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Inaugurating the Angprey Buddhist Temple in Takeo



27 April 05 - Samdech Hun Sen with the people at the inauguration of the Buddhist Temple in the Pagoda of Angprey in the province of Takeo's Saraong district (Photo: Virakmuny)

“... It is indeed a great pleasure for me to join with you all once again today for the inauguration of the Buddhist temple, the Buddhist teaching hall and various achievements in the pagoda of Angprey in the commune of Rumchang, district of Samraong of Takeo province. I am very thankful to our people's understanding for the fact that I suggested the day set for inauguration to today from April 25 as I had to be in Indonesia for the participation in the Asia-Africa summit and the fiftieth anniversary of the Bandung conference. Late is better than never.

... According to what we have learned from its history, the pagoda of Angprey is one of the oldest Buddhist monasteries with its record of 381 years in existence, though rapid development has happened only in the last 137 years. As is said in the history that Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk cut

the ribbon for the inauguration of the College of Keo Din in the district of Samraong in 1963, in 1967 Samdech patriarch Chuon Naat also presided over the inauguration of the pagoda of Angprey, gave its current Buddhist name Dhamanimit. The pagoda, however, went through serious destruction under the regime of the Khmer Rouge between 1975 and 1979.

... January 07, 1979, the whole country was liberated and the revivals of Buddhism together with other religions were noted. When asked which of the religions practiced in Cambodia is the older or which of the two – the Buddha and the Mohammed – was older, one Muslim clergyman in the province of Pursat said they are born on same day and same time after the fall of Pol Pot regime. The pagoda of Angprey has in the
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22-23 April 2005 (The Asia-Africa Summit 2005 in Indonesia)

Addressing the 2005 Asia-Africa Summit in Indonesia

It is a great honor and pleasure to join you, honorable leaders of the Asian-African countries at this august Summit. On behalf of the Cambodian delegation, I extend our deep gratitude to the Government of Indonesia for the warm hospitality and for the excellent arrangements for the meeting. I would like also to take this opportunity to express our sympathies to the Government and People of Indonesia on the destruction and sufferings caused by the recent earthquake.

Asia and Africa have a long

history of friendship, solidarity and cooperation reinforced by the historic Asian-African Conference in Bandung 1955. As one of the founders of the Bandung Spirit half a century ago, through the direct involvement of the Former King His Majesty Preah Bat Norodom Sihanouk, Cambodia is very proud today to join the commemoration of the golden jubilee of this historic summit to reflect back on what has happened since then and cast our vision to the future. In this regard, I would like to bring to all of you the greetings and

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04 April 2005 (Unofficial Translation of Selected Comments)

Inaugurating the Buddhist Temple in Steoung Trang District

... First of all I would like to present my deep thanks and sympathy to fathers, mothers and national compatriots for being present here today. On behalf of my father and my family, may I humbly call on the souls of my great grandparents, grandparents to move from the old pagoda to this new place of respect. I have a great pleasure also to be able to return to the native village in this auspicious occasion to inaugurate the Buddhist temple, and various other achievements -- the health clinic and three Bailey bridges are also included. These achievements are great pride for this area which used to be very poor. The three bridges are built at the commune of Tuol Rokar, the commune of Peam Koh Sna and at the village of Prek Andaung.

... These achievements have taken shape today while I never promised anything to the people in this area. At the same time I share the view of HE Hun Neng, my brother and the Governor of Kompong Cham, when he recalled previous achievements that were destroyed by the land erosion into the river, as they stood on the river side. The pagoda of Botum Kessar was built 175 years as of August last year, when it fell into the river. In other words the pagoda was built in 1830, even before the
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past years enjoyed assistance from the Buddhist followers Mok Meas and Chhorn Hin, the parents of HE Mok Mareth, Minister for the Environment. It has been a great example and I am glad to see that our officials have taken time to help solve the needs of the local people in general, the pagoda in particular. I could also say that this gesture is no new for the members of the Cambodian People's Party as they have been practicing this people-oriented assistance since the 1980's, when they spent from six months to one year in the province to help people deal with their problems right on spot.

... Some people claim that Funcinpec have not had chances and resources to provide assistance to the people. On the contrary, we have mobilized bulldozers, water pumps, etc. for Samdech Krom Preah (Norodom Ranaridh) so that he is capable of providing assistance for the people. For those who claimed Funcinpec possessing no rights to help people, I would tell them that help is welcome from everyone, except those who allied with terrorist groups. As far as school building request is concerned, I am glad to see that schooling children has increased which prompt us to address the demand-supply situation.

