

Cambodia New Vision

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Statement by H.E. Samdech HUN SEN Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia at the Meeting 9+1 with the ASEAN Heads of State and Government in Hanoi, on December 16, 1998

Speech on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Hotel Cambodiana, 10 Dec., 1998)



"..., I would like to express to you and the Host Country, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, my very high appreciation for the very warm welcome and the generous hospitality accorded to us during our stay in this beautiful and historic city of Hanoi as well as for the excellent arrangements made at the VIth ASEAN summit..., I was sincerely impressed by the most inspiring Opening Remark given by H.E.Mr. The President TRAN DUC LUONG. His statement, which has clearly laid out the vision for greater and closer cooperation among countries of Southeast Asia, is of great significance. I would like also to congratulate Your Excellency upon your election as Chairman of the Sixth ASEAN Summit. I am confident that under your able leadership and with your talent and experiences, this Summit will be in position to meet the many challenges in our changing world and be crowned with success.

Today, Southeast Asia and many countries in the world are facing a severe financial crisis that is affecting the political and economical development in each respective country. This Meeting reaffirms the utility for the Heads of State and of Government to remain in close contact with one another. It has turned out to be a necessary exercise to give a clear direction and the needed impetus for an effective and multidimensional regional cooperation in a cordial spirit of solidarity and equality so as to fulfil the vision of the Co-Founders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations-ASEAN, namely a united and prosperous Southeast Asia.

The Kingdom of Cambodia has on her part clearly understood the wisdom of the Co- Founders of the Association. Immediately after the formation of the Royal Government in

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Today we gather together to further develop our fight and safeguard of human rights which in the past 50 years has been translated from a universal declaration in Paris by people from all walks of life, races, tradition and culture, belief, into a life with dignity of humankind.

When we recall about the Human Rights Day, we should not leave aside the group of people who in the last 50 years have transformed human rights issue into a universal view for humankind.

We have even deeper gratitude for those ancestors, the Cambodian ones included, who have left with us in the past hundred years their views and literatures offering education on justice, equity, freedom, and concepts of struggle against the exploitation etc., all of which constitute what we call human rights.

According to the law of nature, we have seen clearly that once taking birth and once passing away, human being are placed in a state of equity, with no one is gaining or losing more than another.

In the space of one's life, however, the society explicitly show that there exist the powerful, the vulnerable, the rich, the poor, the exploiter, and the exploited..., a combination of which alter the human rights defined by nature.

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1993, Cambodia has shown her genuine interest to take part in the Association, first in her capacity as Special Guest in 1993 and 1994 and then as Observer. Since then, the Royal Government and all its institutions have deployed tremendous efforts to prepare the country for full membership in this prestigious club as we are indeed part of the Region to which we deeply feel we belong to. We have made all the given homework given by ASEAN. Therefore, we earnestly believe that we have thus fulfilled all the required conditions to meet a favorable consideration on the part of our nine sisters in the region. It is my sincere conviction that the conditions are now more favorable than ever to realize together the dream of our Fathers of a Southeast Asia Ten. These favorable conditions do exist in my country.

Firstly, the general election could be held on time on last 26 July with the participation of 39 political parties and a very large turn out of voters tantamount to 93.7% of the population. The general atmosphere was peaceful and festive. It is known to you, Mr. Chairman and all Distinguished Participants at the Meeting, that our election have been heralded as free, fair and credible by more than 700 international and 20,000 well trained local observers as well as by the international community. They were described as "a Miracle on the Mekong." On behalf of the Royal Government and of the people of Cambodia, I wish to extend my deep and heartfelt gratitude to all friendly countries, among them members countries of ASEAN, and International Organizations whose precious financial and technical assistance have enabled the success of the whole process.

Secondly, a renewed coalition Government between the two main winning parties, CPP and FUNCIN-

PEC, could be formed under the very High and wise guidance of His Majesty Preah Bat Samdech Preah NORODOM SIHANOUK. For the sake of national reconciliation and of the supreme interest of the Nation, the two parties signed a common political platform to strengthen political stability in respect of the will of the Cambodia electorate. Under such an Agreement, H.R.H. Samdech Krom Preah NORODOM Ranariddh has been elected last 25 November Chairman of the National Assembly whereas myself was elected as Prime Minister on last 30 November. It was agreed to form a Senate with Samdech Chea Sim as its President in line with democratic institutions in other countries. It is to be recalled that the concept of the Senate is not new in Cambodia, where it used to exist before 1970 known as the Council of the Kingdom. The creation of the Senate has been approved by His Majesty the King and will be established soon in conformity with our amended Constitution.

