

# **Cambodia: From War To Peace**

**Presentation by Sopheak OK SEREI, COPCEL Facilitator, at**

**Tokyo Peacebuilders Symposium  
“Peacebuilding Experience and Knowledge From Asia to the World”  
and Challenges Ahead**

**March 24, 2008**

# Outline

1. Country & history background
2. The first initiatives of the Peace Movement and the role of Buddhism
3. CDRI initiatives
4. COPCEL Phase One (1999-2003) and Phase Two (2005-2008)
5. Application of the Culture of Dialogue to resolve political crisis
6. Conclusion

513 115 sq km

65 M

GDP:\$177 billion; pc: \$2,749

- 181 035 sq km

- 14 M

- 28 years of war

-Around 1.7 M died during KR regime

-1991: Paris Peace Agreement

-1993: Successful Election by UNTAC

-Constitutional Monarchy Regime

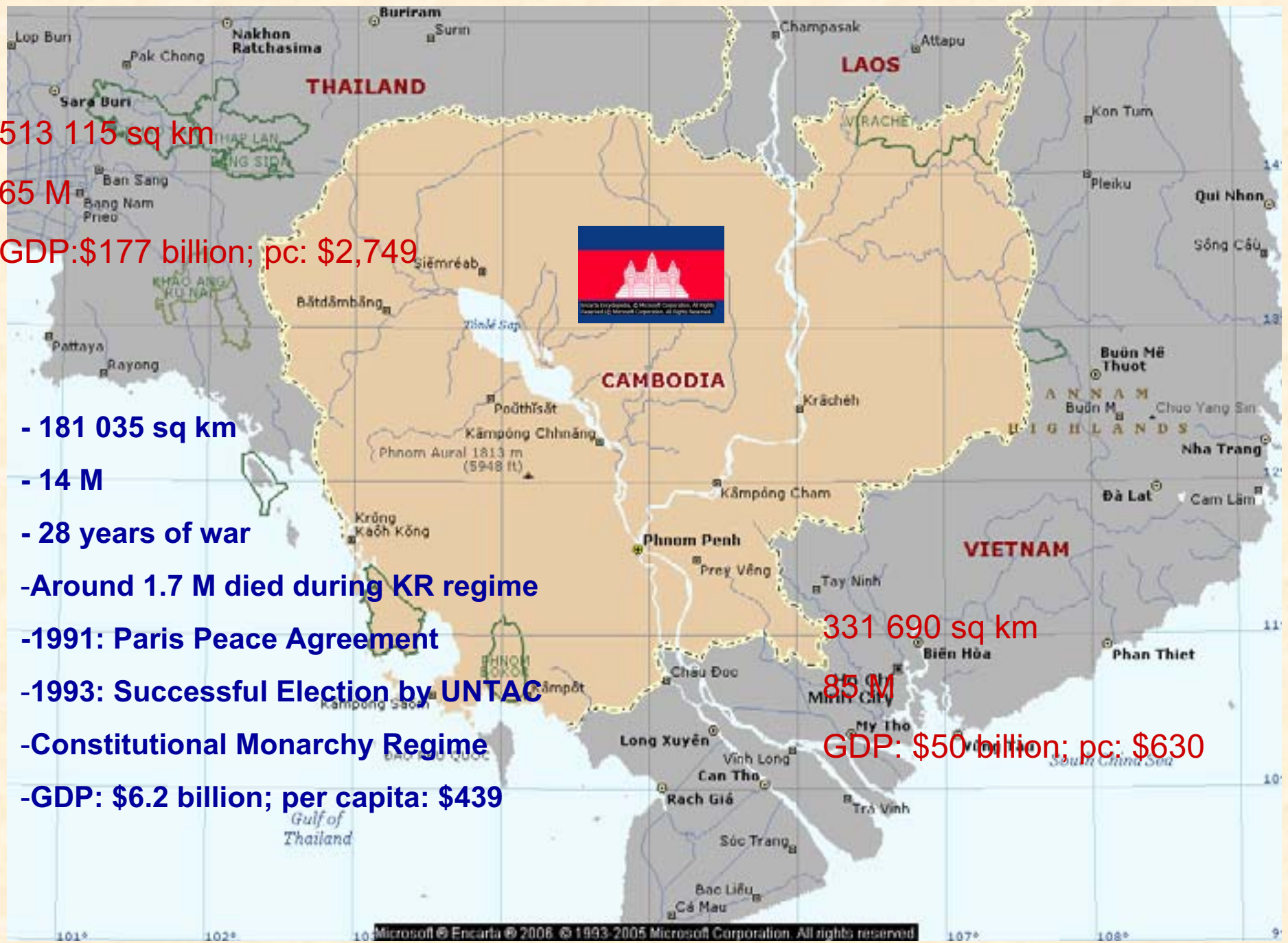
-GDP: \$6.2 billion; per capita: \$439



331 690 sq km

85 M

GDP: \$50 billion; pc: \$630



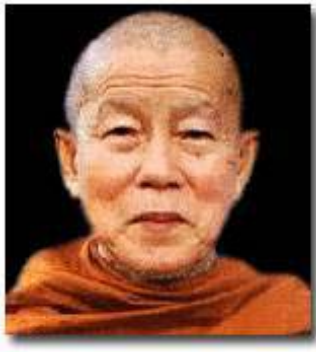
# **What did UN leave behind after 1993?**