... In general this year we have a harsh weather condition, though some parts of our country have had some rains, but many are still in drought condition. As usual, by this time of the year, some parts of our country have had some seedlings already, as of this year not even grass has grown after some rain because of hot weather. Fruit trees ranging from coconut, mango to ba-

nana almost die out of drought and this situation is common to many countries in the world, Thailand is also included. According to HE Su Phirin, the Governor of Takeo province, a land area of 111.59 % of dry-season rice has been cultivated, or an area of 66,955 hectares of the planned 60,000 hectares has been put under dry-season rice. The expected output per hectare is 4,395 kg.

... At the review meeting of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, I have recommended to maintain the cultivated areas for dry-season rice because we have failed to cultivate the rainy season rice. We are lucky that the dry-season rice output has given us a good result with a surplus of about one million tons for the first time more the previous years. We are conducting searches to find out reason why the dry-season rice has soared up, while water is scarce. Two major factors have to be put into consideration in analyzing this trend of dry-season rice production – the Royal Government's policy and the people's efforts in coping with hardships caused by failure of the rainy season rice production. Whether one of the two or both reasons has brought about this progressive trend, it is worth noting that the rainy season rice cultivation produce only about 2 tons per hectare while the dry-season rice produce up to four tons per hectare.

... Taking its high yield into consideration, we should think of transferring some land for floating rice to dry-season rice, for which water resources for cultivation irrigation will be of great attention to be paid by the Royal government. As far as when the rain is coming, according to the weather forecast, rain

would start to come in May and we hope the forecast is 80% correct. As for the request brought to me HE Mok Mareth regarding the digging of a canal "Chumreas Pen," I would urge a thorough study to be conducted as this canal would involve the passing of a sand nested area, by which the system would be clogged and need restoration every year in addition to washing sand into downstream canal and rice field. A serious study should be conducted to look into impacts the canal may have on environment. As irrigation is necessary here, attention should also be paid on what crop could be grown.

... Over the Khmer New Year this year it has been quite a joyful event for the people of Cambodia in general, despite the fact that the weather was hot. Taking death over the New Year into consideration, we have had less number of accidents involving deaths -- only about ten people and some wounded. In Thailand, in what HE Prime Minister Thaksin called an improved statistics, 520 Thais died and 15,000 wounded. In the past between 1970 and 1999, a period of 29 years Cambodia welcomed the new Goddess with fire arms shooting into air. They shot to welcome both the Khmer and the Chinese New Years. Splashing water on one another in Phnom Penh this year, thanks to the efforts made by HE Governor of the Phnom Penh city, was less in observation. We also noted decrease in fighting while dancing in villages. The number of theft is also under control.

Taking this opportunity I wish to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to police, soldiers, and military police for their sacrifice to keep good security for our people

to enjoy the Khmer New Year. The city was quiet as many visited native villages in rural areas because we have better road condition in addition to good security throughout the country. It is indeed my pleasure to be able to join with all of you here and I have only one advice that "while drinking water, one should know where the water comes from," or "while eating fruit, one should know from where the fruit is."

... With the overthrow of Pol Pot, the prevention of the return of the genocide, peace prevailing throughout the country, and especially the breaking of the political stalemate thanks to the collaboration between the CPP and Funcinpec, where Samdech Krom Preah and I have come to an agreement to the setup of the third-legislature Government, we will be able to continue our march toward our goal of alleviating poverty through the implementation of the rectangular strategy, the core of which water policy is the main focus for the years to come.

Samdech Hun Sen on that occasion offered to provide twenty million Riels to the pagoda of Angprey, a water pond for the Sla Rong pagoda, a 10 KVA generator and a set of ten computers and a printer and a school building of six classrooms for the Bun Rany-Hun Sen Sla Rong College, a school building of six classrooms for the primary school of Treang Andet, a set of ten computers and a printer with one 15 KVA generator and two school buildings of 12 classrooms to the College of Hun Sen-Angprey. Samdech Hun Sen also approved requests for renovation of canals and roads made by the CPP working group in Samraong district of Takeo, headed by HE Mok Mareth. ■

02 April 2005 (Unofficial Translation of Selected Comments)

Inaugurating a Building in the Prek Kompoes Primary School

... It is indeed a great pleasure for me to join with all of you today to put into use a new school building which would contribute to the betterment of the children's schooling in the area. May I take this opportunity also to express my sincere thanks to teaching staff and the community of Prek Kompoes for their efforts to reach me for assistance in the construction and improvement of schools in the district of Kandal Stoeung of Kandal province, one of which we are here to inaugurate. According to the report by HE Khim Bo, the school was first built in 1952 at the initiative of the head monk Ek Sieng of the pagoda of Prek Thloeung, since before Cambodia won independence from the French protectorate.

