

Opening Remarks by H.E. CHIN MALIN

Secretary of State of the Ministry of Justice
Vice President of the Cambodia Human Rights Committee (CHRC)

Head of Cambodian Delegation to the 73rd Session of the CESCR in Consideration of
the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh National Report of Cambodia on ICESCR

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- Mr. Chair,
- Distinguished Members of the Committee,
- Excellencies,
- Esteemed Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good morning and warmest greetings to you. After more than two years of many virtual and hybrid mode conferences due to global pandemic known as Covid-19 pandemic, we are finally back to in-person meetings. Please allow me to start by first thanking the Chair and other members of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for inviting us and for this opportunity to introduce Cambodia's report at this meeting today. The Cambodia Delegation and I, we are honored and pleased to be here again with you to present and discuss the second periodic report of Cambodia over these two days, to share lessons and experiences on our constant endeavors towards the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights at the national level.

Let me introduce the key members of our delegation. For the inter-ministerial delegation, they are:

His Excellency Som Chamnan
Secretary of State of the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training

His Excellency Roth Hok
Undersecretary of State of the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning
and Construction

His Excellency Dr. Dy Khamboly
Deputy Director General of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

Mrs. Nuon Monichenda
Director of Department of the Ministry of Rural Development

For delegation from members of the Cambodian Human Rights Committee:

His Excellency Nou Sthapatia
His Excellency Chin Angkearith and
Her Excellency Meng Moniruoth

And H.E. Ambassador and Permanent Representative-designate In Dara and the colleagues at the Permanent Mission of Cambodia to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations at Geneva who are present here in the meeting room.

Mr. Chair, Committee Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before we begin, on behalf of the Cambodia delegation, I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Chair, the committee members, and all of our colleagues for graciously putting your efforts to help Cambodia and make this physical meeting happen. We have every faith that the dialogue of today's session would support Cambodia's efforts to further improve the exercise of its citizens' human rights, particularly their economic, social and cultural rights. In this regard, Cambodia is steadfast and prepared to communicate with every member of the Committee in order to take note of any helpful suggestions, criticisms, and recommendations we may get during this meeting with you.

Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Cambodia has come very far since its most tragic history where the people went through and suffered great devastation due to the Indochina War, the Cold War, and the Khmer Rouge genocide, which shattered the national infrastructure, wealth, and resources. People were almost completely destroyed, millions of Cambodians have died, crippled, widowed, orphaned. The effects of war and the scars left over from the war continue to affect Cambodian, both physically and mentally, to this day. Therefore, Cambodia prioritizes peace, above all else.

With the aforementioned objective in mind, Cambodia has embraced various international human rights norms as a basis for our people to live in peace. Eight out of the nine core human rights treaties have been ratified by Cambodia, as we well know. Cambodia is very devoted to upholding human rights on a global scale, and the policy and legal frameworks that we have, thanks to the support and help of the international community, serve as a key tool for guiding our actions. We agree that the goal of advancing and protecting human rights must be present in every nation's development process. However, we also understand and acknowledge that the stated target cannot be accomplished in a single day.

Distinguished Members,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

After submitting the report and the response to the list of issues, I would like to now call your attention to the most significant recent developments and updates on the application of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights in Cambodia.

1. Right to freely dispose of natural wealth and resources: The RGC has been working on a draft Environment and Natural Resources Code since 2015 as part of the implementation of the Environment and Natural Resources Reform Policy in line with its rectangular strategic policy. The draft Code is to be submitted to the Council of Ministers for review and further proceedings to the National Assembly. To ensure the management of natural resources and the conservation of biodiversity, the RGC has established protected areas, which currently cover a total area of over 7 million hectares, or about 41% of the total land area of Cambodia.

2. Maximum available resources: The proportion of persons living below the poverty line was 22.9%, 13.5% and 9.7% in 2009, 2014 and 2017, respectively. The Anti-Corruption Unit has taken the following measures to fight against corruption. In the judiciary, the Anti-Corruption Unit scrutinizes all court-related complaints at all times. In the past five years, the ACU forwarded 28 case files to courts, and 41 perpetrators were convicted.

3. Non-discrimination: Cambodia's Criminal Code defines discrimination as a criminal offence that may be applied to all situations of discrimination. The Labor Law prohibits discrimination by employers against workers on the basis of race, color, religion belief, sex, political affiliation, national origin, social status, culture, or trade union membership. This discrimination is considered as the zero-tolerance violation under the Labor Law. The National Policy on Primary Health Care focuses on all people and the health sector as a whole, both public and private.

