

# Cambodia New Vision

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## Address of Samdech HUN SEN to the United Nations General Assembly's Millennium Summit (NEW YORK, 8 SEPTEMBER 2000)



**Samdech Prime Minister Hun Sen addresses flood victims during his donations- distributing tour in Chhloung District, Kratie Province on Sept. 22, 2000**

Mr. President,  
Mr. Secretary-General,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honor for me to address this august Millennium Summit. I bring to you all greetings and good wishes from **His Majesty Norodom Sihanouk**, King of Cambodia, and the people and the Royal Government of Cambodia.

As you all well know, Cambodia was at the peak of splendor and glory at the beginning of the past millennium. It was using the then modern technology in architecture, agriculture and urban planning and maintenance. It had been reduced to a feeble image of its earlier glory in the last few decades of the cen-

ture due to civil war and unrest fuelled by internal division and self-serving external forces. But, thankfully, and in a large measure due to the determination of its people and their leaders, and with advice and substantial support from all friendly countries, we are fully back on track as a united, peaceful, democratic and forward looking nation.

Now I am very proud to announce that Cambodia in one integrated, self-contained territory under one government, without rebels or separatists and without internal strife or conflict for the first time in our history in many decades. The black chapter of strife, violence, turbulence and turmoil is finally closed. The last remnants of the

Khmer Rouge have either surrendered or captured and are in custody pending the trial for their crimes of genocide. We are firmly resolved to do whatever is needed to provide a trial of those responsible for genocidal crimes in the past. Indeed, we will do so, balancing as rigorously as possible the need for retribution and to finally put behind us the dark chapter of our national history with the paramount need for continued national reconciliation and the safeguard of the hard gained peace. In this important process, we must strongly adhere to the principle of the respect for national sovereignty. Furthermore, the trial formula that the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has agreed with the UN Secretary General on the establishment of an extraordinary chamber in the Cambodian court is a special arrangement to have a national tribunal with the participation of foreign judges. This constitutes a special case in the history of tribunals in the world. We are back on the international scene and have become a proud member of ASEAN. We have opened a new chapter of the new millennium with hope, optimism and strong determination to achieve whatever we can do with other nations to increase the welfare of the people of Cambodia and other countries in the world.

Nine months earlier the world celebrated with pumps and circumstances the passing of the old mil-

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lennium and welcomed the new one. 1 January, 2000 may be just another day or date in mankind's unceasing continuum of life. Judging however from what we had seen during the grandiose celebration by all countries in the world, the date is a unique landmark in the modern and Christian calendar. This is the testimony to the fact that globalization has become an integral part of our societies and our lives.

Similar to the 1 January, 2000, this summit is another historic day at the dawn of the new millennium when the world leaders have gathered together reflect over the past and plan the future of our world. Cambodia is indeed a small nation, still at the lower end of the global spectrum characterized by wealth and prosperity at one end and abject poverty and deprivation at the other. As a nation, we however also have a vision for our future. I shall therefore endeavor to take some of your time to voice the aspirations, needs and concerns from our perspective and to table some issues at this assembly.

As I stated from this podium during last year's UN General Assembly session, humanity has witnessed unimaginable, enormous and immeasurable changes and progress in the last one thousand years. Progress in science and technology have helped us conquer deadly diseases and to extend and enhance human life and condition. We have vastly increased our understanding of our planet and our universe. We have shortened distances and improved communications to make our earth a truly global village. Much of our technological progress and many notable achievements, sometimes exceeding our expectations and imagination, have indeed occurred in the last mere hundred years. And the more we advance the more possibilities arise for achievement.

Yet, our achievements also mask many continuing failings and seem

to expose more future dangers. On a planet level, we have vastly denuded our natural resources, mining and using non-renewable resources at a rapid rate, destroying our forests, depleting our oceans, polluting essentials for our very survival like air and water and making extinct rare species, both fauna and flora, value of whose contributions to balance and harmony in nature we are yet to understand. We have acquired weapons of awesome power to destroy all that we have accomplished and built. Our achievements in technological revolution during the last century have far bypassed the morality of our human beings. We have committed our efforts and tremendous resources, intellectual, physical and financial, to attaining impressive progress in science and technology. Yet, we are not sure that these achievements are fully under our control and will serve rather than destroy humanity.

The biggest concerns in the new millennium are that the technological and scientific revolution during the last millennium focused on the production of all kinds of modern weapons of mass destruction. As a result, the world has amassed huge amount of weapon production factories and large stocks of state-of-the-art weapons in various countries. At the same time, the modernization of the armed forces, characterized by the arm race, still continues, whereas conflicts have spread out in all corners of the world. The century that ends has witnessed two great wars unleashed by intolerance and bigotry causing more divisions in their wake. Millions of lives are lost, social tensions and hatred abound, caused by religious and other differences. As a country used to be destroyed by wars, we support strongly all initiatives leading to the prevention of the proliferation of small arms, the ban on the test, development, production and transfer of technology of all kinds of weapons, and advocate large-scaled destruction of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.

