

Presentation on
"Cambodia's Peace-building Experience"
By H.E Mr. OUCH Borith, Secretary of State
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
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Excellency Mr. Co-Chair, ladies, gentlemen

1. It is my great pleasure that I attend this symposium on "**Peace-building Experience and Knowledge from Asia to the World**" hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, and the United Nations University, where we will have the opportunity to exchange our experiences and I am confident that it would contribute to our efforts to arrive at a shared vision of peace-building with which all of us can move forward.
2. I would like to take this opportunity to express my high appreciation to **H.E Mr. Yaushi Akashi**, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Cambodia, and **Dr. Sukehiro Hasegawa**, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for Timor-Leste for their presence with us today and for their important contribution to our symposium.

Excellencies, ladies, gentlemen,

3. There is no doubt that peace-building is a far more complex and difficult challenge than it appears to be, as experience has shown. We must recognize that the **process of peace-building does not end with the cessation of hostilities and the holding of elections when in fact the condition that can cause conflicts still remains**. While ending hostilities and election are obviously important elements for the reconstruction process and the development of government institutions, much more needs to be done over the long term to eliminate the root cause of conflicts.
4. For **effective accomplishment of Peace-building**, we must first **clearly define the roles of all the partners in this process**. At the same time, their activities must be well coordinated to avoid competing interests, waste and duplication. All programmes aimed at peace-building need to be fully integrated to ensure their effectiveness. **The United Nations**, through its organs, should play a **central role in the process of coordination and integration**. Of similar importance are **the roles that regional institutions and organizations should play in peace-building**, both at the pre and post conflicts stage.
5. Before I touch upon certain aspects of Cambodia's peace building process, I wish to recall that the Cambodian people had enjoyed complete peace and stability after the country achieved its full independence from France in 1953. Unfortunately, on March 1970, King Sihanouk was overthrown by a right-wing coup, which proclaimed a Khmer Republic under the rule of General Lon Nol. Subsequently, the Khmer Rouge Communist guerrillas stepped up their military campaign against the government, plunging the country into a civil war. On 17 April 1975, Khmer Rouge Communist armies defeated the Lon Nol regime and took over the capital, Phnom Penh. It was the beginning of the holocaust in Cambodia which killed almost 3 millions people. After Cambodia was liberated from the genocidal regime of the Khmer Rouge in 1979, the people of Cambodia continued to suffer from attacks by the Khmer Rouge and its allies, particularly along the border with Thailand. The People's

Republic of Kampuchea (later the State of Cambodia) had at that time, on the one hand, to prevent the return of the Khmer Rouge genocidal regime, and on the other hand, to rebuild the country from scratch. Moreover, the country also had to confront with an economic embargo, unjustly imposed by a number of countries that had sided with the Khmer Rouge, which could be seen as a punishment on a people who had just been saved from the deadly hands of the bloody evil.

Excellencies, ladies, gentlemen

Toward the Paris Peace Agreement

6. Although the choice of continuing the war in search of peace was the easiest and least risky one, the former State of Cambodia did not choose this approach. For the sake of long-term interests of the country, it chose to negotiate with two main objectives:
 - To achieve a political settlement on the basis of preventing the return of the Pol Pot genocidal regime.
 - To maintain social and economic achievements attained after the overthrow of the Pol Pot regime in 1979
7. A historical meeting between HRH Sihanouk and Samdech Hun Sen in Fer en Tardenois, France on 02 December 1987, paved the way for negotiations for a political settlement of Cambodia. Consequently, bilateral and multilateral meetings took place successively at different places and in different forms. The art of compromise had led to a framework settlement and a draft agreement, and the establishment of the Supreme National Council.
8. Despite several challenges, particularly, ~~settlement~~ the issue of military demobilization, which came up during the negotiations, the Paris Conference was eventually convened on 23 October 1991 to sign a comprehensive settlement giving the UN full authority to supervise a ceasefire, repatriate the displaced Khmer along the border with Thailand, disarm and mobilize the factional armies, and to prepare the country for free and fair elections.

Implementation of the Paris Peace Agreement

9. After the signing of the Paris Peace Agreement, the King and royal family members returned to Cambodia with warm welcome from the people, while Khiev Samphan and Son Sen, the Khmer Rouge leaders, were received with demonstration. The United Nations sent UNAMIC in order to prepare for the UNTAC's operation.
10. While **three parties had implemented the Paris Agreement by respecting the ceasefire, demobilizing their forces and opening up their zones for UNTAC's inspection, the Khmer Rouge did not comply with the agreement, boycotted the 1993 election and harassed the other parties and UNTAC as they were implementing the agreement.** More than this, they even took military control of some parts of the country, deployed their forces near the areas designated for organizing the election, prevented UNTAC from entering its controlled zone, and killed UNTAC officers and foreigners.
11. Despite many challenges and the Khmer Rouge's refusal to cooperate, with the good will of the other parties involved, and in particular with the invaluable role played by HRH Norodom Sihanouk and Samdach HUN SEN, UNTAC succeeded in holding the elections under the security protection of the State of Cambodia's armed forces. The election, which was participated by 90% of registered voters, led to the formation of a coalition government

(FUNCIPEC and CPP). However, UNTAC did not succeed in its bid to disarm and demobilize the Khmer Rouge armed forces.

