

Remarks by H.E. PRAK Sokhonn
Deputy Prime Minister
Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
On the Occasion of the 30th Anniversary of the Paris Peace Agreements
Peace Palace, 23 October 2021

- *His Excellency Mikami Masahiro, Ambassador of Japan,*
 - *Excellencies, Esteemed Members of the Senate, the National Assembly and the Royal Government of Cambodia,*
 - *Ambassadors, Representatives, and Members of the Diplomatic Corps,*
 - *Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,*
1. Today, we gather here to celebrate a significant event in Cambodia's history, that of the 30th Anniversary of the Agreements on the Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict, or commonly referred to as the "**Paris Peace Agreements**".
 2. At the outset, I would like to express my profound gratitude toward **Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen**, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, for granting me the honour to deliver this commemoration address on behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia. I also wish to express my sincere thanks to all Your Excellencies, esteemed Members of the Senate, the National Assembly and the Royal Government, to Ambassadors and Representatives of Embassies to the Kingdom of Cambodia, as well as to all distinguished guests present here today.
 3. I thank **H.E. Retno Marsudi**, Foreign Minister of Indonesia, and **H.E. Jean-Yves Le Drian**, Foreign Minister of France, for their congratulatory messages depicting the key roles of the two countries as Co-Chairs of the Paris Conference leading to these historical agreements.

4. My sincere thanks also go to **H.E. Mikami Masahiro**, Ambassador of Japan to Cambodia, for his meaningful remarks delivered on behalf of the diplomatic corps and other signatories of the Paris Peace Agreements.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

5. Allow me to start with a historical truth: The Paris Agreements were made possible thanks to the wisdom, will and genuine patriotism of our two great statesmen: **His Majesty Preah Bat Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk “Preah Borom Ratanak Kaudh”** and **Samdech Techo Prime Minister of Cambodia**.
6. Shortly after assuming the role as Prime Minister, **Samdech Hun Sen** proclaimed that military means would not resolve the conflict in Cambodia; and that peace could only be achieved through negotiations and political settlements amongst Khmers. In this spirit, **Samdech Techo** put forth in October 1987 a five-point declaration to resolve the Cambodian issue as follows: (1) Organise a Sihanouk-Hun Sen meeting; (2) Complete withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia, along with the cessation of all aid and support to the forces of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea; (3) Organize an election with international observers to form a coalition government that adheres to the principles of neutrality and non-alignment; (4) Negotiate with Thailand to establish a safe and peaceful border and arrange for the voluntary repatriation of refugees; and (5) Organize an international conference to ensure that the agreement would be reached, with the participation of both governments (Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea and the People’s Republic of Kampuchea), the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, Vietnam, India, and other countries. **Samdech Hun Sen** was the first to express his intention to meet with **Samdech Sihanouk**, with the abovementioned policy serving as the foundation for subsequent negotiations to pursue peace.
7. Their first meeting, also known as the “Sihanouk-Hun Sen meeting”, took place on 2 December 1987 in Fère-en-Tardenois, France, paving the way for further rounds of negotiations aimed at achieving a final political solution

through the signing of the “Agreements on the Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict”, which have turned 30 years today.

8. Indeed, many countries have extended support to Cambodia throughout these negotiation processes lasting almost 4 years, though some did more than others. France and Indonesia, in particular, have played crucial roles as Co-Chairs of the Paris Conference on Cambodia as many of our talks were hosted there. We shall also recall Australia’s initiative to temporarily place Cambodia under the supervision of the United Nations during the transition period, according to the “Red Book”. France and Japan for their part, while contributing to the peace agreements, have also extensively supported Cambodia’s reconstruction and development efforts. Likewise, our close neighbour, Thailand, has significantly aided the cause and supported the repatriation back home of more than 370,000 Cambodian refugees.
9. We are also grateful to other governments which have contributed based on their respective resources to bring an end to this conflict and rebuild our nation. We need to show gratitude and give justice to Vietnam whose voluntary forces helped liberate Cambodia from the Pol Pot genocidal regime. The complete withdrawal of their troops in 1989 also resolved the deadlock on negotiations concerning the Khmer Rouge’s future and the presence of foreign troops.
10. I take this special opportunity to recall a matter that was a fundamental element of the negotiation process that was the result of both the support by friendly countries, and more importantly the initiative and efforts of the Khmer ourselves to create the Supreme National Council (SNC) of Cambodia. During the second Sihanouk-Hun Sen meeting in Saint Germain-en-Laye in 1988, **Samdech Hun Sen** initiated the creation of a high-level national unification council, which was once again discussed at the Jakarta Informal Meeting I (JIM I), though no agreement was reached at that time. By March 1990, with the support of H.E. General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, the agreement to create the SNC was signed with just a title amendment from the “High-level National Unification Council” to the “Supreme National Council”. The official agreement