Our numbers have multiplied manifold with frontiers of science yet to find ways to feed the future billions and stretching the sustenance capacity of mother earth. The aging of our people will pose immense challenges on future generations where fewer productive people have to cater to the needs of larger numbers of dependents, young and old alike. Human beings are facing many kinds of diseases, both old and new, such as HIV/AIDS, which seriously threaten the existence of the world.

The gaps between the rich and poor, the mighty and meek, and the haves and have-nots have widened. We have lost the art of sharing. In our global village some one billion people living in developed countries account for about 60 percent of world total income, while 3.5 billion people in developing countries get less than 20 percent. The poor, vulnerable and oppressed suffer everywhere through exploitation and neglect. This led to the formation and enhancement of a world order, in which the rich and the powerful oppress and oblige the poor to follow them.

Moreover, today's world is facing many other problems, such as organized crimes, drug and human trafficking, which seriously question the future of the next generation. One can expand the list of these numerous challenges. And our mainstream sociologists or economists call this phenomenon the challenges of globalization.

In our rapid progress and the daily lurch towards more achievements and solving of temporary problems as they arise, we seem not to pay attention to the longer-term future. The dawn of the new millennium forces us to pause and think. In this context, I think that the world's top priority at this moment is to attempt to reduce poverty, which remains the major cause of the biggest disaster for humanity. There-

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fore, the key to this issue is to utilize the potential of globalization for the benefits of all nations and people in the world and prevent marginalization which has left billions of people in abject poverty even as a few live in conspicuous comfort. This is the cornerstone of the inclusive globalization concept, which will allow everyone to share proper benefits from rapid progress of technology and science. Indeed, the concept of inclusive globalization should be based on invisible hands of the market, which is the engine for economic growth. However, only market forces are not sufficient to materialize this concept. An essential ingredient for the future should be to reinstate the sense of "sharing" which has governed human existence from the dawn of history but has somehow got diluted in the race for economic growth in the recent few centuries. Sharing is therefore a necessity not a charity. Sharing will involve some sacrifice and sharing has to be between neighbors at the individual level, between communities, between nations and regions.

In a more development sense, this sharing has to extend to more transfer of financial, technical and technological resources, provide opportunity to developing countries to participate fully and equally in free trade by providing favorable access to developed markets without hidden conditionalities and domestic subsidies. Developed countries and relevant international organizations should double their efforts in supporting the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) through relaxation of stringent conditions that cannot be implemented as prerequisites to their accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO). The LDCs should also be assisted in the capabilities of negotiation process and the institutional capacity of trade, so as to allow them to participate more efficiently in the international trade system. We must consider a new partnership between developed and developing countries to put forth measures al-

lowing the latter to meet effectively the challenges of globalization. At the same time, special care should be taken to design policies and establish favorable environment to promote the flows of investment, technology and new knowledge to poor developing countries, especially the 48 Least Developed Countries (LDCs), which accounted for less than 1 percent of FDI inflows into developing countries.

In the sense of this sharing, several good steps have been taken especially to provide Official Development Assistance (ODA) and to write-off the heavy burden of outstanding debts of the poor countries.

In this regard, as one of the poorest countries in the world we are concerned about the overall decreasing trends of Official Development Assistance (ODA). We think that in providing financing facilities, more "grant" funds should be provided to poor countries to boost the development till they reach a minimum threshold. In this sense, we fully support the strides to fulfill the yet to be attained internationally agreed upon target of 0.7% of GNP of developed countries for overall ODA as soon as possible.

Excessive external debt is a heavy burden for poor countries and constitutes a major impediment to economic growth and investment in human resource development of the country. The needs for servicing debts and debt amortization have diverted considerable foreign exchange resources from investments in physical and social infrastructures, the pre-requisites to development. Since 1996, the donor community has put forth the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative with the view to reducing poor countries' debts to a sustainable level conducive to development. This initiative was expanded during the G-8 meeting in Cologne in June 1999 and was accepted by major international financial institutions, in particular the IMF. The

