



CLOSING CEREMONY SPEECH
of
His Excellency SOK AN
Deputy Prime Minister,
Minister of the Office of the Council of Ministers
and First Vice President of the Cambodian Mine Action
and Victim Assistance Authority -CMAA
at Phnom Penh Regional Conference
on “Mine Action and Implication for Peace and Development”

14 March 2007, Cambodiana Hotel, Phnom Penh

- *General Maurice Baril, Co-chair of the Conference;*
- *His Royal Highness Prince Mired Al-Hussein, President-Designate of the 8th Meeting of the States Parties to Mine Ban Treaty;*
- *H.E. Ms. Donica Pottie, Ambassador of Canada to the Kingdom of Cambodia*
- *Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;*
- *Distinguished Delegate;s*

On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia in particular on behalf of Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Royal Government, I have a great honor to preside over the Closing Ceremony of this very important **Phnom Penh Regional Conference** entitled “**Mine Action and Implications for Peace and Development**”.

First of all, I would like to thank General Maurice Baril and H.E. Sam Sotha, for acting on my behalf, for leading this three-day Conference. My thanks also go to Her Excellency Donica Pottie, Ambassador of Canada and her team for assuring the smooth running of the conference and facilitators who have assisted with facilitating all the working groups and speakers who contributed useful ideas and comments to the conference. Indeed, the success of the conference has clearly indicated that we are building a strong cooperation and partnership for mine action and victim Assistance.

The Royal Government of Cambodia and the CMAA are extremely grateful for active participation of distinguished delegates from South-East Asia and other affected countries, donors, UN agencies and major international organizations. We are very honored and very grateful for Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Cambodia, who committed his valuable time of his very busy schedule to deliver his important remarks in the opening session of the conference.

*Your Royal Highness, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen
Distinguished Delegates;*

I would like to take this opportunity to evaluate that the Conference is well – designed with a very interesting theme and contents and it is also organized at the right place—in Cambodia—a country victim in landmine. Cambodia is now considered as a successful example of good partnership in clearing landmine and of how we are overcoming a challenge in transforming the country of war to a country of peace and development. The successful lessons from Cambodia can be learned by other effected countries in the World. As example, our demining expertise now is well organized by international community including the UN operation in Sudan as well as the integration of demining operation into development.

Landmines severely impede the peace and development of a nation. Not only do they take their toll on victims and families, but the presence of landmines in and around communities, on roads, in farmland and near water prevents the productive use of land, water, infrastructure for development, last but not least tourism. Beyond the direct costs of mine clearance and victim assistance are the wider economic and social costs to victim family members, to the community and to the government. Poor, rural, post-conflict societies can be quickly overwhelmed by the challenges of repairing infrastructure, shortage of human resources and replacing lost agricultural production. Landmines also disrupt economic activities including farming, animal husbandry, trade and tourism producing shortages and inflation and preventing economic stabilization in post-conflict societies. In short, landmines perpetuate poverty and are a major obstacle to peace and sustainable development.

As you know, Cambodia is one of the countries that suffers the most from cluster munitions, mines, and UXOs. Between 1969 and 1973, it is estimated that about 20 million sub-munitions were dropped or deployed on its territory. Those

millions of sub-munitions used more than 30 years ago still claim lives and limbs of civilians around Cambodia, on a daily basis. Although Cambodia has seen a significant drop of the number of mine and UXO casualties over the last year, the country is still dire need of the international community's support to clear the many sub-munitions that are still on its ground and that keep threatening the daily lives of thousands of families all over the country.

Response to ban landmine and to deal with the aftermath of post-war period in which landmines, UXOs and cluster munitions are still active in the country, the Royal Government has made many efforts and gain remarkable successes. In December 1997 Cambodia signed the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention and in May 1999, Cambodia passed the Law to Ban Anti-personnel Mines. The purpose of this law is to prohibit all anti-personnel landmines including the production, trading, exporting and importing of all types of anti-personnel mines. Consequently, the CMAA has been established in September 2000. To coordinate the mine action sector in Cambodia, The CMAA is committed to continue to lead the efforts by mine action stakeholders in clearing munitions, reducing the risks, and advancing to achieve targeted "zero casualties " by 2012. So far, Cambodia has received international assistance in Mine Action and victim assistance.

I would like to recall that on 22 February 2007, the Government of Norway hosted a meeting in Oslo, where 46 States, recognizing the grave consequences caused by the use of cluster munitions and the need for immediate action, committed themselves to prohibit the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians and to establish a framework for co-operation and assistance that ensures adequate provision of care and rehabilitation to survivors and their communities, clearance of contaminated areas, risk education, and destruction of stockpiles of prohibited cluster munitions. Cambodia supports this Oslo Appeal to Ban Cluster Munitions, which cause unacceptable harm to civilians, and will become an active participant in the process. Cambodia will also join the new UN convention on disability rights when it opens for signature on 30 March 2007.

In response to our survivors who reminded us eloquently that Cambodia should support Oslo process, and join the UN Disability Right Convention, I would like to emphasize that the Royal Government of Cambodia is committed to support the

survivors of war, mines, UXO, clusters munitions, and to the clearance of all these munitions that litter our country.

Your Royal Highness, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

After listening to a comprehensive summary made by His Excellency Sam Sotha and Her Excellency Donica Pottie, I would like to express my high appreciation to the fruitful result of the conference through active exchange of ideas, experiences and lessons.

In the presentations and discussions, some important themes emerged. One theme was the necessity for mine action operators to exchange information, which underscoring the importance of national ownership and the mines affected States Parties should take advantage of opportunities to communicate the "4Ps" approach—Problems, Plans, Progress and Priority for assistance. Discussions in the conference appeared to indicate their willingness to do so.

Another discussion brought forward and also extremely crucial that cooperation was central to the implementation of Ottawa Convention. We are so grateful that significant progress is being made towards the achievement of core humanitarian aims : clearing mine areas, assisting victims, and universalization the ban on anti-personnel mines.

On the issue of funding, from a donor perspective, it is necessary to see a direct outcome of the contribution commitment. In this light, the support of the national coordination and national planning are imperative.

It is essential - as the Prime Minister said at the opening ceremony - that all the countries in this region and indeed in the world must join the Mine Ban Treaty. Today there should be no country that insists on the need to keep this weapon that cause such dreadful harm to civilians.

In field trip, as a part of this conference, the delegates spent more time yesterday at the CMAC training center in Kampong Chhnang province viewing demonstrations of two national operators, CMAC, and the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces on mine action assets. Many of the delegates, during the field trip, have first opportunity to

view the activities of mine action interventions that national and international operators have together developed. We are very proud of the good impression that deminers made during the visit and we were proud to show the high level of organizational maturity, professionalism and discipline that has been achieved in our national mine action.

Your Royal Highness Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

With a spirit of continues success, cooperation and coordination may I, on behalf of Samdech Hun Sen, wish you a good luck and prosperity on your mission and a good return journey.

I am now declaring to close this Phnom Penh Regional Conference.

Thank you for your attention!