between the two parties – the State of Cambodia and the trilateral grouping – adopted the “6+6” or “6+2+2+2=12” formula and was signed in Tokyo, Japan, with the support of the host and H.E. Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, also present at that event. The composition of the SNC was however determined at the Meeting in Jakarta, Indonesia, while the first ever SNC meeting was held in the Embassy of the Kingdom of Cambodia in Bangkok, presided over by Dean Chao Sen Kosal, known as “Chhum”. This is an essential part for the negotiation process, which demonstrated Cambodian leaders’ will to secure peace for the nation no matter how challenging it could be.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

11. 30 years have now passed with enough time for us to think through and assess the lessons learnt from each of our historical phases.
12. **The Paris Agreements undoubtedly constituted a positive turning point in our history.** As a result, we were able to re-integrate ourselves into the international community and our then government, established by the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC)-sponsored election, reclaimed our seat at the UN, which was occupied by the representative of the Khmer Rouge for ten years.
13. The Cambodian people, albeit having escaped the Khmer Rouge regime, continued to suffer from the deprivation of their basic and fundamental rights, including the right to food, health care services, education, culture, development, life in peace, *inter alia*, due to the twelve-year economic sanctions. Nevertheless, the sanction finally ended.
14. The new constitution was then adopted incorporating all the principles stipulated in the Annex 5 of the Agreements on the Comprehensive Political Settlement of the Cambodia Conflict. The coronation of **His Majesty Preah Bat Norodom Sihanouk** took place, while the UNTAC mandate officially ended on 24 September 1993.
15. Despite many positive outcomes, **UNTAC left Cambodia with one principal objective unfulfilled: that of the failure to establish a complete peace in**

the country. After UNTAC departure, Cambodia remained divided into two occupation zones and under two governments. Cambodia fell into a “leopard-skin-like” situation, as described by **Samdech Techo**, with some areas controlled by the Khmer Rouge. Armed conflicts and insecurity continued to persist throughout the country as a result of the refusal of the Party of Democratic Kampuchea (PDK), one of the signatories, to comply with their obligations under the Paris Peace Agreements. The withdrawal of the PDK thereby fundamentally affected the “**comprehensive**” nature of these political settlements and have had adverse consequences on the objectives of these Agreements.

16. **Now, it is widely known that Samdech Hun Sen, was the only leader who, through his Win-Win Policy, brought about peace, national reconciliation and unity to Cambodia.** He put an end to the political and military movements of the Khmer Rouge who was responsible for the deaths of more than 2 million people and the massive destruction of the country’s social and physical infrastructure while they were in power. With the Win-Win policy, Cambodia finally secured peace and reconciliation, which lies at the heart of the Paris Agreements and which UNTAC failed to accomplish.
17. I also would like to explain another aspect of the Paris Peace Agreements. Along with the will to bring about peace to Cambodia and its people, there were plans to establish democracy in Cambodia as well; but it was a Western-style democracy that did not carefully take into account the special characteristics of the country, for instance, its recent historical trauma, its culture, its tradition and the conditions on the ground.
18. It is generally known that democracy does not materialize by itself nor does it appear out of thin air. It certainly cannot be imported or exported from one country to another, irrespective of the associated cost. Democracy is a value that we learn and gradually construct and strengthen. But unfortunately, democracy and human rights have rather been used, often times, as instruments by some major powers to pursue their own geopolitical agenda.

