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PM Hun Sen seeks ways for Cambodia to survive the impacts of global economic crisis

Samdech Prime Minister Hun Sen said that he would like to seek for effective responses to the current financial crisis to protect and support the poor and vulnerable people, especially those losing jobs due to the plummet in volume of garment exports, manufacturing, construction, and tourism, and those returning home due to the loss of their overseas jobs in neighboring countries.

He mentioned that the Royal Government always pays attention to the poor families in the low-income areas, the small and medium enterprises, and the unemployed and part-time employed people who lose the opportunity owing to economic recession, including those young people who participated in labor market susceptible to the economic shocks

Samdech Techo HUN SEN also pointed out that “We are willing and firmly committed to assure that our responses to the crisis are suitable for the demand through sustainable economic activities and the opportunity of getting jobs and maintaining daily livelihood, the establishment of social security system to save and help the vulnerable people and groups, and through the mechanism of

providing urgent food relief and social benefits,” and “Global and regional economic slump has not emerged from Cambodia; it is an external factor which is out of Cambodia’s control, however; it is affecting us,”

Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejects US State Department’s report

On 13 March 2009, the spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation issued a statement rejecting the report of the US State Department related to human rights practices in Cambodia.

The full statement reads as follows:

“The ‘2008 Country Report on Human Rights Practices “on Cambodia” issued by the US State Department seems to be a routine that has nothing to do with human rights reality in Cambodia, and appears to be almost a carbon copy of the reports of the previous years with a few cosmetic changes here and there.

The report contains a number of unsubstantiated assertions which appear to be relied on misleading information supplied by certain organizations, which are monitored and financially supported by certain foreign countries.

In this connection, the spokesman of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation wishes to make clarifications on some issues raised in the report as follows:

First, it is very normal in democratic countries that political party which wins landslide victory in democratic elections has to lead the country; and there is nothing unusual about such democratic practice everywhere in the world.

Second, there is simply never 'extrajudicial killing' by security forces in Cambodia as mentioned in the report. This is only vulgar lie.

Third, with regard to the freedom of speech and press in Cambodia, one only needs to read and see how the ubiquitous opposition newspapers attack the Royal Government of Cambodia. Even the newspapers written in foreign languages, financed and managed by foreigners do not have the slightest reservation or hesitation in criticizing the Royal Government of Cambodia.

Fourth, for the so-called 'unlawful forced eviction', one must ponder whether there is any country in the world which allows squatters to takeover possession of or occupy permanently private properties or public areas such as public gardens, sidewalk and streets. Nonetheless, in the recent cases in Cambodia, the owners of the occupied private properties were always obligated to negotiate with the squatters in order to make appropriate resettlement arrangement. At the same time, notice had always been given well in advance in order to facilitate a smooth process of resettlement. For instance, as reported by the Phnom Penh Post newspaper on 11 March 2009, an overwhelming majority of families from the Dey Kraham community has accepted housing at a relocation site. Furthermore, the RGC has put in place a 'Social Land Concession Policy', providing poor and

landless people with access to plots of land which they can now own. Presently, approximately 4,000 hectares of land in Kratie province and 870 hectares in Kampong Cham province have been registered as state private land and allocated to the landless poor for housing and family farming. At the same time, around 10,118 hectares of land in Kampong Thom province have been proposed for the same purpose. The implementation of this policy will be expanded all over the country, in order to improve the livelihood of the poor and alleviate poverty reduction as set out in the Rectangular Strategy of the Royal Government of Cambodia.

Finally, if enforcing rules to maintain public order is construed as human rights violation, then what does one have to say in terms of human rights respect on the condition in the secret prisons of a certain country where torture of prisoners is practiced as reported in the media such as the Nation on 4 and 10 March 2009 and the Bangkok Post on 4 March 2009?"

UN Governing bodies visit Cambodia



On 11 March 2009, the delegation of the UN's Executive Boards highly praised and valued the efforts made in the past recent years by the Royal Government of Cambodia in its national development and pledge to continue to support the existing projects though the world is facing the global financial crisis.

The delegation includes representatives of the United Nations Development

Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Funds (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Food Programme (WFP) and the purpose of the visit is to supervise the implementation of their supported projects in the country and look at ways UN agencies can assist the Royal Government of Cambodia to mitigate the impacts of the global economic crisis on the poorest and most vulnerable in Cambodia.