main objectives of these efforts are to deepen, expand the coverage and speed up the implementation of this debt relief initiative. It is regrettable that the implementation of the initiative has been slow and is not conform to its initial boldness. Nevertheless, we would like to appeal to develop further this initiative by providing additional funds for Highly Indebted Countries and expand its coverage to many other poor countries. In this regard, a number of countries, including Cambodia, have made utmost efforts to reschedule old debts, especially those contracted in the 1970s. It is regrettable that these debts were contracted during the cold war to finance the hot wars in this country and in many regions. Under those circumstances, most of the loans were not utilized for development. Therefore, there should be political will to write-off these debts. Some countries appear to have shared this vision and adopted this approach by not requiring the payback. At the same time, we highly appreciate the generosity of donor countries and international financial institutions in granting new loans to poor countries, such as Cambodia to promote development and reduce poverty. Indeed, recipient developing countries benefiting from this borrowing shall have the obligation to ensure that the assistance is utilized wisely, with full transparency, accountability and efficiency in order to benefit the economy and the poor, as well as to ensure the sustainability of their future debt servicing capacity.

Last but not least, human resource development is the most important and decisive factor for development and social progress. Thus, priority should be given to the enhancement of the capacities of LDCs, for them to achieve the ultimate goals of social and economic development and participate effectively and equally in regional and world affairs.

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The developing countries have their part to play as well in protecting human rights and the environment. They have to adopt and apply measures to preserve and use natural resources in a sustainable manner so that they continue to provide sustenance and support to all future generations as well.

I have only outlined with the broadest strokes of the brush the global needs to be debated and analyzed so that common consensus could be reached on measures acceptable to and implementable by all. We probably need to think about creating a new world order by establishing a new institution and putting forward a new agenda or improving and redirecting the existing one in order to ensure that all developing countries can benefit fairly and equitably from globalization. In this context, may I underline once again the need to re-evaluate the roles of common institutions and focus on their positives. The United Nations has served us well over the last half a century. It has done commendable work beyond its original mandate and has adapted to changing needs. It has been a platform for defining common goals. Yet, some challenges remain including further efforts to transform the UN into an efficient instrument in the hands of all nations and people worldwide. In this sense, Cambodia supports the need for reforming the United Nations.

The United Nations should not only be involved in the settlement of conflicts, but also should play a crucial role in preventing conflicts, building mutual trust and confidence and strengthening relationships with regional organizations and leaders of any country or region. At the same time, as leaders we should cooperate and maintain peace and stability in the region and the world in our new millennium. In this sense, Cambodia fully

supports the policy of unification between North and South Korea and welcomes the historic meeting between the leaders of the two Koreas in Pyongyang on 13-15 June, 2000. The Joint Declaration, issued at the end of this meeting, has not only transformed the Korean peninsula into the zone of peace and stability, but has made considerable contribution to peace and stability in the whole Northeast Asia.

We understand that it is necessary for all of us to strictly uphold the Charters of the United Nations and strengthen the role of the Security Council in conducting peace-keeping operations in the world. The Permanent Members of the Security Council should not only use their privileged status, but also should clearly understand the importance of their special obligation in maintaining stability and peace in the world. The reform of the Security Council should be conducted within the spirit which allows the UN to discharge its responsibilities in determining the destiny of the world with more efficiency and full legitimacy in the eyes of nations and people in all regions and of all levels of development. In this sense, Cambodia welcomes the initiative to expand the membership of the Security Council and expresses full support for Japan and India as candidates to occupy the permanent seat at the Security Council.

Indeed, attention should be given to providing appropriate resources to the United Nations Secretariat and its specialized agencies to enable them to fulfil effectively their mandates and responsibilities. But at the same time the UN needs to show more devoted determination to shed its own functions, committees and fora, which have lost relevance or usefulness. Moreover, the UN Secretariat and specialized agencies are required to utilize efficiently the resources for the in-

tended purposes so as to serve the benefits and priorities of member states.

During the last few years we have devoted a lot of time and resources to rhetoric, i.e. to organizing conferences and meetings in order to discuss and seek common views on what I have mentioned earlier. From the proceedings of many international conferences on development during the last decades, it appears that the world has shared unanimous views on the challenges we are facing and the actions to be undertaken to address them. Therefore, we would not need to organize many more big conferences with the participation of numerous scholars to discuss the development-related themes. And we may not need volumes of position papers to achieve this goal. What is more important however is that we should have strong will and courage to go beyond problem analysis, information exchange and the reiteration of good will and intentions. Thus it is essential at this time to formulate a concrete plan of actions and ensure its smooth implementation. To achieve this goal we need only to trust our collective knowledge, lessons of the past which are immense, and our innate basic good instincts. It is true that the challenges we are facing exceed the capacity of each of our country. Global challenges require global actions. I am confident that this Millennium Summit will reaffirm the commitments of all United Nations member states in respect of the common visions for the world in the new millennium. We all will show our strong determination about this commitment through follow-up actions to be taken after this summit. I thank you all for your kind attention. ■