- A successful election**
- The birth of a new Democratic State**
- A strong commitment to initiate a Human Rights Culture**
  - Blossoming of HR & Advocacy NGOs**

**...but**

- An unfinished business on the Khmer Rouge →  
Armed Conflicts on July 5-6 1997**
- The Ieng Sary faction surrendered to RGC in August 1996**
- The KR Tamok faction surrendered to RGC in December 1998**





# Peace Initiatives in Cambodia

He died in March 13, 2007

In fact started before HR movements, with Samdech Maha Ghosananda and Dhammayietra (Peace March)



DY1 April 1992 to DY11 March 2001

NIWANO Peace Price, Tokyo May 9, 1998

The movement continues till now.....

# CDRI Peace Initiatives



វិទ្យាស្ថានបណ្តុះបណ្តាល និង ប្រជាប្រិយ  
ដើម្បីអភិវឌ្ឍន៍កម្ពុជា

- Many workshops on Conflict Resolution in 1995
  - Creation of CCCR (Cambodian Centre For Conflict Resolution) in 1997
  - In full cooperation with UNDP, Fact-Finding Mission in former Khmer Rouge zones (Northwest) in 1999.
- Theme: does development generate peace?

Cambodian Development Resource Institute



គម្រោងអភិវឌ្ឍន៍  
អន្តរកាលសហប្រជាជាតិ

- Launch of a three-component program (in 1999) on Reconciliation and Peace-Building: Specific Trainings in KR zones, Working for Peace, Training for Peace
- Provincial Governors' workshops yearly institutionalized
- Research in early 1999, on causes of conflict and violence in 1998 National Election
- Launch in August 1999 of COPCEL (Conflict Prevention in the Cambodian Elections) Phase I, in cooperation with TAF (1999-2003)
- Strongly supported by UNDP, COPCEL Phase II is on-going (2006-2008)





Analyzing conflicts – Anlong Veng (KR zone) – Oddor Meabchey Province



Role Play – Tropaing Prasat (KR zone) – Oddor Meabchey Province



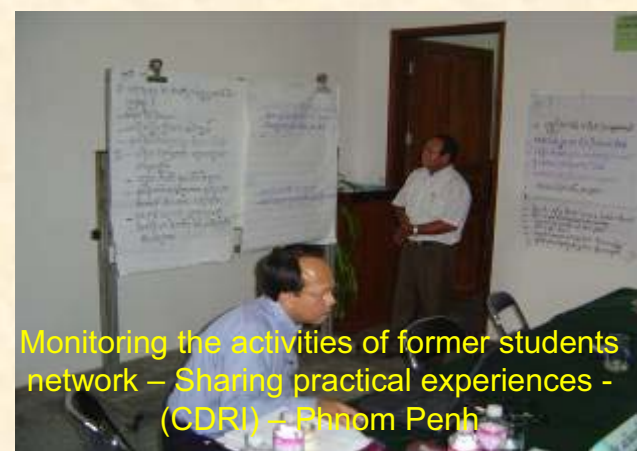
Monitoring the activities of former students network – Sharing practical experiences – (CDRI) – Phnom Penh



“How A Peaceful District looks like in your common Vision – Samlot (KR zone) – Battambang Province



Working For Peace – Joint session between government officials & NGOs (CDRI) – Phnom Penh



Monitoring the activities of former students network – Sharing practical experiences – (CDRI) – Phnom Penh



Certificate to the governor of Samlot (KR zone) – Battambang Province



Training For Peace – Spreading Knowledge about CM and Peace-Building (CDRI) – Phnom Penh