4. Equal rights of men and women: The Ministry of Women's Affairs has launched and expanded various education and vocational training programs for women to develop entrepreneurial skills and their potential for increasing productivity and quality products, promote decent and productive job opportunities and urge employment in priority sub-sectors through enterprise development and support for small and medium enterprises in downtowns and cities, increase access to education and the TVET3 framework for vulnerable groups, and enhance the link between education and TVET service providers with the private sector so as to reduce the skills gap.

5. Right to work: The Royal Government continues to strive to increase the skilled workforce to respond to the current evolution of the labor market. Between the 2017/2018 and the 2021/2022 academic year, the number of graduates of technical and vocational training and short-course vocational training increased by about 270,000 persons, while those who received technical and vocational certificates 1, 2 and 3 (C1, C2, C3) increased by about 50,000 persons over the same period. The Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training provided each of the workers who were suspended or lost employment due to the Covid-19 crisis with a monthly allowance of 200,000 Riels (two hundred thousand Riels) during their studies on Technical and Vocational Degree in order to give them the opportunity to gain a clear vocational skill so that they can seize new job opportunities.

6. Right to just and favorable conditions of work: The Law on Minimum Wage upholds the ideal of wage equality by mandating that companies pay all employees covered by this Law

equally for labor of equivalent circumstances, professional skills, and production regardless of origin, sex, or age. The Ministry of Labor has established inter-ministerial inspection teams in the manufacturing, agricultural, and tourism industries as part of the reform of the inter-ministerial/inter-institutional inspection team. Additionally, the ministry is getting ready to establish an inter-ministerial inspection team in the construction industry.

7. Trade union rights: In Cambodia, neither laborers nor union activists have ever been detained or accused of engaging in peaceful strikes and protests. They are accountable to the law if they organize or lead a strike that results in physical harm to any person or damage to any public or private property. As of 2022, a total of 6,014 professional organizations, including 40 confederation trade unions, 267 federation trade unions, 5,694 enterprise-based trade unions, and 13 employers' associations, have been registered with the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training.

8. Right to social security: The 2019 Law on Social Security Schemes clearly states that the National Social Security Fund is the only operating body that provides the social security schemes, including pensions, healthcare, occupational risk and unemployment. The National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016-2025 divides the social protection schemes into two: social assistance and social security.

9. Protection of the family and children: The National Committee for Counter Trafficking (NCCT) is jointly in charge of the battle against human trafficking. The Inter-Ministerial Working Groups, Municipal-Provincial Committees, and Provincial Committees each include six ministries and institutions as members. Each working group is tasked with addressing the root causes of human trafficking in accordance with their particular fields of expertise. In cases of international human trafficking, gather information that may help to ensure measures to prevent crime, quickly apprehend offenders, and assist victims. The Ministry of Labor has established a Migration Working Group (MWDG) to ensure the safety and welfare of migrant laborers.

10. Right to an adequate standard of living: The Council for Agriculture and Rural Development has launched the Second National Strategy for Food Security and Nutrition 2019-2023. The government has focused on the housing sector in order to ensure that low-and-middle income and vulnerable groups have access to affordable housing. Efforts are now being made to monitor food prices and the cost of healthy food packages. The RGC has no policy or action to dispossess indigenous peoples from the lands and natural resources that they have traditionally occupied and used. The RGC has launched the National Strategy for Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene 2011-2025.

11. Right to physical and mental health: The Ministry of Health has ensured that public health facilities have appropriate basic infrastructure, including medical equipment, modern medical and information technologies and telecommunication networks. Despite the absence of a legal framework covering mental healthcare, Cambodia has given the following priorities to the development of mental healthcare. Priority 1: Human resources development as the first step and the highest priority in the promotion of human rights in the field of mental health.; Priority 2 is the

development of mental health services by implementing the WHO recommendations, paying attention to the provision of basic mental healthcare and treatment services.

12. Right to education: The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport have been undergoing comprehensive and in-depth education reform to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning for all. The quality of students' learning outcome, teachers' qualification upgrading via continuous professional development, and strengthening school-based management have been prioritized in the education reform efforts. School infrastructure and teaching facilities have been built, renovated and equipped to schools in collaboration with development partners to ensure school learning environment for students.