... Looking back into the tradition of our country, the Buddhist monks played very crucial roles in education, especially in gathering contribution for the construction of schools. In many visits to foreign countries, some of the friendly countries were confused that all of the Cambodian men have to enter monkhood. That was not true, I told them. I myself became a monk for a short time when my grandmother died. It was once a practice that men become monks in repayment of gratefulness to their parents. In relation to men staying in the pagodas, I told them that they went to pagoda for education because the pagoda in those days was indeed a school. Some stayed in their monkhood for their whole lives, while others just for the sake of being educated.

... As time went by less and less men stay in monkhood for the whole life because more schools have been made available. Because we have a good cooperation between the Bud-

dhist and the secular worlds we have built more schools, especially here in Prek Kompoes commune the school has been built in many stages, in peace and in wartime. In between 1970 and 1975, Cambodia was divided into areas under the control of Lon Nol and those under the control of the National Liberation Front headed by Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk. Areas under Lon Nol were luckier because they have more schools and teaching staff, except from time to time there had been threats of artillery shells. As for those in the liberated zone of the front there were two differing situations. First there were no teaching activities when the area was liberated, and second, schooling continued while teaching was an unpaid job because we did not have a viable state system.

... Worse still, the Khmer Rouge, having placing their leadership upon the whole country between 1975 and 1979, completely destroyed the education system, where no-one was taught or teaching. After the liberation of the country from the genocide regime in 1979, though the then Government had little or nothing to assist the need for education, still the the National United Front, take for instance the area of Prek Kompoes, gathered teachers and children of school age to join in the campaign of those who know more teach those who know less, and those who know less teach those who do not know. As I could recall, we did not have even good chalk, but clay or charcoal. However, with active participation of our people in education from the beginning, the education system in the whole country booms, as of

now Cambodia registers 3.5 million students, where the number of students before 1970 – the Sangkum Reastr Niyum period -- was less than a million.

... As for the Primary School of Prek Kompoes, in additions to school buildings built so far, I would suggest this time to build a two-storey building of twenty-classrooms like the one we built for the Primary School of Wat Phnom in Phnom Penh. I have just ordered five more solar-energized lights to be installed in addition to the existing ten – two of which should be placed here and the rest should go into the schoolyard. As far as how we call the school, I would suggest this time to name it after my father's, the Primary School of Hun Neang-Prek Kompoes as it is built as a two-storey building like in the city. This is a token of gratefulness to my father for the birth, the life and education I have had to these days. I also have some school named after my mother's like the Primary School of Di Pok-Kdey Lovea. Another reason for doing so was because the school is being built at the help of three pagoda boys – Hun Sen, the School Director Uy Sun and Okhna Mong Ritthi.

... In Cambodia, things are different from some countries in the world when talking about family relationship. No matter how old the child may be, he or she is still a kid for the parents. Take for instance my parents consider me their young kid no matter how grown up I am. For them I am still a young kid. I would have similar approach to theirs with regard to my kids. No matter they had master or PhD degrees, they are still my children. It was in this respect that

one day the School of Boeung Trabek brought a proposal to my father and he had HE Kep Chutema, the Mayor of Phnom Penh to come up with a plan. He then gave the plan to me and said, "Sen (Hun Sen) you take this plan and build a school in the Primary School of Boeung Trabek." As for other countries, especially Europe, when they are at 18 years old, the kids are independent and possess every right. They may send their old-age parents to the house for old people, and on the contrary in Cambodia the older they get, the better care we children have to provide.

... Our Constitution states that the Cambodian children must complete at least nine-year education. To achieve this aim one of the efforts should be to place school as close as possible to the people so that their children could access schools and does not inquire payment for traveling to and from. As of this school, I think we could go from the Primary to the first-level secondary school, and from there, when the teaching staff and school facilities are available, they should be upgraded to the second-level secondary school. We have to provide school access to both male and female students. Sons can go to schools in far away areas, but parents have major concerns for their daughters to go the same distance. The best solution to ease parents' concern is to bring the school facility, and in this case I mean the first-level secondary school of class 7, 8 and 9 to the communal level.

... I am very happy to notice that human resource training has become a national movement. From HM the King to the people in general, the monks, charitable persons, parents, students themselves
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07 April 2005 (Unofficial Translation of Selected Comments)

Inaugurating a Buddhist Hall in Phnompenh Thmei Pagoda

... Today I have a great pleasure to join with all of our people in the inauguration of a new achievement in the pagoda of Sovanmuni or Samraong Andet – the Buddhist hall. Let me take this joyful occasion to express my sincere appreciation to the head monk Rat Saroeun of the pagoda Samraong Andet for such an honored hospitality for my presence in this ceremony. The fact that I have proposed for a rescheduling of the inaugural program to one day earlier because tomorrow we will have the visit of the Prime Minister of Myanmar in the Kingdom of Cambodia.

