

**Toast Delivered by HE Mr. UCH KIMAN
Secretary of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and
International Cooperation at the Reception
in honor of participants to the ARF CBMs Seminar
on Conventional Weapons Transfers**

Phnom Penh, 21-22 February 2001

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**Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is a distinct honor for me to host this modest dinner, to welcome so many distinguished guests attending this very important seminar.

On behalf of my Cambodian Colleagues, allow me to extend a very warm welcome to all of you to Cambodia. I am fully aware that you have spent the first day in hard work, so it is the duty of my Cambodian Colleagues to make this evening a more relaxing and enjoyable one.

To do so, first, I am not going to make a long speech. Second, I am not going to dwell on these topics you have been discussing today and more tomorrow.

All I wish to say tonight is that the Royal Government and the Cambodian people highly appreciate your support and your co-sponsoring of this seminar as a way of recognizing our genuine aspiration to live in an environment of genuine social peace free from all acts of violence and in respect of each other's dignity as human beings.

Why is it so special to make such a statement? The reason is quite simple and very legitimate. The Cambodian people have experienced untold sufferings for three decades due to declared and undeclared warfare, most of all to the worst violations of their fundamental rights during the Khmer Rouge genocidal regime. Their legacies are still apparent today, if one cares to look at it.

Today, peace prevails all over Cambodia for the first time in three decades. But genuine and lasting peace may be at risk because:

- First, it has just started to take root quite recently in a soil littered with mass graves and mine fields;
- Second, the instrument of violence, namely small arms and light weapons illegally held may not have been completely collected by the competent authorities, despite all the good intention and efforts.

Armed with this strong motivation and a clear vision for the future, the Royal Government of Cambodia led by Samdech Prime Minister HUN SEN launched a general campaign of national reconciliation, of pacification, of demobilization of its armed forces and of collecting and destroying illegal weapons before it joined the world campaign for the culture of peace.

Indeed, we collected tens of thousands of small arms and light weapons and destroyed lots of them in public display to bring our peace message across. It was first a lonely act by the Cambodian authorities.

It was quite a feat for the authorities to persuade the population to surrender their "small companion" in return for the promise of an uncertain security and eventual peace. It may be regarded as a gambling with peace.

But apparently the Royal Government won the game, but not yet the whole war against the illegal and mis-used of this "small companion".

So we are deeply gratified that the international community finally recognized Cambodia's lone efforts and that moral and material support started to arrive in time to quickly rid this country of all small arms proliferation, to engage it in the path of socio-economic development so that lasting peace may prevail in Cambodia.

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We need your help to consolidate peace, to demobilize our armed forces- not to send them to the front lines- to collect weapons and to

destroy them- not to ask for military assistance or military hardware to fight any war.

Your participation in today's seminar is a priceless contribution to the above objectives and a moral boost to our efforts.

Let us hope that your strong participation in this collective endeavor has sent a clear signal to those who used to fish in troubled waters that their cold war game, although still life-threatening, is now obsolete.

Let us also hope that this symbolic meeting in Cambodia will produce a more concrete action plan for an effective international cooperation to deal with this problem of small arms proliferation or of their illegal transnational transfers.

The Cambodian people have suffered more than enough.

Please give them a chance of unconditional peace.

My Colleagues and I, in the Royal Government and the whole Cambodian people, are absolutely sure that, having come this far to attend this very important seminar, you will not deny us this simple and legitimate aspiration for a genuine and lasting peace.

To conclude, may I propose a toast to your good health, to a nice stay in Cambodia and to the success of the seminar.

Thank You.