

OPENING REMARKS BY H.E. PRAK SOKHONN

**MINISTER ATTACHED TO THE PRIME MINISTER
PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL COORDINATION COMMITTEE FOR SENDING
TROOPS TO UNPKO**

**AT THE OPENING CEREMONY FOR THE THIRD ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM,
PEACEKEEPING EXPERTS MEETING**

SIEM REAP CITY, JUNE 25, 2009

- Excellencies co- Chairs,
- Excellencies, Distinguished National and International Guests,
- Ladies and Gentlemen!

First of all on behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) I would like to warmly welcome Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen to this 3rd ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) of Peacekeeping Experts at our Siem Reap City, the heart of Angkor complex where hundreds of ancient temples were built by Khmer Kings.

It is of great pleasure and honor for us to host today's forum with the theme of "Enhancing Regional Capacity in Participating in the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (PKO)". My very sincere thanks go to our Japanese counterpart who had kindly proposed Cambodia to be a co-chair of this 3rd Forum, which is a recognition of Cambodia's ability and experience in peacekeeping operations.

We are very happy to share our experience as a country which, 18 years ago received the assistance from the blue berets, has now become a country that contributes to the UNPKO for mine clearance in Sudan in its fourth year.

As one of the 3 countries most affected by land mines in the world, Cambodia has become one of the global leader in mine clearance. Early this month our 3rd demining company has just returned home upon completing its successful mission in Sudan and the 4th unit has also been sent to replace and continue our peace and humanitarian mission there. As some of the ARF countries already did, we have decided to include our armed forces in the UN Stand-by Arrangement System (UNSAS) with two demining companies and one order keeping company ready to assist the UN in responding rapidly and effectively to any crisis situation. Besides, one platoon has also been set aside in preparation for the UN Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT).

Meanwhile, Cambodia has also become an active member of the Global Peacekeeping Operation Initiative (GPOI), in which we had participated in the training exercises in Mongolia in 2007, Bangladesh in 2008 and Indonesia in 2009. Cambodia will host the upcoming training exercise in 2010 in which about 1000 persons are expected for FTX and PCX. GPOI was initiated by the United States of America to assist and complement the UN in order to enhance and maintain the capacity and effectiveness of global peacekeeping operations.

A training center of our military engineering unit has been transformed into a training institute for peacekeeping forces with the support and cooperation of the UN, the United States, India, Vietnam, France, Australia and Japan etc.

The aforementioned activities manifest Cambodia's commitment to promoting and strengthening our role in contributing to global peace and stability.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

As you all well aware, conflicts and crisis in our world today have grown in diversity and complexity, whether they happen between states or between different parties within a state. Whether their nature is political, economic, religious or ethnic they all require peaceful resolution and necessary preventive measures as they represent threats against global peace and security.

At present, the UN Security Council has allowed a deployment of more than 50,000 troops in 15 missions all over the world, of which nearly 40,000 troops have been deployed in Africa alone to maintain peace, prevent violence and ethnic cleansing, humanitarian crises as well as to protect civilians and prevent the spread of conflicts etc.

The 1st Forum of ARF in Malaysia and the 2nd in Singapore resulted in fruitful discussion about the establishment of a network of peacekeeping experts and the preparation of an action plan for peacekeeping operations. The theme of this 3rd Forum, which focuses on strengthening regional capacity in participating in the UN PKO, is consistent with the increased attention and recognition by the United Nations of the roles that regional organizations can play in preventing, managing and addressing conflicts and various threats against global peace and security.

Since the 1st Forum, we have seen that ARF plays a vital role in contributing to maintaining global peace and security. As he took office as Secretary General of the UN, Mr. Ban Ki Moon underlined the need in mobilizing additional resources to help prevent and resolve conflicts in any forms. Therefore, strengthening regional capacity, which the Forum will discuss and share lessons learnt and experiences, will significantly contribute to fulfilling the mentioned objective of the UN. Enhancing our capacity and thus enabling increased regional activities in favor of international peace and security would be an important component for effective response to conflicts.

Cambodia is very pleased to host this forum and share her experience in recruiting and training our forces for participating in the UN PKO. Our soldiers and military, who were previously armed to fight, have transformed their profession to become ones who maintain peace and carry out humanitarian activities, prevent mine and UXO accident, support and relieve the hardship of people who suffered the consequences of war like Cambodians had gone through.

In our peace and humanitarian mission in a neutral and impartial manner, Cambodian forces have accomplished many achievements and have been highly praised and appreciated for their bravery, professionalism, talent and good cooperation with the mission command, other partner units, humanitarian agencies as well as the local residents.

Certainly, Cambodia will learn additional lessons and experience from a more in-depth discussion at today's and tomorrow's forum in order to strengthen our capacity and effectiveness of our future peacekeeping operations.

With our full commitment to global peacekeeping, on behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia I wish this 3rd Forum a great success.

I hope that Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen would also enjoy the visit to our Angkor temples, a heritage that our ancestors left behind for the whole Humanity.

Thank you!