... I am very thrilled to see that the efforts gathered under the leadership of the head monk Rath Saroeun has brought about this pagoda not only as a place for Buddhist teaching and prayer but also a beautiful place of serenity for our elders to learn and practice Buddhism here. I did not have a chance to travel across this area, though I heard about this place very much. What we all see as development in the pagoda proves that our people have strong belief in the Buddhism. According to the report of HE Kep Chutema, Governor of Phnom Penh, the pagoda had not been different to other pagodas throughout the country after the fall of the regime of the genocide of Pol Pot.

... Under the wise leadership of Samdech Patriarch, and all levels of the local authorities, since the former People's Republic of Kampuchea regime to the State of Cambodia, and to the second Kingdom of Cambodia, in the past 26 years the Cambodians have proven that they are willing to make efforts for development of the Buddhist world as well as those of the secular world. The

two worlds are of inseparable relations, where the lack of development in one would lead to impasse of the other. Having said so I would argue that the development in the Buddhist world would allow us to measure the development in the secular world in part or the living condition of our people, because as long as the people are getting better in their living standard, their contribution for the development of the Buddhist infrastructure is also gaining shape. When our people suffer poverty, the Buddhist development would also be in the desperate state.

... Take another angle into consideration, the Buddhist world contributes largely to the education of every individual to perform good deeds and this has a positive implication on the governance of the secular world. If we were to have many bad people then the effort to keep a society intact would be enormously difficult. In general acts of violence has decreased thanks not only to the efforts made by the police or the judicial system, but largely because we have the Buddhist teaching to the heart of everyone. Not only the people who reside and practice Buddhism in the pagoda, those residing outside have also benefited from the Buddhist teachings as well.

... On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia and my own behalf, I would in this solemn occasion express my sincere thanks to the head monk Rat Saroeun as well as the Buddhist monks throughout the country for the fruitful and educational efforts they have done. We should also learn that pagoda is also a place where certain human

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have all been part and parcel to the development of education sector. It is a crucially important role that human resource of high quality plays in the country's development. We are living in the era of knowledge-based economy and not natural economy as before. We are living in a situation of competition, so quality and reasonably affordable prices are what we try to achieve.

... To be on the side of strong competitor and to make the country developed, human resource development is prime, where children of school-age are to be focused. It is not true to buy the idea that children of the urban families are doing better in school than those from the rural area. Children of the rich sometimes could not compete in school because they do not work hard in their studies, and it is not necessarily true that children of the poor could not do better. What is the most importance is the fact that they should have equal access to education. These days I have noticed that we have many competent people but they do not have chances, so they have not fully developed their natural intelligence yet.

... On the contrary to 2003 that we could bring water

resource is being produced in part because it provides shelters to students who could not afford a place to stay while pursuing their studies to places away from home. Take for instance thousands of students have been provided shelters by pagodas in Phnom Penh, and I myself was once benefited from such facility as well. Take for the pagoda of Samraong Andet alone we have here 183 (male) students, and 230 other pupil monks

from Kompong Speu to Dangkae of Phnom Penh, and to 2004 that we could organize boat race in the Rolaing Ken before the Khmer New Year, this year we don't even have water for cows and buffaloes. Drought severely affects not only Cambodia but also Thailand and Vietnam in the region. We all are looking only at the sky for rain. In Thailand they conducted this operation for an artificial rain, though it helps resolve only a small part of the problem and would be costly. Yesterday the Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister Hor Nam Hong raised this issue with the Foreign Minister of Thailand and asked if they can help Cambodia with artificial rain. As for some parts of Cambodia where drinking water is a problem, like in Banteay Mean Chey and Battambang, I have ordered for water tank to bring in water for the people. I hope we will have some rain towards the Khmer New Year

Samdech Hun Sen has in that occasion provided two PCs, one copying machine, one printer and one ten KVA generator to the school of Prek Kompoes, ten million Riels to the people of Prek Thloeing for building dike to protect flood and a school building of six classrooms and five PCs and a printer to the Secondary School of Prek Kompoes ■

and 51 Buddhist nuns. Comparing to the military facility, this pagoda houses more people than in the military battalion.

... The Royal Government at all levels should offer support to the Buddhist activities in this respect, especially in accordance with Buddhist Congress's resolution at the advice of Samdech Patriarch to establish the Fund for Assisting
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French arrival to Cambodia in 1860. As most of the achievements in this fallen pagoda were contributed by the Hun's family, it tells us that the Hun's is here for such a long time.