19. Here I wish to raise another issue surrounding the sovereignty of Cambodia. **It was never stated in the Paris Agreements that Cambodia, after the transition period, that is to say once the United Nations mandate ended, would remain under international supervision.** If there were commitments that would last beyond that juncture, they would be those that would bind Cambodia as a rightful member of the UN, like all other member states. Since, Cambodia became and maintained itself as a sovereign nation like other states in the international community.
20. Regrettably, despite the solid commitments from many parties of the “Agreement Concerning the Sovereignty, Independence, Territorial Integrity and Inviolability, Neutrality and National Unity of Cambodia” not to interfere, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatsoever, in our internal affairs, Cambodia continued to witness attempts at regime change through undemocratic approach.
21. At the 76th United Nations General Assembly in September, **Samdech Techo Prime Minister** raised that *"History has told us time and again that interference and, worse, military options to impose different systems of governance are not the solutions. Far from it, they have only led to many more deaths, human suffering and misery, and social and economic strife. Cambodia is the real-life example and has experienced the worst tragedy; and regrettably, we are now witnessing the repetition of the same policies. If the recent events in Afghanistan, and many more before it, are lessons to be learnt from, there is great merit to respect the wishes of each nation and their people's rights to self-determination.*
22. *Countries, large and small, differ in their history, culture, traditions, ways of life and political organization. They should not be hindered by the imposition of unilateral sanctions, embargoes or other coercive economic measures that violate international law and the very principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations."*

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests

23. According to the Report No. S/25289, adopted by the UN Security Council in 1993, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali concluded: "[...] as *signatories to the Paris Agreements, the Cambodian parties have the primary responsibility for their implementation and that the future stability and well-being of Cambodia depends on the Cambodian themselves.*" Therefore, by the end of the UN mandate, the implementation of the Paris Agreements became the sole responsibility of Cambodia.
24. In the spirit of national sovereignty, Cambodia has strengthened itself to take charge of its own destiny by overcoming adversities, obstacles, and political and economic challenges as well as clashes between ideologies and classes in order to collectively rebuild the nation. In contrast to flowery language in the Agreements and speeches, smiles and embraces, we acknowledged that it was not easy to learn to co-exist and work together after decades of confrontation and conflict. Although our differences had led to armed violence, the willpower of **Samdech Techo Hun Sen** towards national unity has ensured that all parties involved could manage to live and work together. For this reason, Cambodia has developed rapidly, with an average economic growth rate of 7% for roughly the past 20 years. Cambodia attained its status as a lower middle-income country in 2015. We have brought down the poverty rate to below 10% prior to the global health, economic and social crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our literacy rate has increased from 39% in 1991 to 88.5% in 2019, our number of tourists increased from 200,000 in 1995 to 6.6 million in 2019, and our exports of textiles, footwear and travel products rose from zero to over USD10 billion in 2019. In 1993, we barely had any electricity; yet by 2020, 97% of all villages nationwide had access to electricity. We have also built 15,000 km of concrete and asphalt roads, and 20 new bridges across the Mekong, Tonle Sap and Tonle Bassac rivers.
25. In the regional and international arena, Cambodia became a member of ASEAN in 1999, a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2004, and has thus far established diplomatic relations with 174 countries. Cambodia has been transformed from a country that once hosted the blue berets to a country contributing to peacekeeping missions in Africa, the

Middle East and Europe. Since 2006, Cambodia has deployed over 7,826 peacekeepers under the UN umbrella to 9 countries, namely Sudan, South Sudan, Chad, Cyprus, Mali, Central African Republic, Lebanon, Yemen and Syria.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests

26. 30 years after the Paris Peace Agreements, Cambodia has become a highly responsible actor in the international community with equal status, rights, and a government that is fully accountable to its citizens, particularly in shaping a future that is peaceful, stable, dignified and with continued development.
27. Cambodia has maintained its obligations under its Constitution to promote and uphold its core values and interests as reflected in its national and international policies. Cambodia will embrace and defend its independence, sovereignty, permanent neutrality, and territorial integrity, while being firmly committed to fulfilling all of its international duties, both in the region and the world at large.
28. In 2022, Cambodia will assume the role of ASEAN Chairmanship for the third time since we became the youngest member of this Association. This will take place in the context where our region continues to battle the multi-fold crises caused by the COVID-19 and strive to recover socio-economically in the aftermath of the pandemic. Simultaneously, we are dealing with tense geopolitical rivalries between major powers, with spillovers onto other fields including economy, trade, science, technology and ideology. In fact, our region continues to face other deep-rooted issues like the rising tension on the Korean Peninsula due to missile tests and military exercises, despite the restoration of the official channel of communication between the two Koreas. We have seen also some muscle flexing in the South China Sea, which have added pressure on the stability of this region and affected the negotiation of the Code of Conduct for the South China Sea (COC). The political-security crisis in Myanmar is also creating unprecedented difficulty both within ASEAN and between ASEAN and its dialogue partners. In this regard, as we commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the Paris Peace Agreements, we hope