Post-Election

12. The second Kingdom of Cambodia was born with the departure of UNTAC after spending some US\$ 2 billion while the country remained in a situation where the civil war still lingered on in the areas along the Cambodia-Thai border, characterized as the **“leopard skin situation”**. The Khmer Rouge pursued an **“iron corroded by rust”** strategy by rejecting the ceasefire proposed by the legitimate government and putting up attacks and killing of innocent civilians, including foreigners.

“Win-Win” Policy

13. In 1998, with a view to dismantling the political and military organization of the Khmer Rouge without bloodshed, and achieving full national reconciliation, Samdech Prime Minister HUN SEN initiated a **“win-win” policy** on the basis of three main incentives:

- Provision of security guarantee for the life and physical safety of all those who had volunteered to defect from Pol Pot’s political and military organization in order to join the government and the mainstream of the society.
- Maintaining the career and profession of all defectors through a process of integration, except for those who had previously held a political function.
- Offering official recognition of the ownership of the defectors’ property.

14. This **“win-win”** policy responded to the interests of those who served in the rank of the Khmer Rouge and the population living in the zone controlled by the Khmer Rouge. Ultimately, the Khmer Rouge’s political and military organization was dismantled. Peace and national reconciliation were fully restored.

Excellencies, Ladies , Gentlemen,

15. Cambodia’s peace has been attained by relentless efforts, mutual accommodation and the art of compromise along with patience and concession. In this regard, I would like to underline that full national reconciliation and the complete collapse of Khmer Rouge organization have been made possible thanks to a combination of several factors.

- **First**, the King Father as well as the Queen always play an indispensable role in every stage of national reconciliation by taking initiatives to resolve all crisis.
- **Second**, the coordination among all political parties through the multi-parties democracy under the motto of “Nation-Religion-King”, by taking into account the long-term interests of the nation rather than the short-term benefits of each respective parties.
- **Third**, is the Khmer Rouge’s policy mistake. Khmer Rouge’s boycott of representation in the Supreme National Council and the 1993 election was its own political suicide, thus becoming a blessing in disguise for the Cambodian people.
- **Fourth**, equally important is the support from the international community in the process of national reconciliation, promotion of democracy and respect for human rights, and rehabilitation of Cambodia. In this regard, I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude and appreciation to the Government of Japan for its valuable role in and generous contribution to Cambodia’s peace-building process and socio-economic reconstruction of this country.

- **Fifth**, non-retaliation among people living in different controlled areas and from different groups of soldiers who used to fight each other is another important reason, which provides a favorable environment for the government to implement the “win-win” policy successfully.
 - **Six**, The Royal Government’s “win-win” policy, in which everyone is a winner, together with other socio-economic policies meets Cambodian people’s desire for peace and prosperity. The armed forces that used to fight each other have become united without discrimination and division in terms of uniform and patriotism. In this connection, we are proud to say that Cambodia and its people are currently at peace in one integrated, self-contained territory without separatists and antagonist armed groups, for the first time in more than three hundred years.
16. To sustain this policy, Samdech HUN SEN also placed an emphasis on socio-economic development in the areas used to be under the Khmer Rouge’s control by providing appropriate physical and economic infrastructure. This is an important complementary strategy for strengthening and ensuring a compressive success of the “win-win” policy. On the one hand, peace-building would be impossible without achievements on the development front. On the other hand, development in itself is part of any peace-building effort.

Khmer Rouge Tribunal

17. The complexity of the KR issue is a package of problems which involved many people and countries including the UN, who secured the seat for the KR during their practice of genocide, from 1975 to 1979 and up to 1982, and from 1982 to 1993 as a faction in the Tripartite Coalition Government and the Supreme National Council of Cambodia; and even as a legal faction in the Paris Agreement. For the Cambodian people, **National reconciliation and peace are vital and indispensable, and the trials of offenders to find justice for Cambodia are the goal and obligation to be fulfilled.** Nonetheless, there must be due consideration to avoid taking any action that would jeopardize the newly-gained peace and national unity of Cambodia. We need both peace and justice. After peace prevails all over the country, and after our national reconciliation has been achieved, the Royal Government of Cambodia is pushing forward to cooperate with the United Nations to bring to trial senior leaders of Democratic Kampuchea and those most responsible for crimes committed from 1975 to 1979. As a result, a hybrid court comprising of both Cambodian and international judges came into existence in 2006. It has been functioning smoothly, and has already detained five suspects charged with genocide and crimes against humanity. The Royal Government of Cambodia hopes to see the ECCC finishes its task soon, possibly in 2009 since the top leaders of the Khmer Rouge are very old. This could also save time and money.

Conclusion

18. I would like to conclude that no matter how much we recognize what need to be done to address each situation, if there is a lack of political will by those involved in the process and anything less than the full commitment of the international community, both of which are indispensable elements for successful peace-building, all efforts will be in vain. If we can bring these two factors together in an integrated approach to peace building, the success that have eluded us in the past will finally be achieved.

Thank you!