... In recent years, as I could recall, many pagodas built along the river bank have fallen off the shore into the river – and we have three pagodas from this area alone fell off the land into the river because of the river's change its course. In 2003 we inaugurated the new pagoda of Khpop Tanguon for the old one fell off into the river, followed by the 2004-inauguration of the new pagoda of Prek Andaung after the fall of the old pagoda, and in 2005, we have this Botum Kessar pagoda to rebuild for the same reason. If we were to have no war for the last 35 years (from 1970) I would hope that the water course could have been diverted in such a way by modern technology to avoid causing such damages to the shores along here. It has been possible as they did in some countries to take away the silt leaving the water current to continue to flow in its original direction. We did try with limited efforts to save the city of Kompong Cham in the mid 1980s.

... I wish to take this opportune moment to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to those contributors, near and far, to the construction of the Buddhist temple, study hall, and residences in the pagoda. These are made available without my promise. I understood that first of all our people need peace, and my actions have been conducted in search for peace. The country won independence in 1953, but this region continued to be disturbed by the group under Put Chhay (local troublemaker) until 1960. In between 1967

and 1968, we had the Khmer Rouge residing along the Tuol Sambo area. The commune head of Tuol Sambo was killed by the Khmer Rouge in the 1960s. They called one another rouge, blue or pink.

... Cambodia gained independence only to fight its own war killing people and making documentary film out of it. Unstable peace existing for 16 years recalled us of a situation here where people feared to stop peddling bicycle when called in the Rubber plant, as they were afraid of the Khmer Rouge. The central headquarter of the Khmer Rouge was then right behind this place and in 1970-71, all the Khmer Rouge leaders – Ke Pork, Pol Pot, Koy Thuon... were all present here.

... As I have mentioned about executing people and making film out of it, they were true but Mr. Ruom Rit never writes about it and all he was writing so far was just criticizing those who have made great efforts in rebuilding the country. Ruom Rit missed in his writing the stories of people like Sao Ngoy, Preap In, Chao Borei, etc. who had been executed in those days. On my way here I read in the newspaper that Mr. Ruom Rit is seriously ill and Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk would not post in his website Ruom Rit's articles anymore. I dare mention this on my birthday because I am a kid who has been victimized by what was done by the elderly people. I was wounded five times and lost one eye because of those kinds of leaders. To let our people see what was done in the past (by those leaders), we could have all the seven TV stations replayed the film. The younger generation should not be deceived by elder ones.

... Well Ruom Rit is said to stop writing but if he were to continue writing he should narrate the story of executing Preab In at Tropeang Kroloeng. Take for instance HE Tea Banh was formerly called Tea Sangvaat, but because he was not killed from the shooting he then has been renamed to Tea Banh (shooting). What is important is he was not shot under the Khmer Rouge but the Sangkum Reastr Niyum. If Ruom Rit were to go on, I would not be reluctant to order for replay of the films on televisions. It was because of such brutal act of execution at gunpoint that contributed in part to wars.

... No one seems to have talked about it, only I, Hun Sen, dare bring this out. If I were to let this go on, more will continue to come. Hun Sen is accused of being a dictator but what were done wrong in the past by elder leaders were forgotten. I wish to remind that the district of Stoeung Trang has produced three Prime Ministers already for Cambodia – In Tam, Hang Thun Hak and Hun Sen. Hun Sen will not disappoint the people of Stoeung Trang like In Tam and Hang Thun Hak did. But they were lucky because they did not meet Ruom Rit as I do.

... However, we have achieved a stable peace and with it we all could rebuild this pagoda and today I have here a list of contribution of US\$ 27,450 in response to the need of only US\$ 16,560. The extra fund should, if I may say, be spent on building a race-boat shed. May Dr. Saat Samy draft for me how much would it cost to have twenty solar-energized bulbs here.

... Well to sum up this part I have built many things in many places but little or nothing

in the native village. One important reason is that the money used in such reconstruction efforts are donated by charitable persons and I do not want them to blame me for channeling them to the native village's construction. It is even more hesitant when it comes to using the national budget. ■

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Children in all pagodas as many have been accepted to reside in the Buddhist facility in pursuance of their studies. For me what I have achieved through hardship and effort-making is very valuable. Take for instance, a friend of mine back in the old days share a piece of tobacco, which was scarce in those days, with me and I considered that more important and valuable than the triple fives (555) cigarettes these days.

... In 1979, back to those days, the pagoda was in shortage situation. There was no currency in those days and all they offered to the Buddhist monks was rice. That was why in those days we always compare our situation to defend the country with one hand and to develop it in another.

