

Written Interview Response

By H.E. Mr. Prak Sokhonn, Senior Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs
and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia

1. Cambodia is a dialogue partner of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).
What are your expectations towards the upcoming SCO Summit?

Answer=> Cambodia has been a Dialogue Partner of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) since 2015. We attached great importance to the SCO which presents itself as a multilateral organization of equal and diverse sovereign members. The SCO is the most populous multilateral organization in the world, a pioneer in the rise of non-Western arenas for global governance, and even a new paradigm of international relations. We have seen the SCO's growing potential for cooperation in the spheres of security and economy as well as other areas of cooperation including trade, investment, energy, tourism and anti-terrorism.

In July last year, Cambodia applied for an observer seat of the SCO. Therefore, we hope that the upcoming 18th SOC Summit taking place this June in Qingdao, would favorably consider Cambodia's application. On top of that, Cambodia expects the Summit to generate more dynamism for enhancing trust and solidarity between member states and building a more cohesive SCO Community. It is also an important moment to reflect on the organization's achievements, long-term challenges and future course of action. We would like to see, in particular, the SCO carries forward the Shanghai Spirit of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for diverse civilizations and pursuit of common development. We also look forwards to the Summit's adoption of a five-year outline for the implementation of the "Treaty on Long-Term Good Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation" which sets the direction of the SCO cooperation in the next phase. Finally, we hope that the Qingdao Summit would achieve a consensus on new measures and come up with a new blueprint for enhanced development cooperation.

2. How do you find the economic cooperation between Cambodia and other SCO members within SCO framework conducive to the economic reform and development of Cambodia ?

Answer=> The SCO represents over 40% of the world population, 20% of the world's GDP and about 80% of the Eurasia's landmass. This fact is evident that SCO members contribute massively to the world population and economy and together they present a world of opportunities for Cambodia. At present, Cambodia is already benefitting significantly from increasing bilateral economic exchanges and development cooperation with China; and we see great potentials for Cambodia to expand its economic horizon through the SCO. As laid out in the Astana Declaration of the SCO Heads of State on 9 June 2017 and the Joint Communiqué of the 16th Meeting of SCO Heads of Government Council in Sochi, on 1 December 2017, SCO members are committed to work in concert to promote open and inclusive trade and fight against protectionism, build mutually beneficial regional partnerships, intensify economic growth, expand transport links, increase investment and promote innovations and employment. SCO have identified specific areas of cooperation which can well be aligned with Cambodia's development policies and strategies. By becoming an observer and possibly a full member of the SCO, Cambodia hopes to benefit from a vast region that is now endeavoring for peace and stability, greater integration, connectivity and seamless flow of trade and investment for all.

On the other hand, considering geographical proximity, Cambodia can serve as a window to the Mekong sub-region and ASEAN, given that it is the only country in Southeast Asia that has started to explore cooperation opportunities under the SCO framework. Cambodia can play a bridging role to connect the economy of the SCO and ASEAN which altogether represent a combined market of about 4.4 billion people - 600 million in ASEAN and 3.8 billion in the SCO. This will definitely offer Cambodia good opportunities to diversify its export markets, build up and expand its economic growth base and further develop its socio-economy.

Furthermore, China's Silk Road Economic Belt which Cambodia strongly supports stretches across a region encompassing SCO members who are also supportive of this remarkable initiative. SCO can engender synergy from sub-regional and individual country's efforts to create equal development opportunities for the entire region.

3. Security and economic cooperation are the two wheels of SCO. What is Cambodia's position towards security cooperation within SCO framework and what role does the Cambodian side play in this regard ?

Answer=> If we look into fundamental principles of the SCO, it's no doubt that they are conformed to Cambodia's core principles of "permanent neutrality" under its Constitution. The SCO does not intend to form any alliance or direct its actions against any sovereign entity. It actively and consistently pursues dialogue, exchanges and cooperation, and stands for strict adherence to the purposes and principles enshrined in the UN Charter, such as equality and sovereignty of states, non-interference in other's domestic affairs, respect for territorial integrity, inviolability of borders, non-aggression, peaceful settlement of disputes, and non-use of force or threat of force as well as other universally recognized norms of international law. These principles aimed at maintaining peace and security, establishing partnerships between States, protecting national sovereignty and respecting the right to determine one's own destiny and path for political, socioeconomic and cultural development.

