



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
NATION RELIGION KING

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION


Department of Information

**Statement of the Spokesperson
of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation**

1. It is with deep regrets to learn about a recent passage of a purported "Cambodia Democracy Act of 2019" by the House of Representatives of the United States.
2. The Spokesperson of the Ministry is utterly disappointed over the bill's content, and emphatically dismisses its groundless accusations against the Cambodian government based on twisted, selective and out-of-date information and driven by political motivation and double standards. In this regard, the Spokesperson of the Ministry is obliged to offer clarifications as follows:
 - The bill begins with a charge that **Samdech Techo Hun Sen** is the longest-serving leader in Southeast Asia. Such a leadership is not unprecedented in other countries with a parliamentary political system across the regions. Neither the Constitution nor relevant laws of the Kingdom of Cambodia sets a political term limit of a Prime Minister as long as his party wins a majority support of the voters, who freely exercise their political rights in regular elections that are monitored by local and foreign observers. Therefore, such a re-election is far from being undemocratic, let alone be an offense.
 - The refusal to recognize the legitimacy of the past elections in Cambodia is a total contempt for the Cambodian voters' will and a denial of the facts. The first election in 1993 was brokered and organized by the United Nations. The 1998 election was viewed by the chief of US observers' team as "a miracle on the Mekong". The 2013 election was regarded as very free and fair with the opposition winning 26 seats and the ruling party losing 23 seats. The US Embassy in Phnom Penh called on all political parties to accept the results of the communal voting of 2017, describing it as orderly and peaceful and an important milestone in Cambodia's continued democratic development. The 2018 election was peaceful, orderly, free and fair with a high turnout of 83.02%, despite an outlawed group's call for an electoral boycott. This figure attests not only to the population's desire to see the

- continuity in the country's sustained path to peace, stability, democracy and rule of law but as much to their renewed confidence in the leadership of the ruling party in its efforts to achieve these goals.
- The arrest of Mr. Kem Sokha, the former President of the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), and the dissolution of his party by the Supreme Court were made in full compliance with applicable laws of a sovereign country in the spirit of maintaining peace and stability and safeguarding Cambodia's sovereignty and independence. He was charged for the crime of foreign conspiracy punishable under the Cambodian Criminal Code (Article 443).
- The bill attributes flaws in the Law on Association and NGOs (LANGO) for provisions that practically exist in most Western countries to guarantee their transparency and accountability. In fact, the drafting of LANGO has taken into account the best practices in the NGO Laws of the so-called matured democracies, including the US (New York and California States). Its substance is also in line with Article 42 of Cambodia's Constitution, Article 20 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, and Article 22 of International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The National Democratic Institute failed to comply with the provisions of Article 34 of the LANGO.
- The bill criticizes about the purported restriction of press freedom, which is far from the truth. The mere fact was that a handful of newspaper and media outlets had chosen on their own free will to stop their operation when confronted with fiscal obligations and violations of the Cambodian Press Law. Cambodia promotes vigorously the freedom of press and expression on the basis of the rule of law as attested by a thriving media environment of more than 1,000 registered printed, online, TV and radio media organizations, many of which are critical of the government. Moreover, with more than 13.6 million mobile internet connections in 2018, the Cambodian people have enjoyed unlimited, fast and uncensored access to news, including Radio Free Asia, Voice of America and The Cambodia Daily, as well as other personal online exchanges on various social media platforms.
- Those personalities tabling the bill seem to ignore the plain facts that the Cambodian government has approved, at the request of the US Embassy in Phnom Penh, a 12-month entry visa into Cambodia of the US Peace Corps Volunteers and the registration of the VOA's representative office in Cambodia in January and May 2019 respectively. These two instances, among others, prove that the bill has relied upon out-of-date information.



- It is with hypocrisy that the bill makes no single reference to dangerous populist rhetoric of certain opposition elements in Cambodia whose approach is to throw indiscriminate insults and slanders, to incite racial hatred and xenophobia, to provoke ultra-nationalism, to call on military rebellion against the government, and to sabotage a democratic election, all of which are well deplored in all democratic societies. Fair and objective evaluation of political freedom and human rights shall not lose sight of the nature of an unhealthy opposition. Moreover, the US reactions to Cambodia's recent political development do not appear to be about democratic values, considering its different treatments towards various countries on the question of democracy and respect for human rights.
3. The bill's substance is even more disturbing when public figures of a sovereign state have become the subject of punitive measures of another state based on unsubstantiated allegations. This constitutes a flagrant violation of international principles of sovereignty, equality and non-interference in domestic affairs as set forth in Article 2 of the UN Charter.
 4. The Spokesperson of the Ministry considers the above-said moves as running counter to the ongoing efforts of the two countries in improving across-the-board their partnership on the basis of shared interests and mutual respect. Despite unjust pressures and unilateral sanctions from the other side, the Cambodian government has embraced a positive good faith approach to continuing cooperation with the US on wide-ranging fronts, namely the "golden-standard" humanitarian mission of MIA/POW, the active repatriation program, the reactivation of military dialogues, the support for Peace Corps volunteers, and the active joint fight against non-traditional security challenges (terrorism, trafficking, just to name a few).
 5. The Spokesperson of the Ministry reiterates Cambodia's unwavering commitment to pursuing a liberal multi-party democracy and upholding the rule of law and respect for fundamental freedoms in conformity with Cambodia's Constitution. Furthermore, the Spokesperson of the Ministry urges all foreign legislative bodies to maintain their impartiality and to refrain from any unnecessary moves that are disrespectful to the sovereignty and the internal affairs of Cambodia. 

Phnom Penh, 16 July 2019.