Mr. Douglas Broderich who is also Columbian Ambassador to the United Nations said he had learned a lot about Cambodia, including the richness of its national resources. He observed that the domains supported by the four agencies have made a remarkable progress.

H.E. Hor Namhong, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation expressed his warm welcome to the visit made by the delegation and said Cambodia is a special country for it has the genocidal regime which ruled the country from 1975 to 1979 and destroyed the national economy to ashes. After the country's liberation in 1979, the Cambodian people rebuilt the country from zero.

UNESCO delegation visits Preah Vihear Temple



The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has pledged its great effort for conserving, safeguarding and developing Preah Vihear Temple as the World Heritage Site although areas around the temple are now being invaded by Thai soldiers.

A UNESCO delegation including archeologists and a UNESCO general secretary, accompanied by Secretary of State Chuch Phoeurn of the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, and General Director of the National Authority of Preah Vihear Temple Hang Soth, paid a recent visit to Preah Vihear Temple.

The United Nations will make an activity to promote the cooperation between Cambodia and UNESCO on finance and technique. The UNESCO delegation continued visiting the temple till late March in order to continue its work involving the conservation of the World Heritage Site.

MFA-IC: Fraudulent Websites Provides Wrong Information about Cambodia

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia has announced that there are few fraudulent websites providing wrong information about Cambodia Visa Online (e-Visa) and some offering Online Visa Service.

These fraudulent websites are as

www.cambodiaonarrival.com,

www.Cambodiaevisa.com, and

www.welovecambodia.com

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation would like to inform the users of e-Visa that Ministry's website www.mfaic.gov.kh is the ONLY

one authorized website for issuing of e-Visas for travel to the Kingdom of Cambodia.

They can reach our e-Visa service by just typing in the URL address www.mfaic.gov.kh or <http://evisa.mfaic.gov.kh> and please do not click on any link or popup that will appear illegally, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation welcomes visitors to the Kingdom of Cambodia to use the convenience of our e-Visa services that enable you to participate in the E-Government initiative.”

Cambodia launches \$US 11 millions project to fight bird flu

On 17 March 2009, the Royal Government of Cambodia launched an emergency project of 11 million U.S. dollars for avian and human influenza control and preparedness.

According to the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM), the project will be funded by the International Development Association (IDA) with 6 million U.S. dollars, the Japanese government with 3 million U.S. dollars and the European Union with 2 million U.S. dollars.

The U.S. does not interfere in Cambodia-Thailand border dispute

A U.S. high-ranking official has affirmed that his country would not interfere in the Cambodia-Thailand border dispute.

On 17 March 2007, Mr. Stephen Blake, director of the Mainland Southeast Asia Bureau Office of the US Department of State in a lecture at the International Relations Institute of Cambodia on “Southeast Asia Politics and US policy in the region said the U.S. has never intervened in the border issues between the two neighboring countries,

The U.S. is instead encouraging both sides to solve their conflict peacefully.

Cambodia-Denmark holds cooperation talks

On 17 March 2009 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia and Denmark held a discussion on development cooperation.

The Cambodian side was led by H.E Keat Chhon, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister and the Danish side by Mr. Martin Bille Herman, head of the visiting Danish delegation, and Mr. Tom Berthel Hansen, representative of Danida Agency.

In the meeting, H.E. Keat Chhon, who is also first vice-president of the Cambodian Development Council (CDC), said that it is very important to further strengthen the development cooperation and mutual respects of both governments.

Denmark has assisted Cambodia in the fields of natural resource management, living standards improvement, human right and good governance as well as private sector development.

Cambodian court sentences Michigan man to 13 years on charges of sexual abuse

On 19 March 2009, a Michigan man was sentenced to 13 years in prison on charges of sexually abusing a 13 year old girl.

Jason Todd Bambauch, 40 years old also was ordered to pay 20 million riel (\$5,000) as compensation to the girl's family.

Bambauch, a designer whose hometown was not immediately known, was arrested last September. Police charged he had sexual relations with the girl for more

than a year, paying her \$100 a month for her school fees as well as other money.

