

Speech of
HE Mr. Vong Sauth, Minister of labor and Vocational Training on the occasion of the ILO
90th anniversary, 1919 – 2009

27th April 2009

Respect:

- HE Madam Man Sam An, Deputy Minister, High-Level Representative of Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Kingdom of Cambodia.
- HE Mdame Sachiko Yamamoto, **Ms. Sachiko Yamamoto**, Director of the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, ILO
- His Excellencies, Her Excellencies Distinguish guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen, national and internal guests
- All participants

First of all, on behalf of the Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training and on behalf of myself, I would like to express my great honor for the presence of HE Madam Man Sam An, the High-Level Representative of Samdech Akka Moha Sena padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Kingdom of Cambodia for taking time out of her tight schedule to participate in this ILO 90th anniversary.

On this occasion, please allow me to express my great thanks and warm welcome to HE Madam Sachiko Yamamoto, Director of the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. Her presence in this event reflects the ILO's sympathy towards and close relationship with our country.

I also sincerely thank all Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen for being here today, which makes this event to be more pleasant and meaningful atmosphere.

Excellencies, ladies and Gentlemen!

Allow me to brief you all on the historical operation and the outcomes of the collaboration between the Royal Government of Cambodia, especially MoLVT and the ILO

The Royal Government of Cambodia became a member of the ILO since 1969. This means that Cambodia is also celebrating its 40th anniversary. Since Cambodia became a member, it has fulfilled all obligations as stated in the Constitution of this organization.

Due to the internal conflict (civil war), Cambodian membership had been suspended since 1975 because it failed to fulfill its obligations. In 1994, Cambodian membership was restored and it continues to meet the obligation every year, including membership fee, participating in the ILO's annual conference, settlement of grievance concerning working conditions as well as freedom of association, etc. Up to now Cambodia had ratified 13 ILO Conventions including the 8 core convention. This has made Cambodia well known for its compliance with international labor standards.

On this important occasion to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the ILO, I would like to strongly express my sincere thanks to the ILO for its contribution to promoting social justice and the country's economic development, while upholding the organization's fundamental values, from the beginning of its work in Cambodia. We also note that ILO has been collaborating with Government ministries and other institutions as its development partners. Since the early 1990s, ILO has assisted Cambodia in infrastructure rehabilitation such as rural road construction that generated employment opportunities and provided income generation for rural workers, rehabilitated irrigations systems, protected forest and environment etc

MOLVT is also a partner that has directly benefited from the ILO since the onset of the projects and the decent work agenda. As a key partner in the development of Cambodia of our tripartite constituents (government, employers and workers), the ILO has supported Cambodia in the implementation of basic labour standards, which are the most fundamental rights and freedom at work for participating in the social development.

The ILO Decent Work Agenda in Cambodia focuses on 3 priority areas, which are in line with the National Strategic Development Plan and Rectangular Strategy of the RGC. The 3 priorities areas are: (1) Skill Development for Improved Productivity (2) Labour Governance and Rights and (3) Social Protection for targeted groups. In close collaboration with the ILO officials as well as with other donor agencies, MoLVT has benefited greatly from the skill development and technical assistance program. In the course of the partnership between ILO and MoLVT, employer associations and trade unions, we have achieved a numbers of results:

- a) We have helped the garment and shoe industry to protect and improve working conditions in order to comply with the international labor standards. Better Factories Cambodia is a good program, which not only helps to improve the working conditions but also helps Cambodia to gain access to international markets as well.

- b) The development of a credible Arbitration Council has helped to improve dispute settlement over the last several years. Because of the Labor Dispute Resolution Project, a number of the Ministry's conciliators had been trained in conciliation techniques and procedure to build their capacity. The project also contributes to the review of policy and procedures at the national and provincial levels by organizing tripartite seminars in order to ensure the common understanding of the conciliation functions as well as to seek for weakness in conciliations. LDRP has also helped to establish a database to pave the way for union registration and collective bargaining agreement. Please note that the AC is independent institution, which is responsible for resolving labor disputes and promoting the implementation of Cambodia Labor Law.

- c) MoLVT in collaboration with ILO has developed employment policy and a social security system in order to address the need of disability workers and vulnerable persons.

- d) MoLVT has found an incidence of working children and child labor. The International Program for Elimination of Child Labor (IPEC) has been in Cambodia since 1997, and the Time Bound Program (TBP) also supports the RGC to achieve its goals in reducing child labor by 8% by 2015 and to achieve global goals to eliminate the worst form of child labor by 2016. An inter-ministerial Sub-National Committee for Child Labor has been established under the direct supervision of the National Council for Children, to campaign against the worst form of child labor.

- e) The ILO has also helped us on the gender equality issue, with a result that MoLVT has adopted a Gender Mainstreaming Strategic Plan.

- f) The ILO also provides technical assistance to current Social Security and National Social Security Fund and promotes safety and health at the workplace.
- g) With support from the ILO and other partners, ACLEDA is the first micro finance institution established and working in Phnom Penh and all 24 provinces in Cambodia. ACLEDA has become a crucial partner of Social Security Scheme Department.

As described in above, MoLVT notes that the collaboration between ILO and MoLVT has developed skills, methodologies and attitudes of our officials making them more productive and capable.

His/Her Excellencies, ladies and Gentlemen!

In the past decade, globalization has widely proliferated across the world; Cambodia has been part of this trend. Under the wise leadership of Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Kingdom of Cambodia; Cambodia has integrated into the region and the world, and is playing a crucial role as an equal member in other organizations in the sub- region, region, and globally such as ASEAN and WTO etc.

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Such international ties can create great opportunities in helping to resolve the challenges caused by economic and financial crisis, and that have negatively impacted both developed and under-developed countries. We cannot predict the future but for the first half of 2009, we can conclude that the overall growth will decline. This is a very difficult time for the world economy as well as for Cambodia. In this sense, I think, it is a good opportunity for strengthening cooperation among trade unions, the government and the employers in order to jointly support the country's economic situation, and to ensure sustainability, production, employment. The great recommendation of Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Kingdom of Cambodia. has clearly indicated that Cambodia still has much potential to guarantee better living conditions and prosperity for our people. To achieve these goals, continuing our partnership with the ILO is crucial because with the support of this organization, we can ensure decent work for all Cambodians, not only during the immediate crisis but also for our future economic and social development.

The RGC and MoLVT have taken measures to respond to the impact of the economic and financial crisis. We value the ILO as partner, with its long experience and many successful stories in Cambodia since the country started reconstruction. Therefore, the role of ILO in Cambodian economy is still a determining factor and this organization is still a key component for Cambodian economic development as well.

The above are the reasons we have agreed together to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the ILO 1919 – 2009 under the theme “ILO is a partner in the development of Cambodia”.

Finally, allow me to wish Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, good health, happiness and success in all of your endeavors.