



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
NATION RELIGION KING

**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

General Department of Asia-Pacific

PRESS RELEASE

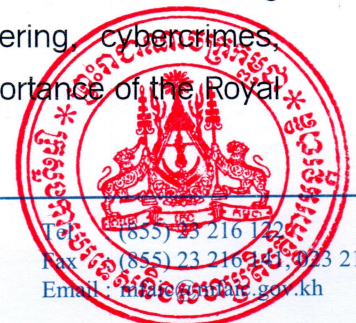
Cambodia hosts the fourth Senior Officials' Talks with Australia

His Excellency PRAK Nguon Hong, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, and Her Excellency Michelle Chan, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia, have co-chaired the fourth Senior Officials' Talks (SOTs) between the two countries. Ambassadors and other government officials also took part in the talks, held in Phnom Penh on 4 April 2024.

The two sides reviewed and examined progress in cooperation in key areas, including exchanges of high-level visits, people-to-people exchanges, security, defense, trade, investment, tourism, agriculture, culture, education, development cooperation, and the Mekong-Australia Partnership. They expressed satisfaction with their long-standing relations since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1952 and agreed to further enhance cooperation.

Both sides highly valued exchanges of high-level visits between leaders, notably the participation of Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei HUN Manet, Prime Minister of Cambodia, in the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit in Melbourne in March this year, and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Foreign Minister Penny Wong in the ASEAN Summits and the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Phnom Penh in 2022.

Regarding security and defense cooperation, both sides were satisfied with the close collaboration between institutions and agreed to continue fostering cooperation in combating human trafficking, money laundering, cybercrimes, transnational crimes, and terrorism. They also stressed the importance of the Royal Australian Navy visiting Cambodia.



Both sides applauded increased two-way trade in recent years and agreed to strengthen trade and investment cooperation. They were optimistic that the launch of Australia's Southeast Asia Economic Strategy to 2040, the establishment of a Trade and Investment Office at the Australian Embassy in Cambodia, and a recent Air Services Agreement would boost trade, investment, tourism, and people-to-people ties.

On agriculture, Cambodia appreciated Australia's support including the Cambodia Agricultural Value Chain program, the development of the Champei Sar 70 rice variety, and the Cambodia Australia Partnership for Resilient Economic Development which play important roles in increasing agricultural productivity. On culture, Cambodia thanked Australia for its assistance in restoring and preserving Cambodia's cultural heritage, including the recent return of three ancient artefacts.

Both sides agreed that capacity building and human resource development are top priorities. The Cambodian side thanked the Australian Government for its invaluable support and assistance in developing Cambodian human resources in almost all areas, especially the Australia Awards Scholarships for young people and government officials to pursue higher education in Australia since 1994. In response to Cambodia's request, the Australian side announced an increase in scholarships from 45 to 50 places per year.

On development cooperation, the Cambodian side commended the Australian Government for being an important and proactive partner, significantly contributing to Cambodia's socio-economic development. Over the past three decades, the Australian Government has provided more than USD 1 billion in official development assistance to Cambodia, supporting priorities such as education, trade, agriculture, health, infrastructure, gender, governance, climate change, and de-mining. The Australian side underlined its desire for a modern and mature partnership to respond to current challenges and its work on a draft Development Partnership Plan for Cambodia for 2024 to 2028. The plan aligns with Australia's new international development policy and the first phase of the Royal Government of Cambodia's Pentagonal Strategy.

On the Mekong-Australia Partnership, the Cambodian side highly appreciated Australia's assistance in areas such as human resource development, women's empowerment, clean water and energy management, modernization of agriculture, the green economy and the digital economy, especially in training and capacity



building of Cambodian diplomats through close cooperation between the National Institute of Diplomacy and International Relations and the Australian Embassy in Cambodia. The Australian side highlighted the importance of supporting resilience and prosperity in the Mekong sub-region through AUD 222.5 million in funding under the partnership over the next five years.

The Cambodian side valued Australia's active engagement in ASEAN and congratulated Australia's success in hosting the ASEAN-Australia Special Summit in March and the adoption of two documents, namely the ASEAN-Australia Leaders' Vision Statement and the Melbourne Declaration. The Australian side thanked the Cambodian delegation, led by **Samdech Thipadei Prime Minister**, for taking part in the Special Summit. Australia also expressed deep appreciation for the advocacy by Cambodia, especially **Samdech Techo HUN Sen**, for the release of Australian economist **Sean Turnell** in Myanmar during Cambodia's ASEAN chairmanship in 2022.

The two sides also exchanged views on international issues of common concern. They reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen relations and cooperation for mutual benefit as well as peace, stability, and prosperity in the region.

The talks were held in a friendly atmosphere with candid discussions amid mutual understanding, reflecting a common desire to enhance and expand cooperation under both bilateral and multilateral frameworks. The two sides agreed to convene the fifth SOTs in Australia in 2025.

In conjunction with the talks, His Excellency **SOK Chenda Sophea**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, hosted a luncheon for the Australian delegation led by Her Excellency Deputy Secretary **Michelle Chan**. During the luncheon, both sides discussed ways to strengthen cooperation in priority and potential areas. The Deputy Prime Minister also expressed satisfaction with the fruitful outcomes of the fourth SOTs between the two foreign ministries.

Phnom Penh, 12 April 2024

