Only after the general elections in 1993 that the RCAF has been reorganized by integrating the former forces of the parties to the Paris Peace Agreement under the wisest leadership of His Majesty the King of Cambodia.

The RCAF has been built and reorganized into a unique national army of the Kingdom of Cambodia, with the core responsibility to protect the national independence, integrity and territorial sovereignty of the Kingdom of Cambodia, to protect the constitution and peace and political stability, as well as to actively participate in maintaining social order, strengthening the rules of law, implementing democracy, respects for human rights and the rehabilitation and development of the nation, especially in rescuing and saving people from natural calamities such as the floods in recent year.

In this context, RCAF is also playing an important role in strengthening and expanding friendship, solidarity and cooperation with external partners, contributing to the maintenance of security, peace and stability in the region and the world.

Indeed, the general elections in 1993 could not bring full peace to the nation and Cambodian people. Only at the early 1999 that Cambodian people have enjoyed full national reconciliation, peace, stability and security in the entire country for the first time in the last several decades due to the "win-win" policy and strong political commitment of the Royal Government and Cambodian people in the process of national reconciliation, without any intervention from outsiders.

It is our greatest pride to end the dark history of wars and internal conflicts and to successfully prevent the comeback of Khmer Rouge, and moreover to dismantle the political and military organization of the Khmer Rouge, which is the aspiration of our people to live in peace, progress, harmony and happiness.

Nowadays, while the Kingdom of Cambodia is at full peace, the RCAF, including the infantry, naval and air forces as well as the military police and other specialized units, continues to play an important role in strengthening peace and political stability, and in implementing the agenda of the Royal Government of Cambodia in the development and reducing the poverty among our people.

Among all these considerable bold achievements, such as the maintenance of security and social orders including the suppression on terrorism, armed robbery, kidnapping, RCAF has directly and actively contributed to performing the backbone role in support of other government's institutions in many areas.

Those activities include the crack-down on drug trafficking, anarchy and violation in forest exploitation, the suppression on smuggling, the participation in construction of roads and bridges, big and small irrigation systems, wells, schools, hospitals, pagodas, development centers and the clearance of mines freeing lands for our people, and saving our people in the case of natural disasters.

In order to promote the prestige and preserve the precious tradition of the RCAF since 50 years ago and in the grand occasion of the Anniversary of the RCAF, may I urge the Commanders, Officers and soldiers of all institutions and units of RCAF to continue advancing the great achievements gained so far to focus on concrete priorities as follows:

- (1) *Continue the practices according to the roles and duties as stated in the Law on the General Status for Soldiers of the RCAF by exerting highest degree of loyalty and sacrifices for the cause of the nation, religion and the King.*
- (2) *Continue to successfully implement the Royal Government's policy agenda and the plan for reform of RCAF on the basis of the national defense policies stated in the White Book of national defense as a guideline.*
- (3) *Continue to enhance the political quality of all soldiers through trainings in psychology, correctly respecting the national laws, disciplines, regulations and military orders, to exercise democracy and protect human rights. As a soldier, you should adopt good behavior and ethics deserving the deep affection of our people.*
- (4) *Enhance trainings as planned*

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and identified to conduct both inside and outside the country, in order to strengthen and develop the capacity in technical specialization. Promote the development of the human resource in the armed forces with progressive development and strength to assure that the obligations of national and motherland defense are met.

- (5) *Improve the living standard of soldiers by focusing on building of barracks, health care and additional cultivation in order to help solve problems faced by the limited national budget with the sense of high responsibility and creativity.*
- (6) *Implement strictly the military policies on demobilized and retired militants, deserted and disabled militants and the families of deceased and disabled soldiers.*
- (7) *The Ministry of Defense, General Staff of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces, the Headquarters of the Royal Military Police must coordinate with the Ministry of Interior, Commission-General of the National Police, Commanding Headquarters of Provincial Units and local authorities at all levels to strengthen the suppression on crimes and violations such as: armed robbery, assassination, kidnapping and the suppression and elimination of drug trafficking network, which are the sources of threat to the national security. This is to maintain and strengthen security and public orders and social stability to be further improved.*
- (8) *In the coming dry season, you all must help the people in harvesting, in the local areas*

close to your settled units, especially prepare all the sufficient means and resource to rescue and save people from natural disasters.

At the same time, enhance arms management by heightening the control on illegal arms use in order to strengthen public confidence on the stability of our society and shall enhance participation in combating transnational terrorism.

- (9) *Continue contributing to the rehabilitation and reparation of social infrastructure and irrigation systems.*

Especially, the Engineering Unit of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces must take part in closely coordinating with institutions and related authorities in the rehabilitation and rebuilding of infrastructure damaged by wars and natural catastrophes.