that the lessons learnt in Cambodia in obtaining peace and national reconciliation could contribute to resolving the crisis in Myanmar, a full member of our own ASEAN family. Given its Chairmanship theme, Cambodia will appeal to all members of the ASEAN community to unite in addressing the many complex challenges that we face. We hope that, with the solidarity between ASEAN members and the support by external partners, Cambodia will be able to enhance and advance the ASEAN Community-building process, strengthen ASEAN centrality, preserve its important role in global trade, investment and supply chain through the timely implementation of the ASEAN Comprehensive Recovery Framework (ACRF) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP), among others.

29. Next month, Cambodia will co-chair the 13th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM13). If not for COVID-19, Cambodia would have been extremely busy with the preparation to host Leaders from 50 countries in Asia and Europe as well as the President and the Secretary-General of the two regional institutions. Leaders from the two continents will meet via videoconference to discuss a range of issues anchored around the chosen theme: "**Strengthening Multilateralism for Shared Growth.**" We hope that the ASEM13 will strengthen multilateralism, with the United Nations at its core, to enhance international solidarity in overcoming all challenges while promoting peace, sustainable development and shared prosperity for all.
30. Cambodia will endeavor to support the efforts and contribution by the international community in addressing issues related to climate change, terrorism, transnational crimes, and continue to contribute our troops to UN peacekeeping missions as a testament to our commitment to help build and maintain peace, and protect innocent civilians throughout the world.
31. The Royal Government of Cambodia will continue to uphold its responsibility toward our citizens by dedicating our efforts to protect their basic and fundamental rights, starting from the right to life and the right to healthcare amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. To put it simply, it is to save the lives of our citizens and creating a conducive environment for them to return to work, for our children and grandchildren to go back to school, and for our businesses to

resume as normal. To date, as a result of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign, 85.3% of the total population is vaccinated, of which 99.7% are 18 and over adults, while over 90% are children aged from 6 to 17. Moreover, the Royal Government has produced and launched a wide range of well thought through policies, strategies, and action plans in pursuit of prosperity for all Cambodians as we aspire to become an upper middle-income and high-income country by 2030 and 2050, respectively.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests

32. On Monday, with the approval by the Royal Government, the National Bank of Cambodia introduced a new 30 000-riel banknote, which was proposed since last year. The banknote reads "In Commemoration of the 30th Anniversary of the Paris Peace Agreements (1991-2021)" and features a portrait of **His Majesty the late King-Father, “Preah Borom Ratanak Kaudh” and Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei-Techo Hun Sen**, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia at the times of His Majesty's return to the Kingdom in 1991.
33. With the circulation of this banknote, the Royal Government of Cambodia, led by **Samdech Hun Sen**, the first and foremost architect of the Paris Agreements, reaffirmed the importance of the historic achievements of this nation and reminded all citizens of the importance of the Agreements and everyone involved in our joint endeavour towards peace and national unity.
34. On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia, I would like to once again express my gratitude to all countries that have made invaluable contributions to such historic turning point 30 years ago. My gratitude also extends to all other partner countries, and here I wish to mention China, our current most important trade partner, investor and donor, that have contributed to the persistent efforts of the Royal Government and the people to restore and develop the country over the past 30 years.
35. Despite being in the New Normal, Cambodia will remain an open country, which provides freedom and protection to all who live and enjoy in this society, respectful of the law and equal rights of all people. Cambodia, to the best of

our ability, will remain firmly committed to supporting and contributing to the attainment of global peace, security, stability and prosperity. Based on the principle of “Foster more friendship abroad based on the spirit of national independence”, Cambodia will continue to show that our country is small, but we have a big heart!

36. On this ending note, I warmly wish Excellencies and all distinguished national and international guests the four gems of Buddha’s blessing – longevity, nobility, health and strength – and to be safe from COVID-19.

Thank you
