

**China People's Daily Written Interview with
H.E. Prak Sokhonn, Senior Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and
International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia**

Question 1: What is your idea on the friendship between our two countries in the past 60 years? What is the foundation and unceasing power to the development and prosperity of these relations?

Sixty years ago on 19 July 1958, Cambodia and China formally established diplomatic relations. However, cordial interaction between our two peoples had existed hundreds of years earlier. Despite drastic changes in both countries, our leaders and peoples continue to cherish the bonds of close friendship and cooperation. Since our ties were upgraded to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Cooperation in 2010, cooperation in all fronts have been greatly consolidated and expanded both in scope and depth. China has given full support for Cambodia's socio-economic development and Cambodia also wholeheartedly supports China's greater role in regional and global development and in the promotion of peace and stability for all to share. There is no doubt that the relationship and cooperation between Cambodia and China at present is better than ever before.

China and Cambodia have cultivated very high political trust and cooperated closely on the basis of mutual respect and sincerity to safeguard and promote our core national interests. Cambodia firmly adheres to the principle of One China Policy, and likewise, China always respects Cambodia's sovereignty, independence and the development path determined by our people according to our national context. Geographical proximity also helps to consolidate the foundation for everlasting and growing bonds of fraternal friendship between our two nations.

Question 2: Currently, China-Cambodia relations is under development at ever high speed, including intergovernmental exchange as well as people to people communication. What is your comment on this status? What is your comment on the role of Belt and Road Initiative among these relations ?

Relations and cooperation between Cambodia and China have indeed been rapidly growing, particularly after our ties were promoted to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Cooperation in 2010. We can witness more frequent exchanges of visit at all levels, from the central to the local institutions, in recent years. This has not only bolstered political trust between our countries, but also deepened and expanded our cooperation in all sectors.

Increase in intergovernmental exchanges and cordial contacts has encouraged fast-growing two-way trade and Chinese investment in Cambodia, thereby contributing significantly to Cambodia's high growth. Nowadays, we can see many Cambodians going to visit China, and a large number of Chinese tourists, 1.2 million last year and increasing, come on leisure trip to Cambodia. Tourism and youth exchanges have increased people-to-people communication, promote better understanding and friendship among our two peoples from all walks of life.

Cambodia is a strong supporter of the Belt and Road Initiative put forward by His Excellency President Xi Jinping. This initiative promotes hard and soft connectivity, friendship, partnership and development based on win-win cooperation, mutual benefits and peaceful co-existence. We can see more and more development projects taking off in Cambodia in the framework of the Belt and Road cooperation. For instance the Phnom Penh – Sihanoukville expressway, the construction projects of new airports in Siem Reap and Phnom Penh and other projects signed during the visit of Prime Minister Li Keqiang in Cambodia in January this year reflects the future growth of our economic cooperation and a good development prospect for Cambodia's socio-economy.

Friendship and cooperation between Cambodia and China, including in the framework of the Belt and Road initiative, will undoubtedly continue to yield fruits for socio-economic development of our two countries and contribute to building a prosperous and harmonious community of common destiny for all mankind.

Question 3: Sihanoukville Special Economic Zone (SSEZ), to some extent, marks the economic and trade cooperation between two countries along the Belt and Road.

Sihanoukville Special Economic Zone (SSEZ) is the largest of its kind in Cambodia and has the backing of both the Governments of Cambodia and China. The launch of the Belt and Road Initiative has really opened up great opportunities for the development SSEZ which currently has the tenancy of more than 100 companies and provides employments to around 20,000 Cambodian workers. Considering that industrial manufacturing sector is a major driver of Cambodia's growth, the SSEZ represents a significant contribution to the socio-economic development and poverty reduction in Cambodia. It also adds greater substance to Cambodia-China relationship.

Located in the Sihanoukville province which has an expanding international airport of its own and home to Cambodia's only deep seaport for international trading, SSEZ is an ideal destination for companies to set up their businesses and industrial plants. Furthermore, the Royal Government of Cambodia intends to turn this province into a vibrant model industrial zone for implementing Cambodia's Industrial Development Policy 2015-2025. With the support from the Chinese Government in the framework of bilateral cooperation Plan to Jointly Build the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Maritime Silk Road, the construction of Phnom Penh – Sihanoukville expressway will soon become a reality. This will make SSEZ all the more attractive to investors.

Therefore, I am optimistic that the goal to have 300 enterprises settled in SSEZ and to generate at least 80.000 employments set by its management can be achieved in the near future.

Question 4: What is your prospect towards our relations in the next 60 years? What should we do to cultivate our friendship forever?

Relations between Cambodia and China has already reached the highest point in the history of our formal ties which started 60 years ago. The current excellent relationship and fruitful cooperation nurtured by the leaders of our two countries serve as a firm foundation for cultivating even closer friendship between our two nations in the next 60 years.

With regular consultations, our policies will be better coordinated, and together we can achieve better outcomes for sustainable development of our countries and contribute more significantly to building a harmonious, peaceful and prosperous world.

Lasting friendship between our peoples can be ensured through reinforcing high political trust, greater people-to-people exchange so as to consolidate mutual spirit of solidarity and respect and greater economic integration.