13. Cultural rights: The Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts has included indigenous dances in the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. In order to protect, preserve and promote indigenous languages, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport has taken steps which include implementing a multi-level primary education program for indigenous children in provinces, develop the alphabet of Tampuan, Kreung, Preav, Kavet, Phnong and Jarai among all, 24 languages, and do various collaboration with other ministries and work with indigenous people to protect, preserve and promote indigenous languages and awareness of indigenous traditions, cultures and customs. The Ministry of Rural Development has been implementing National Policy on the Development of Indigenous Peoples by determining the guidelines and set up the criteria on the establishment of Indigenous Peoples' communities with the participation and acknowledgement from local authorities, the Ministry of Interior, with collaboration relevant ministries and institutions. With this policy, Indigenous Peoples continue to protect their valuable tradition, customs, beliefs, languages and use of natural resources such as lands and forests.

Chair,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have now entered 2023, the fifth year of the implementation of the fourth phase of the Political Platform and the Rectangular Strategy of the Royal Government – Phase IV in the sixth legislature of the National Assembly.

In 2022, Cambodia has just achieved new achievements in its development path, although the Covid-19 has not yet been completely eradicated and is affected by the complex evolution of the international situation. Peace, political stability and security, which are the foundations for the development and harmonious living of the people, have been vigorously defended by the entire national force united around the Royal Government. The slogan - "We thank peace," "We thank win-win politics" has resonated throughout the country and has become the spirit of a strong and vibrant society in the process of building and defending the motherland. If we do not keep the peace, we will not be able to achieve everything today.

The fight against the deadly Covid-19 epidemic in 2020 and 2021 has scored success through proper leadership, effective implementation of sharp strategies and measures, and active participation of the people, who have strengthened the people's health protection foundation to

ensure the process of economic restoration and recovery after the Covid-19 crisis. The economic sector has recovered rapidly due to the proactive efforts and ownership of the Royal Government through the introduction of timely measures to maintain socio-economic stability. On this basis, the Cambodian economy grows at around 5.5% in 2022 and is projected to grow at 6.6% in 2023. At the same time, people's lives have been stable, especially the poor and vulnerable who have been severely affected by the Covid-19 crisis, as well as people who are vulnerable to the pressures of rising global commodity prices and those who are affected by flood through the implementation of social intervention programs and measures in a timely manner. In 2023, the salaries of civil servants and the armed forces will be raised to another level, as well as the pensions of former civil servants and veterans will be adjusted and increased, particularly the minimum wage for workers in textile, garment and footwear sectors has also been jacked up to US\$ 200, along with continuing reception of other benefits from the implementation of the Royal Government's social protection policy.

Cambodia's multi-party liberal democratic process is moving forward along the path of the rule of law, especially the successful, free, fair and just 5th Mandate Commune/Sangkat Council elections. At the same time, all works and activities of political parties on the way to the 7th National Assembly election are going well. Along with the above achievements, Cambodia's prestige has been raised on the international stage, especially through the glorious success of Cambodia's rotating chair hosting the ASEAN Summit and related summits.

Cambodia has been constantly moving in the right direction in response to the sacred aspirations of the people. Cambodia has turned from a killing field of genocidal regimes, from the battlefields of chronic warfare, from national disintegration and territorial division, and from a land where the national economy has been destroyed to a land of peace, unity, democracy, respect for human rights, rule of law and development in all areas enabling all people to live in harmony.

These realities underscore the great changes in Cambodia's history that have emerged from the right leadership of the Royal Government, from the efforts of all ministries, state institutions and authorities at all levels, people's participation from all walks of life, all races, all religions by encouraging deep patriotism, from the participation of the private sector and civil society, as well as the sincere support and assistance from neighboring countries and international communities.

Mr. Chair,

Committee Members,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Once again, the Cambodia delegation reiterates the significance of ICESCR instruments. We thus believe and are certain that the meeting's results will better direct us in advancing our efforts to enhance the Government's implementation of the Convention.

As I draw to a close, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me wish you and us all a productive meeting. And with that, I would want to conclude my remarks by expressing my genuine and

unwavering appreciation to Mr. Chair, the committee members and all the team here. I also look forward to engaging in a productive dialogue with all of you.

The Cambodian delegation is ready to speak with all distinguished committee members and colleagues in an open, fruitful, and insightful manner.

Thank you!