We are of the view that SCO's security cooperation framework is a complementarity to other regional security architectures, such as ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and East Asia Summit (EAS) in which Cambodia is a party. Real security is sustainable peace and stability and realizing one's own security at the sacrifice of others' is no longer acceptable. Thus, security cooperation within the SCO framework is of importance for a broader region which can benefit from SCO collaborative efforts. Terrorism, narcotics and illicit arms trafficking and other types of criminal activity of a transnational character and illegal migration requires joint efforts across the border to be effectively addressed. Cambodia believes that it can contribute proactive to the efforts of SCO Member States to respond to these security challenges. The SCO's security cooperation such as through multiple joint anti-terrorism exercises has effectively helped to curb the spread of terrorism, separatism and extremism in the region.

Cambodia is keen to share its visions and experiences and contribute to SCO's endeavor to maintain regional peace and stability. It can also benefit from the SCO security cooperation framework.

4. Since the establishment of the diplomatic relations between Cambodia and China 60 years ago, the bilateral relations have been developing at a fast speed and practical

cooperation between our two countries has been deepening continuously. What do you think are the most important outcomes of our bilateral cooperation? And what future plans does the Cambodian side have for the two sides within SCO framework?

Answer=> His Majesty Preah Bat Samdech Preah Norodom Sihanouk “Preah Borom Ratanak Kaudh”, the late King-Father of Cambodia, saw from the very start of our diplomatic relations in 1958 that Cambodia can find a trusted friend in China and that close bilateral cooperation between our two countries will be mutually beneficial and favorable for our socio-economic development, contributing to peace, stability and prosperity in the region. It is worth recalling that, when Premier Wen Jiabao paid an official visit to Cambodia in April 2006, Cambodia and China decided to establish a “**Comprehensive Partnership of Cooperation**” in order to consolidate traditional friendship and mutual trust, promoting economic and trade exchange as well as to increase exchange and cooperation on the socio-cultural and security fronts. Fraternal ties and fruitful cooperation between our two countries had been much further strengthened and deepened that our leaders agreed to raise the level of our relations to “**Comprehensive Strategic Partnership of Cooperation**”, on 13 December 2010. With strong political commitment and efforts of our top leaders, a lot have been achieved.

Most importantly, friendship and high political trust between our leaders and at all levels has been built; and this serves as a steady foundation for cooperation in all feasible areas. Cambodia fully respects China’s sovereignty and strictly adheres to “One China” policy. Likewise, China respects Cambodia sovereignty and its choice of path to national development. We work proactively together and on equal footing through bilateral and multilateral frameworks to serve our mutual interests and contribute to peace, security and shared prosperity in region and beyond.

As a major donor, China has contributed enormously to Cambodia's success in its development policy which places high priority on building transport infrastructure, irrigation system, human capital and efficient power supply. For example, China has funded many construction projects of roads and bridges which help narrow Cambodia’s connectivity gap internally and within the region. Cooperation in hydropower development

improves Cambodia's living standard and investment competitiveness. In fact China now ranks first in terms of investment and also the lead country in the number of tourists coming to Cambodia. Last year, we received around 1.2 million Chinese visitors, contributing not only to Cambodia's economic growth, but also better understanding between our two peoples. At the same time, bilateral trade has been increasing year by year and reached more than US\$ 5.5 billion in 2017.

Bilateral mechanisms and cooperation frameworks between the two countries have been established to ensure that cooperation in all fields are further carried out smoothly and effectively. For instance, Cambodia-China Inter-Governmental Coordination Committee was set up in 2014, tasked with the duty of following up and setting the course of actions for promoting comprehensive strategic partnership of cooperation. We signed in May 2017, the Outline of Bilateral Cooperation Plan to Jointly Build the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, which sets key areas of cooperation that will mutually benefit both our nations, namely infrastructure, agriculture, capacity building, Special Economic Zone, culture and tourism, finance and eco-environment protection.