... Just now I have a request from Samdech Patriarch about sending some senior monks for study at the Royal School of Administration (RSA). Though I have not got a reply from the Royal School of Administration, still I may respond that the RSA would accommodate three monks for each course, after which they could go to work in the Cabinet of Samdech Patriarch and the provincial Buddhist administration.

... Thanks to the initiation from the Governor of Phnom Penh and in contribution for traveling from-to the pagoda and the main road of 1,200 meters... ■

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good wishes of His Majesty Preah Bat Norodom Sihanouk, the Great Father of Cambodia and His Majesty Norodom Sihamoni, the King of Cambodia, and the people and the Royal Government of Cambodia.

The Bandung spirit started a wave of decolonisation and emergence of newly independent states in Asia and Africa. It helped establish the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) which provided a very critical and useful balance between opposing ideologies during the Cold War. But Asia and Africa continued to be the proxy battleground of great powers causing devastation and trauma to the local people. Cambodia is a prime example of such devastation and neglect and suffered the most in Asia. But we have emerged from our darkest chapter as a reinvigorated and vibrant, democratic, unified nation assuming our rightful place in the international community. Today, we look to the future with great optimism, borne out of own achievements through implementation of sound economic and social policies.

At this Summit, I suggest we focus on the key essentials that shall set our strategic partnership on its rightful course for the future. First of all, Cambodia commends the Asian-African Sub-Regional Organizations Conference (AASROC) process as a means of reinforcing the relevance and validity of the Bandung spirit.

Indeed, we all know that due to the forces of globalization and regionalism as well as the IT revolution over the last few decades, the world has continuously changed and undergone unexpectedly rapid transformation, fostering more favorable

conditions for preventing and solving the lingering strategic and geopolitical problems. Nevertheless, the rapid evolution and revolution have also presented major challenges and uncertainty for our fragile world. Therefore, efforts to ensure peace among and between nations and the fulfillment of the basic needs of all continue to be an uphill struggle as we grapple with the interlinked problems of population growth, the growing digital divide, the specters of disease – particularly HIV/AIDS, SARS- wars in some regions, terrorism and transnational crime, the arms race and nuclear proliferation and especially the worsening disparities in development both across and within countries.

As a legitimate Leader receiving the mandate from our people, we have obligation to take measures to forcefully and effectively respond to both challenges and opportunities facing our peoples. I believe that the utmost priority of most of the countries in our two continents is to reduce poverty and work toward poverty elimination. This requires all of us to work at three different levels namely national, regional and inter-regional, and global level.

At national level, each government is required to lay out and actively implement reform programs in all sectors, especially governance in policy and poverty reduction strategy for our people, by focusing mainly on securing peace, security and stability and delivering the basic goods and services our people are entitled to. At the same time, for the long run, we must establish the vision, action plan and program to ensure high living standard and harmony for our people through sus-

tainable social and economic development. In this regard, Cambodia highly appreciates the African Union for its program for poverty eradication, socio-economic development and growth so called “NEPAD” (New Partnership for Africa’s Development).

At the regional and cross-regional level, it is imperative for today for Asia and Africa to work even more closely to pool our resources to address the continuous and enormous challenges and grasp opportunity in the 21st Century. To this end, we need to enhance our cooperation in all levels and all areas ranging from political solidarity, security, development cooperation and economic integration to socio-cultural relations and people to people exchange between the two regions. Fostering relationship based on equal footing and mutual benefits will bring about shared prosperity and harmony. In this regard, we must revisit it in order to improve and further strengthen inter-governmental mechanisms, regional and sub-regional organizations and people to people interaction between the two continents. At this level of cooperation, I am very proud to take note that ASEAN has resolutely and confidently stepped forward far beyond.

At global level, we also need to strengthen cooperation on the core issues aimed at improving of the global environment for development through measures such as: increased ODA, debt reduction or debt write -off for poor countries, developing real free trade, especially in the framework of WTO, preferential tariffs on the exports of developing countries, and expanded technology transfer and measures to overcome the digital divide.

On the security, political and diplomatic front, we must jointly fight against terrorism that endangers people lives and the social fabric, regardless of the reasons for the acts committed either in the name of a religion or on national aspirations of any nation. With regard to elimination of weapons of mass destruction, Cambodia has joined with fellow ASEAN members 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). This problem should be solved only through peaceful means.

Cambodia has always been an active member of the Bandung Asian-African Conference. I reaffirm our commitment 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. Africa and Asia are two different continents, far separated. Yet we are of the same world, and our peoples and governments pursue the same aspirations – human dignity in life and work, and peace. Let us put our shoulders together in the cause of a sustainable better world ■

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NGOs and International Organizations in order to well integrate the livelihood of the victims and their families into the society... Also, as a present for the efforts of the national mine operators as well as CMAA and in order to participate with development partners, I would like to contribute 800,000 US dollar as counterpart budget of the Royal Government to CMAA for the year 2005 in which such the amount has been provided every year... ■

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progress in order to highlight advantages and disadvantages as well as following up casualties and real result from the mine clearing activities.