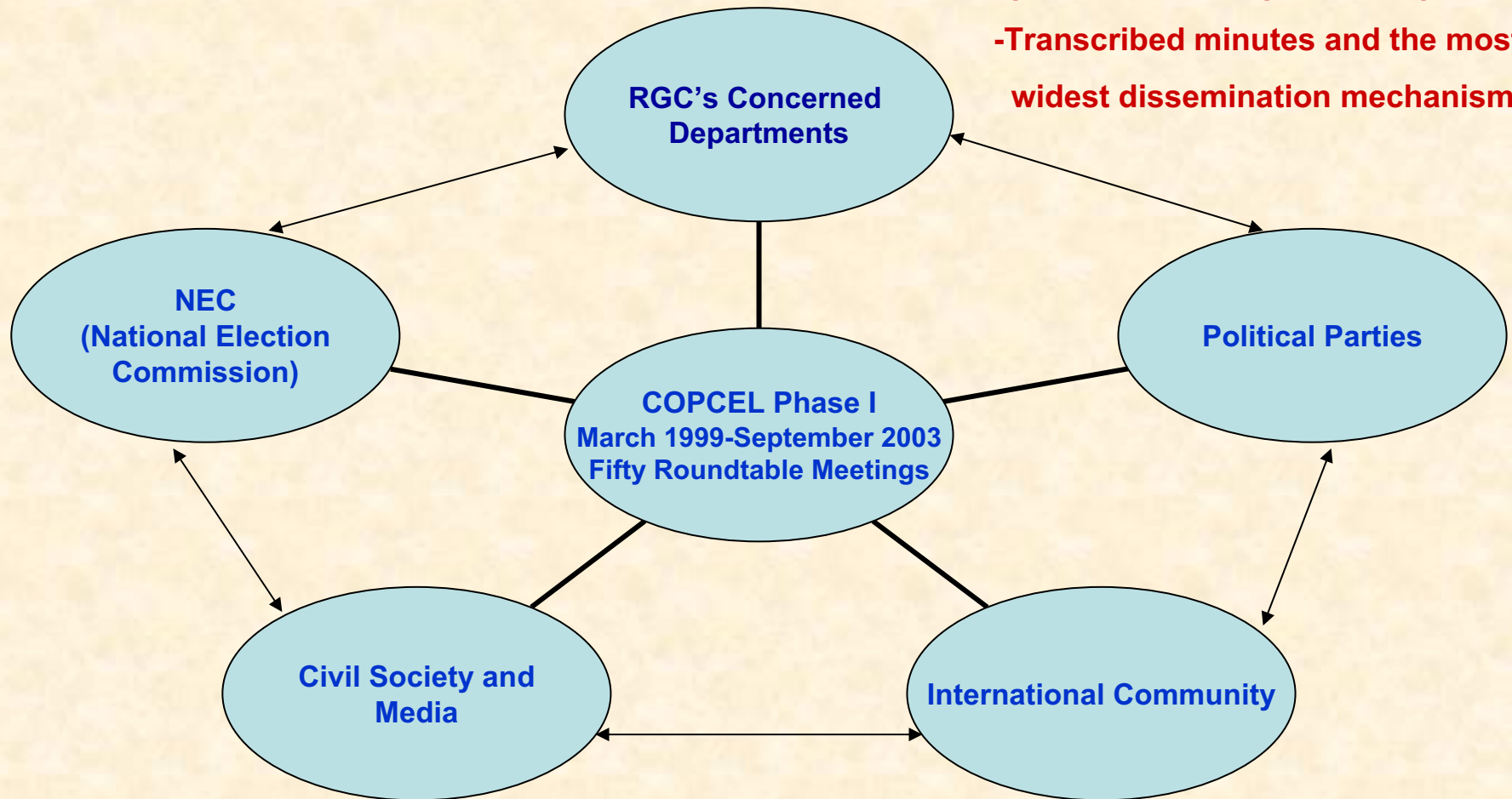


Documenting – Learning for next generations of Peace-Builders (CDRI) – Phnom Penh



## Facilitation Principles:

- Face-saving approach
- Full freedom of expression
- Safe environment for engagement
- Tape-recorded intervention→  
promotion of responsible speech
- Transcribed minutes and the most  
widest dissemination mechanism







