

**Statement of H.E. Mr. PRAK Sokhonn, Sr Minister,
Minister of Foreign Affairs and International
Cooperation
on Cambodia's National Developments and Regional and
International issues
(Manila, 06 December 2017)**

*Excellency Alan Peter S. Cayetano,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. Before I start with our Socio-Economic Situation, I'd like to congratulate you for your victory in protecting your national security, peace and national unity. Your lessons learnt (*in liberating Marawi*) would also be ours, even though Cambodia has been spared from terrorist acts so far.
2. To set a bit the context, I can't help but recall that Cambodia has achieved full peace only in 1998, thanks to the Win-Win Strategy of Samdech Techo Prime Minister Hun Sen, contrary to some who thought that it was the works of the UN in 1993. In fact, the UN did bring us only a partial peace, since they were not able to disarm the Khmer Rouges forces. For the last two decades, Cambodia has embarked on a very successful journey of economic development.
3. With peace and stability in place, Cambodia has achieved remarkable socio-economic growth, scoring an average GDP growth of 7.6% per annum spanning over two decades long. We have maintained macroeconomic stability and achieved a manageable rate of inflation of 3.1% in 2016. Our GDP per capita increased from USD 1,042 in 2013 to approximately USD 1,435 in 2017. This impressive growth has enabled Cambodia to recently graduate from a low-income country status and move up to a lower-middle income country status. We aim to achieve an upper middle-income status by 2030 and a high-income country by 2050. Currently, the Cambodian economy is projected to maintain a 7% growth rate in 2017 and 2018.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. Foreign Direct Investment has always played a big part of our growth engine. Last year, we recorded a total investment of US\$ 3.6 billion, with China ranking first with about 30% of the total investment, followed by Japan, Thailand, the Republic of Korea, the United States, Singapore, and Vietnam. In term of external trade, we have witnessed a gradual increase from US\$ 19 billion in 2015 to more than US\$ 22 billion in 2016.

5. Cambodia has also registered massive gains and improvements on human development and the country ranks as the seventh fastest growing HDI in the world.

6. As far as our long-term socio-economic policy is concerned, Cambodia is implementing its Rectangular Strategy Phase III focusing on four priorities: growth, employment, equity and efficiency. The government has also its specific Industrial Development Policy 2015-2025, which is a policy package aimed at transforming the country's industrial structure from a labor-intensive to a skill-driven industry by 2025.

Excellency Co-Chair,

7. Let me now turn to the recent political development in my country, which has captured a lot of attention from the media lately. Unfortunately, as you can appreciate, media always has the tendency to dramatize any situation and in our case, it has attempted to project a distorted image of Cambodia as falling into political crisis.

8. I would like to reassure you that the general situation in Cambodia is very calm and peaceful. Life goes on as normal and businesses are still thriving. Of course, from the news, we hear about external pressure and threat to cut aid and economic sanctions from a few countries, which has a stake in or side with our opposition party. That said, we

stand firm on our conviction that the recent measures taken by our government are normal and they are necessary if we are to enforce the rule of law, to secure peace and stability, and to ensure our independence and sovereignty from foreign intervention.

9. On that point, let me just focus on the two main events that have drawn most of the international attention. First, the arrest of the opposition party leader Mr. Kem Sokha, and second, the Supreme Court's decision to dissolve the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP) and to ban 118 of its members from engaging in political activities for 5 years.

10. In the case of Mr. Kem Sokha, it is a matter of *flagrant delicto* where he personally boasted to have been instructed by a foreign power to overthrow the legitimate government of Cambodia. By his own admission he has revealed his secret plans, his aspiration to emulate the Color Revolution that toppled the regimes in Yugoslavia and Serbia. All these acts are tantamount to committing act of treason, subject to criminal punishment in accordance with Article 443 of the Criminal Code of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

11. On the Court's decision to dissolve the CNRP, it was closely related to Mr. Kem Sokha's case and it was based on sufficient and adequate evidence of the conspiracy plot with a foreign power to topple a legitimate government. Moreover, there are ample evidence of the involvement of key CNRP members in many planning activities in support of the preparation of the Color Revolution. Consequently, these activities which may jeopardize our country's peace, security, and independence are found to be in violation of Articles 6 and 7 of the Law on Political Parties.

12. Other measures pertaining to the closure NDI and the Cambodia Daily are all strictly matters of law compliance and enforcement. They have nothing to do with any political agenda. The act of self-declaring as an independent news media does not exclude oneself from the obligation of paying

tax or from complying with the laws in force of the host country.

13. Irrespective of the pressure and criticism from some Western countries, our government is crystal clear in its determination to safeguard a multi-party liberal democracy which abides by the rule of law. We intent and we will organize a general election next year that is free and fair. The credibility of Cambodia's general election shall be decided by the Cambodian voters and not by foreign powers and their allies.