Thirdly, Cambodia has enough resources and potential to significantly contribute to the prosperity of the region. Despite domestic problems and the regional economic crisis, the Royal Government could maintain macro-economic stability. Last year, GDP growth rate reached 2% which is in line with world wide and regional trends. During the second half of 1997, the Riel depreciated only about 25% and remained in overall stable during the first half of 1998 to pick up again during the second half of the year. Tourism, construction and garment industry have witnessed renewed strong activities whereas rice production has turned out to be higher than expected thanks to favorable rains in October and November. Furthermore, the amount of approved FDI projects was not touched much by the regional crisis. The capital investment

in the first nine months of 1998 reached US\$ 800 Millions, about the same of 1997 level. We expect that the next CG Meeting scheduled for early 1999 will stimulate the flow of international aid and assistance into Cambodia.

The regional current crisis poses major challenges to all of us in the region. ASEAN has recognized that its economic goals will be best secured through: a renewed commitment to economic cooperation and market liberalization. Indeed, regional integration is more critical now to ASEAN development than ever. There is little doubt that the importance of initiatives such as AFTA, the ASEAN Investment Area and ASEAN Industrial Cooperation scheme will only increase in the future. For its part, Cambodia pledges to move forward with its market reforms and the establishment of a liberal and transparent economic and legal system. Despite the region's economic crisis, we will continue to build a non-discriminatory, open trade and investment regime.

Integration into ASEAN represents a top priority for Cambodia. It presents to us both opportunities and challenges, especially given the status of Cambodia as a country in transition. While we anticipate that our nation's long-term investment and growth will be strengthened by ASEAN integration, we recognize that there will be short-term costs. In the long run, Cambodia's success in participation in ASEAN economic initiatives will depend on our ability to build a stable, transparent environment for investment and on the energy and innovation of our people to take advantage of the opportunities offered. I have no doubt that both Cambodia and ASEAN will prosper in a partnership as a result. To promote growth, Cambodia will need ASEAN aid and assis-

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tance in a flexible way that has been its hallmark since its founding thirty-one year ago. Concerted action from all of us has been the key task and, I feel ASEAN can play a pivotal role in addressing problems facing our region. ASEAN has been regarded as a pragmatic, progressive and successful organization that has demonstrated effective and equally innovative approaches in international relations. The RGC has always identified ASEAN as the vehicle that would secure peace, harmony and security necessary for steady recovery and cooperation development in all fields. For this reason, Cambodia remains committed to its declared intention of being a credible and active Member of ASEAN and intends to make energetic positive contributions to ASEAN progress towards the realization of ASEAN Vision 2020.

Though Cambodia is not yet a Member of ASEAN, in my capacity as the Head of Government of Kingdom of Cambodia, I pledge to strengthen and develop good relations and active cooperation in all fields with all countries in the world, especially with our sister countries in the region. All conflict issues should be settled through negotiations based on principle of equality and other principles stipulated in the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia of 1976. Cambodia will be Member of ASEAN the day the Association so decides. Cambodia will do her utmost to contribute positively to the cause of peace, stability, cooperation, development, friendship and prosperity in Southeast Asia.

Once again, I cannot close my remarks without thanking all the eminent Heads of State and Government attending this important meeting for their understanding and continued support for Cambodia and her people. ■

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Many people sacrificed their lives, and they deserve high respects from all of us, for the course of safeguarding human rights. Cambodia, having gone through a period of darkness, is quite accustomed to those tastes and used to fight absolutely to liberate themselves from such an inhumane living condition.

In the passage that I have just read we have to bring to mind also the rights which have continuously been neglected, to continue to realize justice for everyone while preventing people from rights abuses.

Human rights are not a sort of culture for any particular group or countries to be exported or imported from one to another at all. Human rights insinuate in all cultures of the countries in the world and have become a common culture for all nations. Let me stress here that no one would want to live without a value of being a human-kind. When people are deprived of human rights, they also are deprived of the value given by the nature.

Therefore, the struggle to safeguard, and to protect the human rights from abuses is the task for each one of us, and for every of us. I do not believe in the distinction that human rights is for this or that particular person or that it should exist for a particular time. While we are striving to liberate our country from poverty, it is also the time for human rights requirement. We develop democracy because we need to protect the human rights. We introduce reforms because we want to better enhance human rights. Therefore, we are in need of human rights and we are struggling until our goal is reached i.e. no one is suffering from famines, illiteracy, violation by power, racism etc. Human rights will be a satisfaction when humankind cease to abhor one another, but are accustomed to expressing love, and encourage-

ment to one another for the sake of development. To configure the human rights concept to be as attached to every one as their breaths in and out, is a task of the Government. It is in this reason, prior to the establishment of the new Government, we have foreseen already that all determinations and activities have strongly inspired in the mind, and I have scored a number of successes including the incorporation of the human rights issue into the Government platform.