- (10) *The RCAF must definitely protect the independence, integrity, territorial sovereignty and neutrality of the Kingdom of Cambodia, to be forever lasting by respecting the basis of the national constitution, United Nation Charters and the international laws.*

You should strengthen and enhance solidarity, good cooperation with the armed forces of the neighboring countries in order to transform the border areas to be the areas of stability, peace, friendship, cooperation and development. Moreover, as the terrorist organizations become a "hot focus" in the region and the world, thus RCAF shall have the responsibility to cooperate with other countries to combat all kinds of terrorist acts for the common security of mankind in the region and the world.

In closing, may I take this very opportunity to express my deep thanks to the governments and armed forces of our partner countries, national and international organizations, who have supported us, both in mental and material terms, and in the reform of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces.

I urge all the partners of Cambodia to provide us with generous assistance for the capacity strengthening of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces. Finally, on behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia and my own self, may I wish all of you, once again, the five gems of Buddhist Blessing!

08 November 2003**Greeting the Cambodia-Japan Diplomatic Relations and the Japan-ASEAN Exchange Year**

"... I am indeed most delighted and honored to be present at this commemorative parade to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Cambodia and Japan, and the ASEAN-Japan Exchange Year 2003..."

Indeed, H.E. Gotaro Ogawa, our close friend, will be leaving the Kingdom of Cambodia in order to take his new assignment very soon. During his three year tenure in Cambodia, H.E. Ogawa has left indelible print of personal exploit in Cambodia's development. He has made great contribution to the strengthening of relationship between Cambodia and Japan. In this joyful gathering, on behalf of the RGC and Cambodian people and myself may I wish him and the family success with his new assignment, good health and happiness.

..., I am pleased to learn that the people of Kompong Cham have come to this peace parade to mark the 500 Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Cambodia and Japan and the ASEAN Japan Exchange Year 2003. The Great Kizuna Bridge symbolizes the strong heart-to-heart bond and the long lasting friendship between the two nations and peoples in the 21st century. Kizuna means "a solid friendship between our nations and countries without discrimination in relation to race or religion". Thus, the donation of this bridge to the government and people of Cambodia by the Japanese government and people reflects the friendly long-lasting relationship and cooperation between Cambodian and Japanese peoples.

With the 50th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Cambodia and Japan, and the ASEAN-Japan Exchange

Year 2003, our people are celebrating our King NORODOM SIHANOUK Birthday, the Water Festival and the commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the Independence Day (November 9) which are the landmark national and historical events. Moreover, these occasions happen at the time that the entire Cambodian people are happy with and strongly supporting the positive results of the meeting between the three political parties, - seeking political solutions involving the functioning of the National Assembly and the formulation of the new Royal Government for its third mandate. The meeting was presided over by His Majesty NORODOM SIHANOUK, the King of Cambodia on 5 November 2003.

I believe that under the wisest leadership of our highly respected King of Cambodia, the Father of National Reconciliation and with the responsible will and aspiration of the three political parties, the National Assembly and the New Royal Government will be eventually established and effectively function very soon. Cambodia and Japan are not close geographically. However, if we think about the contacts and interactions that have gone on between our two peoples since the olden days, we are not that far apart either in cultural and spiritual terms. Thus, as you all may aware that the relationship between Cambodia and Japan has started since 17th century, when Japanese merchants and immigrants set sail to Cambodia and formed a Japan town in Ponhea Leu District, Kandal province, at the intersection between the Mekong and the Bassac Rivers.

This friendship has enabled our people and two countries to develop the tradition of mutual respect and support, both in mental and material terms, in the development process,

which covers a wide range of areas, including politics, economy, culture, social affairs and religions between our two countries. Our King, His Majesty NORODOM SIHANOUK was the first Asian king to visit Japan. He was greeted and welcomed by Japanese Emperor with great hospitality and sincerity. However, since Cambodia experienced protracted wars and political instability since 1970s up to 1990s, our diplomatic relations were temporarily interrupted.

Since the search for political settlement of Cambodia, we have cooperated with Japan in advancing toward peace and economic reconstruction in the country. Our diplomatic relations were reestablished in 1993, paving the way for substantial influx of Official Development Assistance from Japan. Moreover, the Royal Government of Cambodia has also received other assistance from Japanese NGOs and people, who directly donated to Cambodian people like schools, hospitals, ponds, wells, etc. This has been great contributions to enhancing the dignity of the Cambodian people, while fostering democratic and stable governance. The Cambodian people will never forget this generous assistance and support.

All these prove that Japan is a rare and exceptional friend of people and government of Cambodia. The Royal Government and people of Japan always help and support Cambodia in all fields and in all circumstances, though Japanese economy is experiencing a number of problems. Thus, Japan and Japanese people is the biggest donor to Cambodia since Paris Agreement. Moreover, the Royal Government and people of Cambodia are proud to notice Japan's important role in Cambodia's national reconciliation efforts that successfully ended the

prolong wars and brought full peace to the entire Cambodia.