5. *To continue developing the information management tools. In the present time, the Mine Action Authority has already set up a data center and it is now gradually operational, but it has not yet been strong. In this sense, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the European Union, Germany, England and UNDP for equipping, providing consultants and offering training to officials in using computer, which is an important tool in evaluating local work as well as keeping and analyzing data from operators and all development partners at the provinces and cities.*

Second objective: to enhance mine sector by linking to the socio-economic development: we have to remember that the inception of the mine clearing activities had been organized after the end of two decades of civil war, which was in 1992, and the operation was in response to the emergency without any clear plan. All operators worked according to the request from village and commune authorities. After that the shortage of land has emerged, especially the land distribution did not reach the real poor. The shortage of land for the people and land distribution are the primary factors in preparing proper mine clearing plan based on priority, which means to benefit to the socio-economic sector.

In this framework, we have to ensure the responsibility of the

provincial and municipal level in linking mine clearing activities to local development, which is the only objective of the government's policy in poverty reduction. To achieve this objective, the CMAA has to strengthen the decentralized mechanism, which means that the planning of mine clearing must have broad cooperation from the commune-sangkat councils, working groups of mine clearing at district-khan levels, operators and development agencies at the provinces and cities.

At the same time, we have to ensure and to promote within the socio-economic framework, to focus on strengthening the national framework and to enhance priority of the poor. In this sense, the CMAA has to strengthen socio-economic groups by linking with the Provincial Mine Action Committee (PMAC) and Mine Action Planning Unit (MAPU). If these units are fully operational, we will be able to ensure the implementation of provincial, municipal and national plans at the right direction, to ensure the selection of land as priority to have mines cleared, to select the real poor as the beneficiaries and to ensure the transparency of the selection process.

Third objective: to strengthen mine-clearing operation over the present achievement. In this sense, I would like to raise three recommendations for the conference to consider as they are the core activities of mine sector in Cambodia.

- (1) *To completely clear the high-priority mine field by 2012.* CMAA has compiled the criteria to generally assess socio-economic impact on the community by using the methodology formulated by

technical group searching mine field and the world technical group. For Cambodia, I understand that the implementation of this methodology to give the priorities as 1st, 2nd and 3rd is not applicable. For instance, Battambang's first priority is to clear mine for farming, Siem Riep and Preah Vihear's first priority is to clear mine around temples and national heritage sites ect. Therefore, CMAA must have its technical team in order to cooperate with international technical team to reexamine the methodology by incorporating the assessment of community impacts to be a basis for prioritization. Moreover, those areas along the border, as far as I know, is still a matter to be discussed in the sense that CMAA, RCAF and local authority have to clearly define by taking the inhabited areas or unresolved border area as the basis. All operators have to strictly implement this policy.

- (2) *The mine clearing achievement is limited, but is on the right target.* According to the report of the first round landmine impact survey by specialist team, the area of 446,000 hectares is expected to have mines in which 10% or 42,000 hectares of the area directly affects the livelihood of thousands of rural people. Therefore, if we compare the present operation and the achievement from 12-year work, we need at least 12-15 or 20 years more to clear mines marked as highly prioritized land.

Remarkably, if we examine the achievement of the four large scale operators from 2000 to 2004, we attained 16,200 hectares or 3,200 hectares on average per year. In that sense we need 13 years more to completely clear mines on the highly priori-

tized land. Another issue is that how can we assure such outcome? Or should Cambodia operate in more productive to reach the target as early as possible? Clearly, CMAA has to enhance its coordination and cooperation with all players and international mine experts to seek new techniques or methods for more productive operation.

- (3) We pointed out that *only 10% that affects the livelihood of rural people every single month.* The reports argued that *90% of the areas that technical team mark as a constantly mine clearing site is excessive.* Therefore, the secretariat of CMAA has to organize workshop for discussion with veterans, all-past-fraction commanders and communities in all geographic areas with help of satellite images analyses.

- (4) The implementation of National Standard. *CMAA has finalized a standard that is crucial to manage mine clearing operation* and I will examine and put it in use shortly.