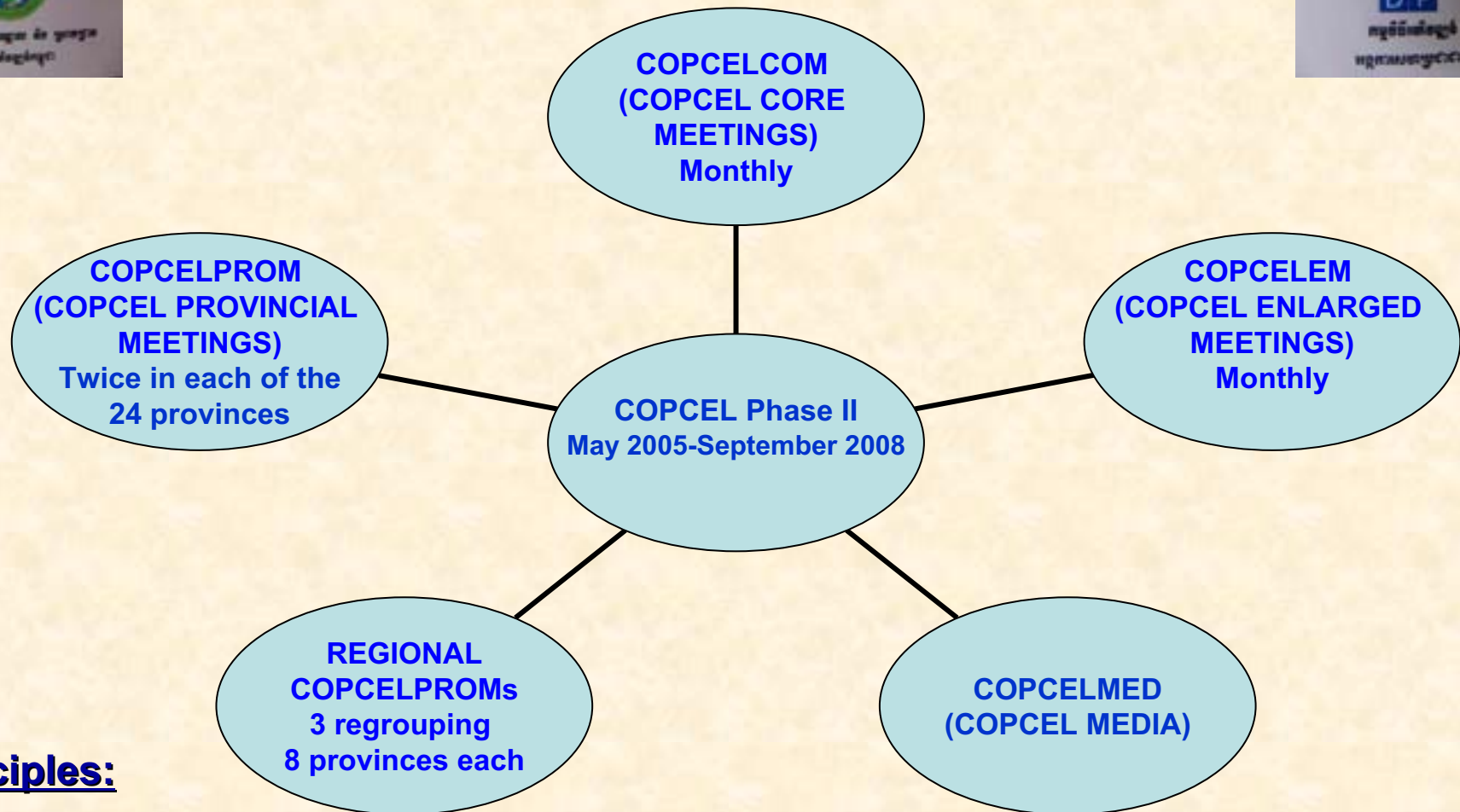
• After the 2003 election, political crisis for 11 months



• Cambodian solution: dialogue, dialogue & dialogue



# Reinforcing the Peace-Building by Strengthening and Spreading the Culture of Dialogue



## Principles:

- Re-apply all the principles of COPCEL Phase I
- Both at national and sub-national level
- More aggressive COPCELMED incl. TV & Radio exposures, media analysis
- More national events: national launching conference, high level meeting and evaluation conference after the commune election, Youth and Women national conference





COPCEL II – Launching Conference  
Phnom Penh Hotel – Phnom Penh



COPCEL II – COPCELPROM - Stoeung  
Treng province (North)



UNDP Head in COPCELPROM Kg  
Chhnaing province (Centre)



COPCEL II – Evaluation Conference after  
the Commune Election - Phnom Penh  
Hotel – Phnom Penh



COPCEL II – COPCELPROM  
Rattanakiri province (Northeast)



COPCEL II – High Level Meeting  
Cambodiana Hotel – Phnom Penh



COPCEL II – Youth, Women & Election  
Conference - Phnom Penh Hotel



COPCEL II – UNDP & SIDA representatives  
observing the COPCELPROM process –  
Kampong Chhnaing province (Centre)



COPCEL II – COPCELMED- Larry  
Strange, CDRI ExDir, interviewed by CTN



# Conclusion

- War or Peace? For Cambodia, after knowing war, it's now time for Peace-Building with whatever it takes
- The choice is Cambodian, no one else and no excuse
- Buddhism is definitely an asset
- There cannot be peace without dialogue even if we have to change our national character
- Building peace by practicing it, learning by doing and documenting
- Genuine and harmonized external assistance is what Cambodia needs, and
- Cambodia must design its own needs based on local context, only then it can contribute significantly to world peace

A photograph of ancient stone statues, likely from the Mayan or Aztec civilization, set against a backdrop of trees and a bright sunset sky. The statues are weathered and feature intricate carvings. The text is overlaid in a vibrant pink color.

*THANK YOU*  
*and*  
*MAY PEACE BE*  
*with*  
*ALL OF YOU*