Excellency Co-Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

14. Let me now turn my focus on **regional and international issues, starting with recent development in ASEAN**. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the founding of ASEAN. I would like to congratulate Your Excellency and the government of the Philippines for the successful conclusion of the ASEAN chairmanship 2017 and for making this commemorative event a memorable celebration for the region as a whole.

15. Throughout its 50 years of history, ASEAN has initiated and carefully nurtured many crucial regional architectures that have kept the region stable and prosperous. Weathering storms and challenges in critical times, ASEAN has without fail strictly adhered to the ASEAN Way of consensus-based decision making, of seeking dialogue, consultation and engagement. Our perseverance and resilience as a regional bloc has been bound by our joint commitments and collective responsibility for peace, stability and prosperity based on the principles of respecting independence, sovereignty, not interfering in other countries' internal affairs and equal treatment without impositions.

16. Cambodia undertook twice the ASEAN chairmanship in 2002 and 2012. Wearing on this role, Cambodia has contributed to further engage with external partners to maintain ASEAN's centrality and keep ASEAN in the driver

seat. Excellency, you raised about ARMAC. The ARMAC is now up and running following the appointment of the Executive Director of the ARMAC Permanent Secretariat last October. May I take this opportunity to extend our appreciation to the Philippines, especially Ambassador Montero, for its active chairmanship of the ARMAC Steering Committee and its financial contribution to the ARMAC operating budget for 2017.

Excellency Co-Chair,

17. On the **South China Sea**, like your Excellency, I am pleased to take note of the improving relations between ASEAN and China and am encouraged by the adoption of the framework of the Code of Conduct for the South China Sea (COC), which is a crucial step that brings us closer to the conclusion of a substantive and effective COC. Cambodia welcomed the announcement of the start of substantive negotiations on the COC with China at the 20th ASEAN-China Summit and the upcoming convening of the 23rd ASEAN-China Joint Working Group Meeting on the Implementation of the DOC in Viet Nam in early 2018.

18. In the COC formulation process, Cambodia stresses the importance of upholding the Bali-Siem Reap Spirit, which put aside contentious issues and exercise flexibility. Moreover, the COC shall be based on the objectives and principles as stated in the agreed Framework of COC with the goal of promoting cooperation, increasing mutual trust and maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea.

19. On the **Korean Peninsula**, the recent provocative and threatening actions, including the nuclear test, by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on 3 September 2017 and the increasing number of ballistic missile tests are in clear contravention of the UNSC resolutions. These developments seriously threaten peace and stability in the entire region and beyond. Cambodia strongly urges the DPRK to fully and immediately comply with its obligations

arising from all the relevant U.N. Security Council Resolutions.

20. Cambodia reiterates its support for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner and calls for the exercise of utmost restraint, and the resumption of dialogue in order to de-escalate tensions and create conditions conducive to peace and stability.

Thank You!

Additional Issues:

☛ UN Peacekeeping Operation

Cambodia is committed to the UN peacekeeping efforts. More than 2 decades ago, Cambodia received the UN Blue Berets on their peacekeeping mission. Since 2006, Cambodia has dispatched 4,769 troops to take part in UN peacekeeping missions in a number of countries that are hot spots in the world like Sudan, South Sudan, Chad, Central African Republic, Lebanon, Cyprus, Syria and Mali.

☛ Counter-Terrorism

Terrorism is a global issue that poses a threat to regional and international peace and stability as well as a direct challenge to the attainment of sustainable development. No country is immune from terrorism and as such global efforts are needed to counter this threat. Cambodia's position is clear: while we strongly support the role of the UN in fighting against terrorism, we believe in the primary role of states in preventing and countering terrorism both at the national and the international level.

We cannot and should not associate terrorism with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic groups. To defeat this scourge, we are of the view that more efforts need to be focused on addressing its root cause, including the early stage of radicalization, the issues of foreign fighters, terrorism financing and other forms of support. We should not breed hatred and incitement among peoples or ethnic groups. Cambodia shares a concern that the imminent collapse of ISIS could have negative impact on our region as some of its fighters would probably return to their home countries and join local fighters.

☛ **Climate Change**

Climate change is not only a direct threat in itself but also a multiplier of many other threats ranging from poverty, disease and food security to mass migrations and regional conflicts. In our view, climate change is a global Human Security issue that presents a serious and unprecedented threat to global peace and security.

Cambodia is regularly ranked among the top ten most vulnerable countries globally with extreme weather events that damage our infrastructure, severely impacting on agriculture, disrupting economic activities and hampering crucial social services for our vulnerable groups. While Cambodia's contribution to climate change is negligible and our domestic resources quite limited, Cambodia has made nonetheless clear commitments to low carbon development and that's why Cambodia ratified the Paris Climate Agreement in 2016.