Bambauch's lawyer, Chap Keo, said his client never had sex with the girl and that her parents promised that he could marry her when she turned 18. The lawyer said Bambauch would appeal the verdict.

Japanese assistance to support ECCC

The Japanese government has decided to contribute US\$200,000 to finance the Cambodian share of the trial budget as part of the Project to Enhance Judicial Process of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC).

This contribution will be used to cover the shortfall of the Cambodian side regarding the ECCC operation cost.

Japan places a great emphasis on the progress of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, as it believes that this process will promote peace, democracy, the rule of law and good governance in Cambodia. Japan has been making active diplomatic efforts to realize and support the Khmer Rouge Tribunal.

Japan strongly hopes that these trials, which will render justice to the serious crimes perpetrated under the former Khmer Rouge regime, will be carried out properly and promptly without delay, as all the detained leaders of the former regime are aged persons.

Vietnamese top list of foreign tourist arrivals in Cambodia

Vietnamese people have surpassed South Koreans to top the list of foreign tourist arrivals in Cambodia in the past months of 2009.

In January, the Kingdom received 22,875 visitors from Vietnam and 22,524 from South Korea.

Meanwhile, the number of South Korean tourists fell by some 30 percent in the past months of 2009 over the same period last year, a direct reflection of the deep percussion of the global financial crisis in the country.

New irrigation network put into use

On 20 March 2009, under the presidency of Prime Minister Techo Hun Sen, a newly constructed Charoeuk irrigation network located in Kandieng district of Pursat province was put into use.



The irrigation network has 102 meter long and 10 sluice gates, with a total construction cost of more than US\$3 million, and about 3,440 families of five communes of Kandieng district benefit from Charoeuk irrigation network.

Within the last ten years, Cambodia has rehabilitated and constructed irrigation facilities for about 44 percent of the total 2,547,000 hectares of its agricultural land.

Cambodian PM rejects UK report of political unrest

On 23 March 2009, Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen rejected a UK report that the kingdom is among the top 5 countries at high risk of political instability amid the global economic climate.

"We have political stability and live in peace now, but they still labeled us

negatively," he told the opening ceremony of the annual work-review meeting of the Health Ministry, while mentioning the report issued by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), a British think tank.

"We know that their assessment had other purposes inside," he said, adding that EIU was just afraid of assessing other neighboring countries in turmoil.

Due to the current global financial crisis, the EIU report classified the risk of social upheaval and political unrest as high or very high in 95 countries, and ranked Cambodia the fourth in terms of such threat.

PM: Health is the top priority of Cambodian government

On 23 March 2009, Samdech Techo Prime Minister Hun Sen said that the health sector remains the top priority for the Cambodian government.



At the annual work-review meeting of the Ministry of Health, he mentioned that "Even though the global financial crisis is affecting Cambodia, in the name of Prime Minister, I would like to confirm that the budget law has already passed, therefore there is no budget cut,".

Cambodia send troop to two African nations

Cambodia will contribute troops to U.N. peacekeeping forces in Chad and the

Central African Republic, marking the poor Southeast Asian country's second military mission abroad in three years, the prime minister of Cambodia said Tuesday.

Government spokesman Khieu Kanharith said the Cambodian contingent would consist of noncombat forces and would perform only humanitarian duties.

In April 2006, Cambodia sent 135 soldiers to help U.N. peacekeepers clear mines in war-torn Sudan.

That same year, Hun Sen rejected U.S. requests for the deployment of Cambodian troops in Iraq. He said he questioned the overall legitimacy of the war in Iraq and that it remained too dangerous for Cambodians to operate there.

Cambodian Ambassador to UK sends letter to EIU

H. E. Hor Nambora, Cambodian Ambassador to the United Kingdom has sent a letter to the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) over its latest report saying that Cambodia is among the top five countries at high risk of political instability amid the global financial crisis.

The full text of the letter dated on 23 March 2009 reads as follows:

"On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia, I am writing to express my deep concern and disappointment with your latest report, 'Manning the Barricades' in which you highlight Cambodia as one of the countries most at risk of suffering serious social unrest as a consequence of the on-going global financial crisis.

Your scaremongering allegations are highly dangerous as they could be construed as actively inciting unrest.

They also happen to be a gross distortion and misrepresentation of Cambodia's true position and there can be no justification for these claims.

