

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

by

**Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the
Royal Government of Cambodia in the occasion
of the Opening of the ILO/Japan/US Regional
on the ILO Declaration on Fundamental
Principles and Rights at Work**

Excellencies,

H.E. the Minister of Social Affairs, Labour, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Distinguished guests,

It is in only 24 days that the year of 1999 - the last year of 20th century and also the last year of the last millennium - will be end. Both in Cambodia and as in the world, during the last millennium or century as well as the last year, had passed through a history of their growth that somewhere and sometimes of the past - were either prosperous or devastated era. The bitter period of the last millennium had woken and shaken a spirit of all human being in the whole world to determine that the year 2000 is a year of culture of peace - for the century and the millennium of peace. In the historical fighting for fundamental principles and rights at work - against forced labour - leading to establishment of various international conventions, including the seven fundamental ILO Conventions. The eighth fundamental Convention - Convention No. 182, which shall be into force on 18 November 2000, and together with the Convention No. 138 providing us, in addition, the possibility for fighting child labour.

For current developing countries, of course, for many years ago, there had a great deal of cases concerning strongest abuse of rights at work so that to accomplish their aims at developing their economic cornerstone. In Cambodia, even though at this time we have exposed challenges for lives and our economic power has not been yet strong, Cambodia has clearly determined its perspective and complied with fundamental principles and rights at work - to make employers and workers work and live together. In this year, so far, Cambodia is only the forty-eighth country in the world and second in this region to have ratified all of seven fundamental ILO Conventions. There are three reasons why Cambodia has ratified those fundamental ILO Conventions :

Firstly, through its history for long time ago, Cambodia had not any seriously problems according to forced labour, child labour, and discrimination in respect of work for men and women etc. On the contrary, women and children have been provided a good value both in culture and social action. Cambodian women, of course, for some decades ago had no right to election, but through the period of rapidly growing human rights and democracy, they have full right to election and also to be candidate of all forms of election. It is no any prohibition, which is specified those women can not be a leadership or can not receive equal remuneration to men for work of equal value yet. Talking about the Kingdom of Cambodia today might be looked for only one case and only for Cambodian women - that case, in which women have no right at work as men and are prohibited by law, is to reign the throne.

Annex 7

Secondly, in respect of culture and social history, Cambodia had a favorable situation, but at one time it fell down until a deepest hell of a genocidal regime. At that time, all Cambodian people, either who are men or women, adult or child as well as illness or healthy, which had been forced to work. Talking about the savagery from this forced labour, I think that Cambodia has strongly and clearly understood and really can not be forgotten it. These facts can make Cambodia has brought a concept of much more preference and compliance with principles and rights at work so that to fight against forced or compulsory labour.

Lastly, it is toward to the consequences from the genocidal regime, the ratio of women and young persons under 18 years of age, today, is considerably remarkable. This specific ratio has guided the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Ministry of Social Affairs, Labour, Vocational Training and Youth Rehabilitation as well as others legislative Bodies have always to make every effort to establish laws and regulations in order to prevent to all forms of forced labour. In 1992, Cambodia adopted its labour law, and with some new changes, in 1997 Cambodia adopted a new labour law.

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

As hosting country, we, on behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia and of the Cambodian people and on behalf of Cambodian employers and workers and myself, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to everyone who has come here today. And I hope this Seminar will share your experiences or difficulties and advantages to each other for the interests of all workers and employees for each country.

I also would like to extend a very warm welcome to Ms Mitsuko Horiuchi, Assistant Director General of the ILO for Asia and the Pacific, Mr. Kari Tapiola, Executive Director of Standards and Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, ILO, Geneva, Ms. Kimie Iwata, Assistant Minister of Labour, Japan, Mr. Andrew J. Samet, Deputy Under-Secretary of the Department of Labour of the United States and all delegations in this Seminar. I believe that the ILO, the Government of Japan, the Government of the United States and all our friends continue to support Cambodia, either sharing experiences or other supports, so that Cambodia become a good sample country in complying with the fundamental principles of labour standards.

I wish all of you, distinguished guests to have every success and happiness for the New Year of 2000 - the new century, 21st century - and for the new millennium.

Thank you.