

**Remarks of H.E. Mr. PRAK Sokhonn, Senior Minister,
Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
At the Closing of the Ministry's Annual Congress 2017
28 February—01 March 2017**

Respectful Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia,

Excellencies, Lok Chumteav Deputy Prime Ministers, Senior Ministers, Ministers, Members of the Senate and National Assembly,

Excellencies, Lok Chumteav Ambassadors/Permanent Representatives

Excellencies, Lok Chumteav, ladies and gentlemen and representatives from line ministries and institutions,

Distinguished participants,

At the outset, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to **Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN Sen**, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, for presiding over the Annual Congress 2017 of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, which clearly demonstrates **Samdech's** exceptional consideration towards Cambodia's diplomacy as well as his personal appreciation to our diplomats, officials and staff of the whole Ministry.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to Your Excellencies, Lok Chumteav, members of the Royal Government, the National Assembly and the Senate, leaders and representatives from line ministries and institutions for your presence at today's Congress.

This afternoon, the Ministry has finally concluded its two-day meeting that gave us an opportunity to candidly discuss and exchange opinions, to share knowledge and lessons-learned from our past works as well as to learn from presentations covering various topics such as institutional budget implementation, strategies to attract foreign investment, protection of migrant workers, methods to analyze international politics, regional and global economic trends and strategy as well as measures to strengthen the implementation of anti-corruption law.

May I take this opportunity to once again extend my appreciation to our distinguished speakers for their valuable presentations that have enriched our senior management, diplomats and officials with new knowledge, thereby contributing to the enhancement of our work efficiency and to the future success of our multi-sectoral diplomacy.

The Retreat session among our senior management team and senior diplomats has also allowed us to identify challenges and explore solutions and especially to strengthen the bond of friendship and collegial solidarity among ourselves as comrades-in-arms.

Allow me to report to **Samdech Techo Prime Minister** and the Congress that, in almost one year, the works of Ministry have focused mainly on both internal reform and the recalibration of our major lines of our foreign policy to ensure consistency with the Constitution as well as to reflect the actual evolution of the international situation.

Now may I brief the Congress about the results of our internal reforms.

As you have noticed when entering the compound of the Ministry, you will notice that the Ministry is under major construction works. In fact, these works are not limited to physical construction works but in the same time, there are other forms of works also underway, namely institutional reforms, organization restructuring, human resource and finance issues.

1. Construction Works

There are two construction works being proceeded at the same time. One is the renovation of the existing central building that is 14 year-old and has never received any repair. This building has a very stylish architecture with adorned decoration although the structure itself can no longer respond to the actual work and services requirements of the Ministry. Another one is the construction of two additional wings, one on each side of the main building. The north wing will provide extra office spaces for our officials and staff for their comfort and dignity. The south wing will be home to our new Institute for Diplomacy and International Studies.

2. Reforms on Institution and Organization

The Ministry has reorganized its internal structure by establishing four new general-directorates and some new departments such as the Department of Border Affairs that will serve as secretariat and a coordinating mechanism between the ministry and the Authority in charge of Border Affairs. The Institute for Diplomacy and International Studies is a new institution aimed at building professionalism of our career diplomats to enable them to become a suitable representative and to better protect our national interest and serve our people on the international stage. These reorganizations are necessary to respond to the new workloads of the Ministry, including acting as coordinator among government institutions to promote international cooperation with various development partners. We have also formed some working groups such as the working group to manage our digital database and considered the integration of the Information Research and Analysis Group (IRAG) into the Ministry so that the latter can have its own think tank group to provide advice on foreign affairs.

3. Reforms on Human Resource and Finance

I have to admit that this is a very difficult task. This is the process to change mindset, work attitude and work procedures of the whole ministry. This compels us to have transparency in the management of finance both in the areas of expenditures and revenues, to have transparency, equity, competencies and merits in personnel appointments, to think more about the “we” rather than the “I”, meaning that we have to think more about common interest that is beneficial to everyone rather than to a particular individual or group. For this to work, we have to eliminate corruption, exploitation or nepotism.