Of course, we are sitting in Phnom Penh, but pacification took place in last conflicting areas in the country. While fighting against forest annihilation becomes a strong measure, along with other quiet changes at the time when the new Government is taking place, a forceful reform will continue to take the lead in bringing Cambodian society towards everything deemed necessary for human rights. I strongly believe that members of the RGC will be making their efforts to be in the same pace with me in the reform process.

I hope that the anniversary of the Human Rights Day this year will provide new result for the human rights and the contribution of Cambodia with the international community for human rights. December 10 should be with everyone of us every day, every time, and every place, especially the vulnerable who are certainly in demand of the most protection from the RGC and the Law. That is the most striking vein in the mind of the economy-oriented Government that I am to lead.

May I convey the best wishes of the RGC and of my own to every one here, and be the force and concept of human rights trickle down into the vein of our society. ■

Interview Granted by Samdech Hun Sen to VTV on December 15, 1998

My visit to the Neighboring Vietnam... Strengthening Relations, and Joining the Asean Sixth Summit

“... My visit paid to Vietnam at the moment is the first one following the formation of the Royal Government. It is a reflection of the priority in the foreign policy of the Royal Government of Cambodia in the relationship with neighboring countries, including Vietnam.

“... My current visit in Vietnam is of two major significance: firstly, to strengthen the relations between Cambodia and Vietnam; secondly, Vietnam is the host country of the ASEAN summit, and Cambodia is an observer of the Association, with the hope of being admitted during the Hanoi summit. Therefore, it is a visit of great importance...

Cambodia's Membership to ASEAN... A Question of Timing

“... Today, I have several contacts with Heads of State, Prime Ministers, and King from ASEAN countries...

“... As everyone knows, Cambodia together with Laos and Burma were scheduled to join ASEAN officially in 1997, however it is due to internal difficulties, Cambodia's membership is postponed until now... During the talks, all countries support Cambodia's entry into ASEAN, there remains only the issue of timing...

“... This evening, the Heads of State, and Prime Ministers of ASEAN will discuss the final decision that Cambodia would be admitted in Hanoi or otherwise...

“... No countries oppose the Cam-

bodia's membership and entry into ASEAN. The issue in point is timing, being admitted in Hanoi or in other places...

Pleased and Proud of the Development of the Two Countries' Relationship

“... During the talks with Prime Minister Phan Van Khai, there are many an issue to be solved. I would like to say that I am very pleased and proud to see that the relations between the two countries are developing more and more, especially the relations in the fields of economic and social development, water transport and tourism, education and training, and agriculture...

“... As regards the border relations, the two sides will cooperate to safeguard order and security... and the Vietnamese side has agreed that water will be drawn from Vietnam to Cambodia for the sake of the Cambodia farmers, and the high-yielding rice seeds created by Vietnam will be provided to Cambodia...

“... During the past years, Vietnam has provided the training to 50 Cambodian students in a year, now I proposed to Prime Minister Phan Van Khai that the Agreement be prolonged for another 5 years, and the number of student be increased to 100, and the Prime Minister has fully agreed and added that if Cambodia wanted to increase the number to more than 100, it is all right...

“... I am very pleased and proud that the two sides have paid due attention to the development of the two countries' relationship...

“... I would like to recall some historical background... The bad elements always link the Cambodia

Government with Vietnam. They not only oppose the CPP and me, but also Samdech Norodom Sihanouk, in 1970, by accusing the then Samdech Sihanouk to be pro-Vietnam, and imposing a death sentence on Him...

“... The Pol Pot clique slaughtered 3 million Cambodian people also by accusing the victims as pro-Vietnam...It is not strange... It is only the reason of the bad...

“... At present, King Norodom Sihanouk, previously accused of being pro-Vietnam and imposed with a death sentence, is the King of Cambodia. As for me, they call me a Vietnamese puppet, now I am the official Prime Minister of Cambodia, which is recognized in the word over...

“... Such are the statements of the bad, the reactionary, but for our part we have to do everything possible to strengthen the relations (of the two countries)..., in the next one hundred, one thousand, one million years, Vietnam still stay where it is, and so does Cambodia... there is no other choice for Cambodia and Vietnam but to make every effort to build good relations, for the sake of national development, on the basis of respect of independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity of each country and mutual benefits.

I would like to say that on this issue, the bad elements resort to the incitement on Vietnam issue not only aimed at me personally, calling me and the CPP the Vietnam puppet, but also the King of Cambodia being called the same...

“... It is the reason of the bad...But it is our common sense to do our best to develop better relationship between Cambodia and Vietnam. ■