In the rehabilitation and development of Cambodia, Japan has provided substantial financial and technical assistance to Cambodia especially for transportation infrastructure, which is the highest priority for Cambodia in its quest to reduce the poverty among our people. Specifically, since 1993, Japan has helped build and rehabilitate roads and bridges across the country. Those are durable and quality constructions such as the construction of Chroy Changva Bridge, Road 6A, Phnom Penh Port, Sihanoukville Port, a stretch of road linked Road 6A to Kampong Cham's provincial

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town, Electrical Power Grids, Clean Water Refineries, and other activities in education, social affairs, health, Buddhism and in many other areas - all that has enabled Cambodia to restore and develop the nation very fast and changed noticeably. Our relationship is deepening - economically, politically, strategically, and perhaps most importantly, in our understanding of each other. And it is this understanding that has underpinned, and will continue to serve, the development of our broader bilateral ties.

Of course Cambodia and Japan have shared many common perspectives on regional security. The threat posed by terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction - and the terrifying prospect that these threats might combine - has also given new urgency to international and regional security cooperation. Cultural and people-to-people links are as much a part of the relationship. A Japan Studies center was recently established in Cambodia and hopefully in the future there will be a new center

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established at the Royal University of Phnom Penh to disseminate Japan's style of management, culture and language. More importantly, Japan has played an active role mobilization of assistance for the rehabilitation of the Angkor temples, the national symbol of Cambodia.

The understanding that has developed between our two cultures plays a vital role in underpinning the bilateral relationship more broadly. In the 1990s, in particular we saw a major expansion in the teaching of Japanese in Cambodia. The rapid expansion of Japanese language studies produced a new generation of young Cambodians with a deep knowledge of both the Japanese language and culture, thus resulting in close relations in many other areas such as business, trade and investment. Moreover, our two countries have agreed to conduct a number of exchange programs to mark this important milestone in the bilateral relationship. Such exchanges will help ensure that future generations of Cambodians and Japanese continue to share the same understanding of each other that current and past generations have enjoyed, bringing more and more mutual benefits in the future.

..., On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia and my own self may I request H.E. Mr. Gotaro Ogawa, Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of Japan to Cambodia, to convey our deepest gratitude and appreciation from the Royal Government and people of Cambodia to the Government and people of Japan, who have provided assistance which has contributed greatly to the building and maintaining of peace and political stability, and the rehabilitation and economic development of Cambodia toward progress and hope in the future. The Royal Government and people of Cambodia highly appreciate and will treasure this invaluable support

forever. I strongly believe that the Peace Parade today will contribute to the strengthening and forging close cooperation between our two countries and people, especially in improving our share understanding...”¹

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plementation - the organization of joint trade and investment fairs and exhibitions.

Our four nations will organize and implement a regular and continuing series of such trade and investment fairs and exhibitions. Our nations will take turns in organizing these events, which will showcase and demonstrate to the region and to the rest of the world the full range of commodities and services that are available from our respective countries and the region as a whole. Through such events we will be able to broaden our markets while lowering our per-country market development costs. In the process we will gain timely intelligence about market trends and improved access to information on product quality and production technology. In this sense, the holding of joint trade and investment fairs is consistent with our shared strategies for regional and international integration.

In terms of financing, I am convinced that the joint trade and investment fairs can be self-financing, and the private-sector will be the first to reap the gains from such initiative. Thus, the events can be organized by the private sector, especially our respective national Chambers of Commerce, with minimal support from the cooperating governments. Let me reiterate my conviction that our Summit is strategic and timely. We have taken a major step forward in enhancing our cooperation. The next priority is to push our activities forward toward actual implementation to achieve performance and practical results as soon as feasible. Let us not wait for the completion and perfection of the entire package. Small victories, gained early, will pave our common road to overall good results over the long haul.

To monitor progress and help accelerate implementation, our Senior

Officials and Ministers should meet as often as needed, and at least once a year. The Leaders should meet once every two years to review the progress of this cooperation. In this context, I support the idea of organizing the next summit meeting in Thailand and the meeting afterwards by an alphabetical order.

May I conclude by emphasizing my conviction that our successful implementation of the Economic Cooperation Strategy among our nations – Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand, will greatly contribute to the transformation, in the first half of the 21st century, our shared areas into zones of sustained economic growth, progress, prosperity and harmony for all our peoples.¹

12 November 2003, Yangon, Myanmar**The CLMT Economic Cooperation Strategy — the Summit of Four Heads of Governments**

“... May I first express my sincere thanks to the Government of the Union of Myanmar for the warm hospitality extended to me and to the delegation of the Royal Government of Cambodia. I also congratulate the Government of Myanmar for the excellent arrangements for this Summit Meeting.

