

**Hon. YANG SEM, Chairman of Commission  
of Human Rights, Complaint Reception and Investigation  
and Head of the Delegation of the Kingdom of Cambodia  
to the 143rd General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union**

**Addressed at the General Debate of the Assembly**

**Under the Theme  
“Contemporary Challenges to Democracy:  
Overcoming Division and Building Community”  
Madrid, Spain, 26-30 November 2021**

- **Honorable Meritxell Batet Lamana, President of the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Spain and President of the 143<sup>rd</sup> IPU Assembly**
  - **Honorable Duarte Pachecho, President of the IPU,**
  - **Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General of the IPU,**
  - **Distinguished Delegates, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!**
1. First of all, on behalf of the Parliaments of the Kingdom of Cambodia, I am honored to participate in-person in this 143<sup>rd</sup> Assembly of the IPU. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Hon. Duarte Pachecho, for his great leadership and to congratulate Hon. Meritxell Batet Lamana, on being elected as the President of the 143<sup>rd</sup> Assembly. I am also delighted to congratulate Mr. Martin Chungong, who will be appointed as the IPU Secretary General for the third term.
- The theme of the 143rd IPU Assembly: “Contemporary Challenges to Democracy: Overcoming Division and Building Community” is highly relevant.
2. As for us, we Cambodians went through a number of tragic episodes from the Civil War to the Pol Pot Khmer Rouge genocidal regime from 1975 to 1979, resulting in the loss of 3 million lives including almost all Senators and Congressmen in a complete destruction to the root of national socio-economic infrastructure.
3. During these tumultuous periods, the rights of Cambodian people were entirely abolished, even the rights to life. Despite the end of the Pol Pot regime on 7<sup>th</sup> January 1979, the civil war in Cambodia raged on. Being in the situation of “War and Peace at the same time”, Cambodia, used one hand to fight to prevent the return of the genocidal regime, and the other to rebuild and develop the country from ashes in circumstances of unjust political and economic sanction.
4. Even though after the signing of the Paris Peace Accord in 1991 and first election held in 1993, civil war still prolonged. Clearly, building a nation cannot be done in the midst of constant warfare.
5. This was the reason that led Cambodia to adopt and introduce “Win-Win Policy”, which has brought all Cambodian factions together. This is for the first

time in our modern history that we achieved national reconciliation, peace and national unification in late 1998. I would also like to emphasize that this hard-earned peace was achieved by Cambodian.

6. Indeed, peace has opened-up opportunities for development in all areas. Cambodia, previously plagued by war, devastation, territorial division and insecurity throughout the country, has now become a country of peace, a unified and secure nation, and one of the attractive tourist destinations in the region and in the world such as the Temple of Angkor Wat and beautiful beaches. The people of Cambodia is now a family, a community and a society, living in peace and harmony.
7. Previously being a country that received UN peacekeepers, Cambodia has now sent her forces for UN peacekeeping mission in many parts of the world. Perceived as an economically-underdeveloped country in the past, mired in the poverty and serious food insecurity, Cambodia is now a rice-exporting country. Moreover, Cambodia has successfully graduated herself from low-income to lower middle-income country, and is committed to making further efforts to reach an upper middle-income status by 2030 and a high-income country by 2050.

*Honorables, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!*

8. Although the full peace and national unity was only restored after 1998, Cambodia has made her utmost efforts after the first general elections held in 1993 to strictly adhere to the principle of multi-party liberal democracy, by regularly holding free, fair and just and transparent elections that allow citizens to choose their own leadership.
9. The Royal Government of Cambodia has always consider NGOs as partners for development, especially in local and remote areas. To further foster genuine partnership, the Royal Government has regularly organized Consultative Forum with Civil Society Organizations (SCOs) in a constructive manner.

*Honorables, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!*

10. With a proactive and responsible spirit in implementing measures and strategies, with the active participation from the public from all walks of life and the support from our friends and development partners, the Royal Government has effectively managed the risk of COVID-19 in order to ensure the protection of the rights of citizens, especially the right to life, the right to access to health service, the right to education, and socio-economic and cultural rights. Consequently, as of 27th November 2021, Cambodia has achieved 88.30 % vaccination of its total population of 16 million and the number of COVID-19 confirmed cases and deaths have declined significantly.

*Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!*

11. Cambodia remains committed to strengthening close cooperation and constructive partnership with all relevant stakeholders in order to further enhance the promotion and protection of human rights, freedom and multi-party liberal democracy in the country. We would like to stress that national sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in the internal affairs of states shall be fully respected.
12. In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere condolences to all Parliamentarians of the world who lost their loved ones and call for Parliamentary solidarity to continue to fight against this pandemic until it disappears from the face of this earth.

Thank you for your attention!