With the support from **Samdech Techo Prime Minister**, the Ministry has attached serious consideration to the living conditions of our diplomats, officials and staff to ensure that they have what they need to fulfill their duties properly. For our diplomat overseas, from the beginning of 2017 onward, we have increased the salary and housing allowance and reinstated the subsidies for spouse and children below 18 year-old. The budget for general expenditures of our missions abroad has also been revised in accordance with the scope of works of each particular mission. At the headquarters, we have introduced for the first time ever a monthly reward system, partially taken from revenues that we have collected for the Government, and re-allocated among our senior management, officials and staff of the Ministry. May I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to **Samdech Techo Prime Minister** for his approval and support to these reform works and I would also like to express my appreciation to the Ministry of Economy and Finance for assisting our Ministry in addressing our financial difficulties in the most appropriate manner possible.

Samdech Techo Prime Minister,

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

In 2016, Cambodia has actively engaged in promoting diplomatic, economic and cultural ties with all friendly nations, especially with regional powers and neighboring countries so as to further strengthen ties and cooperation in all fields for mutual benefit.

The State visit of the H.E. Xi Jinping, President of the People’s Republic of China was the most outstanding and significant event of last year, that clearly demonstrated the strength of the special relations between the two countries, which adhere to a partnership for peace, security and stability in the region based on the fundamental principles of mutual respect, support and trust.

The frequent exchanges of visit between Cambodian leaders and friendly nations, especially **Samdech Techo Prime Minister’s** visits to many countries and participations in many major events worldwide, have further boosted political, economic,

trade and investment cooperation, increased development assistance, and as attested in the signing of many MOUs and bilaterally and multilaterally cooperation projects.

Samdech Techo Prime Minister,

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Despite signs that some major trends in 2016 may continue, the year 2017 indeed has begun with many uncertainties.

What we are certain is that the world will continue its path toward multi-polarity as typified by power rivalry between the major superpowers that will bear serious implications and impacts far beyond their own bilateral interactions. Moreover, the Brexit, wars and conflicts in the Near and Middle East and in Africa, terrorism and the refugee crisis, the tensions in East Europe in the Korean peninsula and in the South China Sea, the problems with climate change, etc. are the key challenges that will test this new year.

This is the backdrop against which we have to carry out our diplomatic tasks for this year 2017.

For our overseas missions, we shall endeavor to enhance our work efficiency and to robustly embark on our multi-sectoral diplomacy.

Like what other countries have been actively engaging, we shall promote activities that raise the image of our own country as a preferred destination for investment and tourism, bearing in mind that we should stress on our country's competitive advantages such as political stability, a healthy average annual growth of more than 7% over the past two decades, the most liberal country in ASEAN, a young labor force and competitive wages. In the field of tourism, we should feverishly promote our world famous ancient temples, our beautiful resorts and natural sites, and most importantly we should take pride in showcasing the friendly smiles of our people, young and old, that have earned Cambodia the recognition as the world's friendliest country.

Our missions abroad shall continue to exert their best efforts in protecting Cambodian nationals residing overseas and their interest, and in assisting our migrant workers especially those illegal workers and are other victims suffering from brokers and employers' abuses.

Samdech Techo Prime Minister,

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Once again, I would like to express my sincerest and deepest gratitude to **Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN Sen**, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, who has always been very supportive to our reform works and has consistently guided

Cambodia's diplomacy with sound judgment and great wisdom to ensure that our country can enjoy independence, sovereignty, peace, development and dignity.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to ministries, institutions, foreign embassies and their representative offices, international organizations for their cooperation and support to the mission of the Ministry.

Lastly, I would like to conclude by wishing Samdech, Excellencies, Lok Chumteav, ladies and gentlemen, honorable guests and dear participants all the four gems of Buddhist blessing: Longevity, Nobility, Health and Strength as well as continued success in all your endeavors. In this very special occasion, may I have the honor to invite **Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN Sen**, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, to deliver his remarks and high guidance to the Congress. **Samdech Techo Prime Minister**, the floor is yours.