This Summit is of great significance to our respective countries as well as the entire region, as it represents an opportunity for us all to dialogue and exchange views on a shared Economic Cooperation Strategy (ECS). As a result of this Summit, we will take further steps to identify and develop options and opportunities to implement our shared vision of national as well as regional socio-economic development for the benefits of our people within both the framework of the GMS and the entire Southeast Asian region.

From its inception, Cambodia has supported the shared vision of development among the nations of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Thailand (CLMT). Personally, I appreciated the proposal made by H.E. Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra at the sidelines of the ASEAN Special Summit on SARS in April 2003. Therefore I am very glad that our respective senior officials and Foreign Ministers have worked hard so that today we hold this Summit to kick off the CLMT ECS in much more concrete terms for the long term benefits to our people.

While the CLMT nations are at varying stages of economic development, we share many common aspirations and approaches in promoting mutually beneficial, sustainable development. Indeed, our cooperation is based on universal values and consistent with the principles of international law, the aspirations of the ASEAN and the shared

dreams of our nations of enduring peace and stability, good neighborliness, mutually beneficial development and lives of progress, prosperity, welfare and harmony.

In implementing our shared vision, we have adopted the approach of “four nations, one economy,” shaped by our commonalities and sustained, complementary efforts to strengthen the linkages among our respective Governments, entrepreneurs, and peoples. We all believe that the key to enhanced peace, security and shared prosperity among our nations is mutual cooperation and coordination for mutual understanding, strengthened by continuing dialogue, investments and technical and scientific cooperation and exchange.

I commend highly the outcome of the meeting of the CLMT Foreign Ministers on the ECS in Bangkok on 1 August 2003. That meeting enabled our Foreign Ministers to discuss the specifics of our shared vision of regional growth and prosperity. Our Ministers also worked to specify the strategic areas of economic cooperation among our four nations to increase trade and investment, enhance competitiveness and generate more employment and improved income and quality of life in the sub-region. Moreover, under the mandate of our Foreign Ministers, two meetings of the CLMT ECS Working Group were organized, successfully drawing up a comprehensive Action Plan with concrete cooperation and investment projects.

The Royal Government of Cambodia welcomes and is quite pleased with the ECS Action Plan that has resulted from the hard work of our respective Foreign Ministers and Senior Officials, with a set of specific, concrete projects in the five

key areas of cooperation, namely: (1) Trade and Investment Facilitation, (2) Agricultural and Industrial Cooperation, (3) Transport Linkages, (4) Tourism Cooperation, and (5) Human Resource Development.

Indeed, I am very happy that our discussions have resulted in the identification of concrete and specific projects and initiatives. This will help ensure that we are better able to take further steps forward toward actual implementation to meet the aspirations of our peoples.

In this context, Cambodia fully supports the classification of the proposed investment programs, projects and cooperation arrangements into three phases: immediate-to-short term (2003 –2005), medium term (2006-2008), and long term (2009-2012). It is also heartening that we have set up a biennial review mechanism to ensure that we shall regularly appraise our progress and jointly act to further stimulate the process of ECS implementation.

I realize that in order to implement all of the initiatives and projects that we have identified in the ECS Plan of Action we will need to resolve the fundamental challenge of financing, which I believe can be met with resolve and creative mechanisms.

First, I believe that we should maximize the opportunities for private sector participation in all the initiatives. Most of the initiatives can be designed so that it will be in the best interest of our private sectors to participate and invest in these projects, and thereby minimizing the need for extraordinary public financing.

Second, we should enable the active involvement of various levels of our respective governments in the initia-

tives. I cite for example the various sister city agreements, all of which can be undertaken among the cooperating local governments and based on local financing;

Third, we should work together to generate support under multilateral frameworks, particularly international financing. For example, we should ensure complementarity of our initiatives with the priorities of the Asian Development Bank as it finances various cross-border infrastructure across the GMS. Certainly the World Bank, other financial institutions and donors can be encouraged to intensify their investments in our region by providing concessional loans and supporting regional technical capacity building initiatives through grants.

Since the economic cooperation strategy was initiated by the Thai Prime Minister and Thailand is more advanced among the four countries in terms of economic development, technical expertise and financial resources, I think that it is appropriate that Thailand plays a role of prime mover or locomotive of our economic cooperation strategy. In this sense, Thailand should play a leading role in coordinating the implementation of the ECS Plan of Action and the projects. This will allow us to achieve as soon as possible the concept of four countries-one economy. Indeed, each country is obliged to set up a sound and efficient national coordinating mechanism in order to speed up our cooperation. I hope that the Prime Ministers of Laos and Myanmar share the same view.

Speaking of benefits from our collaboration, allow me to cite, just as a single example, the benefits that we can expect from one of the projects that we have identified for joint in-

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