For future plans, Cambodia will work closely with China to strengthen both bilateral and multilateral cooperation including through the SCO framework. We will continue to deepen mutual trust through regular consultations and find new approaches to further promote win-win cooperation.

5. While Cambodia and China are steadily pushing forward cooperation in political and economic fields, what have benefited the Cambodian side most in people-to-people exchanges such as culture, science and education ?

Answer=> People-to-people interaction and mutual understanding is the cornerstone of cordial and long lasting relations between nations. Therefore, the leaders of Cambodia and China rightly agreed to promote exchange of visits between government and private institutions, conduct youth and cultural exchange programs and also jointly work to boost tourism and art shows. For example, taking the opportunity of the 60th anniversary of the establishment of Cambodia-China diplomatic relations, various commemorative events have been organized, including joint cultural shows in Cambodia in alignment with the

Chinese New Year, photo exhibitions, 2018 Cambodia-China Business Forum and the 1st Cambodia-China Tourism Summit. Meanwhile, Cambodian student association in China also held Khmer New Year celebration with some joint art shows in Jiangsi, China. The Royal Academy of Cambodia in cooperation with the Confucious Institute in Cambodia also plans to hold “The 60th Anniversary of Cambodia-China Relations: Sicientists Gathering” from 2 to 22 June 2018 at Phnom Penh Hotel to promote science-related experience exchanges. These activities will no doubt help to enhance mutual understanding and networking between our peoples from all walks of life, thereby consolidating mutual spirit of solidarity and friendship.

On education front, Cambodia has been benefiting significantly from Chinese cooperation in human resource development. Hundreds of Cambodians have received scholarship support from the Chinese Government as well as Chinese universities to pursue tertiary study in verious fields in China. In 2017, the Chinese government, under the bilateral and ASEAN framework, provided more than 180 scholarships to Cambodian students and recieved more than 560 officers from the Ministry of National Defense of Cambodia for short term training in China. These human resources will not only contribute to Cambodia’s development, but also serve as cultural ambassadors.

Tourism cooperation has also yielded very fruitful outcome. Currently, there are 15 airline companies operating 155 direct flights per week between Cambodia and China. Facilitated by these direct airlinks, many Cambodians are able to visit China and increasing number of Chinese tourists have come to Cambodia. In 2017 Cambodia received 5.6 million international tourists, of whom 1.2 million are Chinese, representing an increase of 46% and putting the number of Chinese tourists on top of the list. It is indeed a big contribution to Cambodia’s econòmic growth, as tourism is one of the four major divers of Cambodia’s economy. We hope that there will be more direct flights in the near future; and with Cambodia’s readiness for more Chinese visitors, the target of attracting 2 million Chinese tourists to Cambodia by 2020 will be achieved.

6. What specific measures would you suggest the two sides should take in order to promote the long-term development of our bilaterall relations ?

Answer=> Cambodia steadfastly follows its “One China” policy and fully respect Chinese sovereignty. We highly appreciate China’s adherence to its policy of mutual respect for Cambodia’s sovereignty and its unwavering support for Cambodia to choose its own development path compatible to its own context. Cambodia strongly supports the Belt and Road Initiative and is firmly committed to contribute to the success of this win-win scheme initiated by China, which we believe will bring immense benefit not only for China, but also Cambodia along with other countries in region.

To further enhance and deepen the comprehensive strategic partnership of cooperation to serve the common interests of our two peoples and contribute to the maintenance of peace, security and development, both sides should jointly implement the following actions:

- Reinforce high political trust and continue to strengthen good traditions in exchanging visits and maintaining regular contacts among leaders of related ministries and institutions at all levels.
- Endeavor to increase people-to-people exchange, especially among the youths of the two countries, so as to consolidate friendship and mutual spirit of solidarity. To this end, cooperation between civil societies of the two countries should be encouraged.
- Continue to maintain close and active cooperation in the framework of the regional and international organizations to advance mutual interests and contribute to preserving peace, security, stability and development in the region and in the world.
- Work jointly through existing bilateral and multi-lateral mechanism to deepen and expand the scope of cooperation and make full use of economic potentials for sustainable development of the two countries.