Fourth objective: I focus on the prevention for people from mine-related accident. The statistics for the last five years shows that the mine-related accident was 46% and the unexploded ordinance accident was 56%. So, all levels of authorities including operators have to prepare its work plans and programs by allowing the participation of people and community in particular to raise awareness of the accidents. At the same time, the public services to mine and unexploded ordinance victims should be enhanced, especially the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veteran and Youth Rehabilitation has to clearly outline the handicaps caused by mines and unexploded ordinances and to coordinate with other players,

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28 April 2005 (Unofficial Translation of Selected Comments)
Remarks at the 1992-2004 Mine Actions Sector Stock Taking

“... I have great honor and pleasure to join you all in the closing of this stock-taking conference on mine actions sector in Cambodia, organized by Cambodia Mine Action and Mine Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA). On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia and as the head of CMAA, I am proud to participate in this closing and meeting you all, Your Excellencies representatives of donor countries and development partners, members of the RGC, NGOs representatives and all the mine operators. Now it is the third time for me to have the chance to follow your discussion on the achievements and respective commitments, through the report made by HE Sam Sutha, who is my personal advisor and the secretary general of Cambodia Mine Action Authority. The report indeed reflects your truly and tireless efforts in freeing the lands of whole Kingdom of Cambodia from mines, and thus enabling the reconstruction and development of our motherland.

Through the reports that I receive regularly and this briefing, it virtually proves our steady commitment in moving forward toward a Cambodia with zero rate of mine casualty, as I raised during the Mines Awareness Day and the 10th Anniversary of the Mines Action Operation on 22 February 2002 in Ratanak Mondul, Battambang.

Thus, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the national and international institutions for your physical and mental efforts devoting to responsibly fulfilling this ample mission. Those are CMAC, Cambodia Red Cross, RCAF, National Police, Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and

Youth Rehabilitation, Halo Trust, MAC, Handicaps International, NPA, Care International, CCBL, AUSTCARE and many others that we cannot name all. All these organizations perform their duty and mission in clearing mines and unexploded ordnances.

The report to the conference has taken stock of the achievements since 1992 to 2004 that during the period we have cleared a total 28,000 hectares of lands, destroyed half a million of anti-human mines and 15,000 anti-mines and more than one million other weapons and unexploded ordnances.

The report has clearly reflected the concerns and outstanding tasks for the Royal Government of Cambodia in the area of Cambodia mine actions. The Royal Government therefore shall consider and address the following issues:

1. *Develop plans and approaches to optimally reduce the danger caused by mines and unexploded ordnances every year. Moreover, mines clearance shall be undertaken to provide productive and safe lands for development.*
2. *Ensure distribution and use of mines-cleared land to those targeted beneficiaries.*
3. *Ensure all the mines clearance operations are within an integrated poverty reduction policy agenda in order to contribute to the development of Cambodia.*

To address all these issues, we must realize two main tasks:

First, we must comply with

the terms accorded in the Ottawa Convention, increasing program of activities on awareness of mines and unexploded ordnances and mines clearance on high risk lands, including the participation of local and concerned authorities together with local people.

Second, we shall accelerate our mines clearance activity, while maintaining high safety measures, in order to reduce the danger to a lower level as well as to increase the cultivated lands for our farmers.

In this context, the Royal Government of Cambodia, through CMAA, has set 4 core objectives into the National Strategic Development Plan 2005-2009, as HE Sok An, Deputy Prime Minister and Vice Chairman of CMAA, has presented at the Summit of Signatories of Ottawa Convention in Nairobi in December 2004.

Those objectives are:

First objective: to strengthen the national facilitation framework in which CMAA has to play an important role in the facilitating operational actions in the whole Kingdom of Cambodia. In order to ensure the continuity of national development, the mine clearing operation has to be done with high efficiency and to ensure the proper mobilization of resources according to the need of the operation. In order to implement these principles, we have to:

1. *To integrate mine sector to the national priority in every sector. We have to include mine clearing actions into the national development plan in which there is a need to update the plan by monitoring through the data*

and goals that have been set in the Millennium Development Goals.

2. *To further strengthen facilitation mechanism of mine sector. Indeed, I knew that CMAA has played as a facilitator through different mechanism but we have to continue to work harder.*
3. *To strengthen the secretariat of CMAA in order to ensure more active process through employing more highly qualified staffs to do the work with high efficiency and to ensure the implementation of the every guideline on national policy on mine clearing at all levels of authority, provinces and cities. At the same time, the secretariat of CMAA has to strengthen the Mine Clearing Committee and working group of the mine clearing activities, which is its etat-major, to be strong for the operation and to ensure the effectiveness in the proper implementation of the sub-decree on “mine clearing operation management” in order to contribute to the socio-economic development. Indeed, the proper implementation means to strengthen the provincial-municipal committees in the integration of mine clearing priority at national level in the plan of the provinces and cities.*
4. *The operators and all development partners have to make regular report to CMAA. The secretariat of CMAA has compiled many kinds of documents and forms as well as past achievement. This action will make it easy to follow up the operational*
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