May I suggest that it is insulting for you to claim that Cambodia is more politically unstable than the war-torn nations of Iraq and Afghanistan. You also place Cambodia in the same "highest risk" category as deeply-troubled nations such as Zimbabwe, Chad, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Even when comparing my country with its immediate neighbors, it seems perverse of you to highlight Cambodia as being particularly vulnerable to instability and yet seemingly ignore well-publicized incidents of unrest in countries such as Myanmar, Thailand and Sri Lanka.

You also appear to have rather arrogantly dismissed any serious evidence which contradicts your own claims; not least that provided by the Prime Minister of Cambodia, Hun Sen, who only in February 2009 addressed a Business Round Table event co-hosted by your own organization.

You may recall that the Prime Minister used that occasion to record that Cambodia had just enjoyed a decade of blistering growth, more than doubling its per capita GDP between 1998 and 2007. He attributed this great success to political stability, forging deeper integration with the global trade and investment communities; and improved macro-economic management.

The Prime Minister also pledged that – even in the light of the global financial crisis – Cambodia would seek to maintain its economic growth at six per cent during 2009.

But you seem to have ignored this reassurance from the highest possible level; preferring to rely on your own

evidence which would appear to be both sketchy and unconvincing.

You also seem to have ignored Cambodia's sizeable oil and gas deposits, its wealth of natural resources as well as its growing reputation as 'must visit' tourist destination and as a centre of enterprise and investment.

The Royal Cambodian Government has recently initiated a series of measures in direct response to the global financial crisis including:

- Redoubling its efforts to aggressively promote and support wealth creation and improve the lives of its citizens as stipulated in Cambodia's Constitution.
- Increasing and diversifying the markets for Cambodian garments and other manufactured goods.
- Developing social safety nets to provide assistance to vulnerable groups and communities through mechanism such as food relief and cash transfers.
- Using Government expertise to broaden and diversify the agricultural sector of the economy; which in turn, should lead to stronger outside investment.
- Improving Cambodia's tourism infrastructure including the development of new resorts and other tourist sights.
- Further investment in energy generation to reduce energy costs borne by local communities.

In closing, perhaps I can direct your attention to the website of the independent research body, the Cambodian Development Resource Institute (www.cdri.org.kh) which – contrary to your own accusations – shows Cambodia as having demonstrated impressive growth over the last decade; with strong economic and social

development, greatly-increased government revenues, improved health, education and infrastructure; and a substantial reduction in poverty.

I strongly urge you to seriously reconsider the unwarranted assessment you have about Cambodia and issue a retraction.”

Draft Law on ban of chemical and nuclear weapons approved

A draft law on the Ban of Chemical, Nuclear, Biological and Radiation Weapons in the country was approved on 20 March 2009 by the Council of Ministers during its weekly plenary meeting under the presidency of Prime Minister Samdech Hun Sen.

“The draft law will help guarantee security, public orders, environment protection and welfare of our people, and also contribute to protecting security and peace in the region and in the whole world,” it added.

Cambodia-Britain holds annual cooperation talks

On 19 March 2009, there was a discussion between Cambodia and Britain on the annual bilateral development cooperation.

The meeting focused on three main works such as the country's program assessment and reexamination, consideration of the British International Development Agency's request on the future cooperation and reviewing the past implementation works.

The United Kingdom has assisted Cambodia with US\$224 million from 1992 to 2008 in the fields of poverty reduction, health, de-concentration and decentralization reforms.

Cambodia, four development partners launch US\$12 million program to expand trade



The Cambodian Ministry of Commerce, together with four development partners, here on Monday launched the Trade Development Support Program (TDSP) worth US\$12.6 million to assist Cambodia to expand its international trade.

“The program focuses on legal reforms, trade facilitation and product standards, and is designed to empower the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) to facilitate trade by improving regulations and internal processes.

The program is financed by the European Commission, the Danish International Aid Agency (Danida) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and will be administered by the World Bank.

Cambodia-US cooperation in searching for remains of American MIAs

A U.S. official has expressed the appreciation and thankfulness of the American people and government for the assistance and good cooperation of the Royal Government of Cambodia in further searching for the remains of the U.S. soldiers missing in action (MIA) during the Vietnam War.

