



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
Nation Religion King

**Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Cambodia
to the United Nations Office and other
International Organizations in Geneva**

PRESS RELEASE

“Cambodia’s Various Rights Praised at the United Nations Debate in Geneva”

Geneva, 11 October 2023 – Thirty-two state delegations attended an Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur (SR) on the Situation of Human Rights in Cambodia, held on 9 and 10 October 2023 during the 54th Session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

The Council heard the utterance of admiration for and recognition of, by the general delegations, Cambodia’s notable accomplishment in economic social cultural rights and her cooperation with various United Nations human rights mechanisms, including delivery of unfettered access of, engagement with, and the extension of mandate of the special rapporteur on Cambodia.

Twenty-three (23) delegations spoke in favour of efforts, progress and achievement Cambodia has realized in the promotion and protection of human rights and national development on many fronts and urged the SR’s working methods to be balanced and constructive, taking into account the perspective of the government and national circumstances. There were appreciations for the successful holding of the 2023 general elections in free, fair, transparent, credible and just manners with high voter turnout of 84.59% to choose one among the 18 contending political parties. The Delegations commended, inter alia, the successful responses to the Covid-19, post-pandemic economic recovery, diverse social protection initiatives, including the launching of the National Social Assistance Fund, for impoverished households and vulnerable groups; rights of the indigenous people and people with disabilities, religious freedom, rising literacy rate, increased budget allocation for social sectors, implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Cambodia’s endeavours and commitment in establishing National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) in line with the Paris Principles were also recognized. Some acknowledged the progress and achievements of Cambodia in advancing the roles of women in civil service, peace and security dealings, demining work and entrepreneurship and welcomed the amendments to the Law on Political Parties. Some noted the vibrancy and the large number of media outlets, civil society organizations and trade unions in Cambodia.



The other nine delegations taking part in the discussion with critical comments urged Cambodia to broaden civic and political space, including further respect for freedom of expression, media and peaceful assembly, and independence of judiciary. Concurrently, almost all of them welcomed Cambodia's ongoing cooperation with the United Nations human rights mechanisms and progress on economic, social and cultural rights, particularly increased budget allocation for social and education sector and health care. They also positively noted the efforts to strengthen social protection system and combating climate change.

During the debate, the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Cambodia to the United Nations in Geneva highlighted the flaws of the SR's report as follows:

- We regret that the report and benchmarks do not set the record straight on many fronts due to incomplete and unbalanced integration of factual and legal accounts of various bodies of the state provided. Such practice deviates from the well-established principles in the 'Code of Conduct' and 'Manual of Operations of the Special Procedure Mandate Holders,' resulting in erroneous grading and unfair assessment on civil and political fronts.
- The proposed benchmarks do not reflect our unfolding efforts and progress made on the ground on wide-ranging areas, including the environment surrounding the general elections, reinstatement of political rights of the opposition, legal and judiciary reforms and crackdown of human trafficking, just to name a few.

The Ambassador also challenged the SR on a number of other topics below:

- In the run-up to the communal and parliamentary elections in 2022 and 2023, civic and political space have been broadened. Among the convicts who engaged in instigating national insurgency, over a hundred of them have their political activity ban relinquished. They have formed and joined different political parties to compete in the recent elections. Around 30 convicts were pardoned and have their political right reinstated.
- The recent general elections were recorded with the high voter turnout of 84.59% to choose one of the 18 contesting political parties and their future leaders, whom they believe can continue leading the nation on the path of peace, stability and socio-economic development. The electoral process was also closely monitored by nearly ten thousand of national and international independent observers who widely made assessment on the elections as free, fair and peaceful. The power transfers were also followed strictly a rigorous democratic process at the party, electoral and parliamentary levels.
- The absence of two political parties from the electoral process due to their non-compliance with the law does not negate the liberal, pluralistic and democratic nature of the Kingdom. To maintain a vibrant and constructive environment for all political parties that aspire to participate with the newly-

established government by providing advice and consultations, the Supreme Consultative Council has been officially reinstated. 30 political parties have applied for membership of the Council.

- Civic and political space are also indisputably free and open, attested by the constructive vibrant roles of over 6,000 NGOs and the robust presence of nearly 2,000 digital and traditional media outlets operating without censorship. Furthermore, the government remains committed to holding the bi-annual partnership dialogue with the NGOs to further address their concerns, including the ongoing amendments of the Law on Associations and NGOs.
- Judicial independence is well guaranteed by our Constitution. There is no shortage of instances that ruling party supporters and members have been punished by the same courts. The affiliation with a political party, trade union or any purported rights organization does not entitle a person to break the law with impunity.

The Permanent Representative concluded his remarks by reaffirming steadfast commitment of Cambodia as a country ratifying almost all core international human rights instruments, in promoting and protecting human rights under the Constitution and within the rule of law, advancing sustainable development, upholding our hard-won peace, and pursuing our irreversible democratic journey with pluralism. ENDS