Speaking at a working session in Phnom Penh on 23 March 2009 with Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Hor Namhong, Ms. Ann Mills Griffiths, executive director of the National League of POW/MIA Families, said she was convinced that the existing good cooperation would be continued in search of 55 American servicemen who are still missing and unaccounted for.

Cambodia to get US\$50 million for climate change project

On 23 March 2009, Development partners have promised to provide US\$50 million for a climate change project in Cambodia, said a senior official of the World Bank (WB).

“Cambodia is selected as a pilot country in the pilot program for climate change with global fund which can be contributed by a number of development partners,” as saying of the WB’s Country Manager.

The project will be managed by WB and the fund will be allocated in the next four years, with half as concession loan and half as grant aid.

.Japan’s Assistance for water supply and mine clearance projects in Cambodia

The government of Japan has decided to provide US\$35 million in ODA loan and 5.5 US\$ million grant aid to Cambodia to support two development projects.



The agreement was signed on 25 March 2009 by Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister H.E. Keat Chhon and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Resident Representative to Cambodia Mr. Kazuhizo Yoneda.

According to H.E. Keat Chhon, a loan of up to 3,513 million yen, approximately equivalent to US\$35 million, will complement the US\$20-million credit from the French Development Agency (AFD) and the US\$20-million budget of the Phnom Penh Water Supply Authority to build a new water supply factory in Phnom Penh’s suburb Niroth.

The interest rate is fixed at 0.01 percent per annum, with the repayment period of 40 years, including 10 years of grace period.

Moreover, a grant aid amounting 548,000,000 yen, approximately equivalent to US\$ 5.5 million, will be used to buy equipment for demining activities (Phase V).

Canada and England become Cambodia’s major markets

According to the report of the Ministry of Commerce, Canada and England have become major trade partners for Cambodia in 2008. Canada is the second largest market of Cambodian products after the United States while the United Kingdom took the third rank.

In 2008, Cambodia exported to the United States with US\$2,041 million, Canada US\$212 million and the United Kingdom US\$164 million. Cambodia’s total export volume in 2008 reached more than US\$3,356 million.

The major export products are textiles with US\$3,149 million, agro-industry US\$73 million and agro-food US\$16 million, etc.

United States launches US\$77 million health program

On 26 March 2009, the United States introduced a five-year \$77 million program that will cover the breadth of U.S. health activities in Cambodia and support the Royal Government of Cambodia's national health plan, Health Sector Plan 2008-2015.

The new health program will complement and expand existing U.S. program on HIV, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases, bringing expected U.S. support for Cambodia's health sector to total of US\$175 million over the next five years.

The program was designed against a backdrop of improving health indicators in Cambodia in recent years. HIV prevalence has been halved to less than 1% since 1998, while most child-health indicators have improved by about a third, among other successes. However, the maternal mortality rate remains one of the highest in Southeast Asia, while infectious diseases like tuberculosis continue to be a challenge.

Trials of Khmer Rouge Officials Begin

Monday on 30 March 2009, the first substantive sessions in the trials of former Khmer Rouge officials began, 30 years after the end of the notorious communist regime that left some 1.7 million Cambodians dead.



In the Court, the first defendant in the tribunal, Kaing Guek Eav, 66, identifies himself with his name and various aliases, and giving the names of his wives and children.



Widely known as Duch (pronounced doik), he has been charged with crimes against humanity, war crimes and various Cambodian crimes including murder. He was the commander at S-21, the main prison and torture house during the Khmer Rouge regime from 1975-79.

More than 14,000 people died at the prison, also know as Tuol Sleng. It is now a museum.

The Duch trial is expected to be held four days a week and could last four months. He has previously admitted to journalists that the charges against him are correct.

Senior UN Delegation appreciates government's efforts on combating HIV/AIDS and human trafficking

At the meeting on 27 March 2009, Dr. JVR Prasada Rao, UNFPA Director for the Asia Pacific, and Mr. Steve Kraus, New York-based UNFPA HIV/AIDS Branch Chief, with Deputy Prime Minister Sok An, Minister in charge of the Council of Ministers' Office, well acknowledged the efforts of the Royal Government of Cambodia in successfully fighting against HIV/AIDS and women and child trafficking.