



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
NATION RELIGION KING

**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

Department of Information

**Statement of the Royal Government of Cambodia
on Further Steps to Strengthen Democracy and Political Space**

25 years ago, Cambodia's first post-war multi-party parliamentary elections took place under the supervision of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in line with the spirit of the 1991 Paris Peace Accord. Following the adoption of a new Constitution, the Kingdom of Cambodia has been ruled with a constitutional monarchy based on multi-party liberal democracy. However, the UNTAC had departed from Cambodia while full peace was out of reach. It took another 5 years before peace, reconciliation and national unity were realized thanks to the Win-Win policy and the personal efforts of unification of Samdech Prime Minister.

Since then, Cambodia with support of friendly countries and international institutions has strived to rebuild the country and to promote the citizens' rights, freedoms and dignity while maintaining peace, stability, social security and public order as well as promoting development and enhancing the quality of life of the citizens.

In full conformity with the Constitution, Cambodia has held regular elections of the senate, parliament, provincial/municipal/district council and communal council during which the citizens have exercised their political rights and will to select their leaders in a free, fair, transparent and reliable fashion. The above-said electoral processes coupled with wide-ranging forms and mechanisms of participatory consultations and decision-making with Non-Governmental Organizations, associations and the public in the national governance has gradually consolidated the young democratic foundation of this nation.

To uphold the aforementioned invaluable achievements and to improve the political climate and democratic space for the citizens to exercise their legitimate rights and freedoms in the spirit of national reconciliation, the Royal Government of Cambodia would like to underline its position and further steps to be taken as follows:

1. The election of the sixth legislature of the National Assembly on 29 July 2018 was conducted in a free, fair, peaceful and transparent manner. 20 registered political parties contested in the voting, and 83.02% of the registered voters cast their ballots to express their desire to see continuity in the country's sustained path of peace, stability, democracy and rule of law.



By November 2018, there are 41 registered political parties which actively engage in promoting multi-party liberal democracy. Legal actions against political parties violating the laws constitute the enforcement of principles of the rule of law to strengthen the process of democracy and to guarantee peace and stability, which serves as a basis for long-term sustainable socio-economic development.

In order to further promote democracy and the rule of law, the National Assembly is reviewing legal provisions to enable individuals who were banned from politics to resume their political activities. Moreover, the Royal Government has set up participatory consultative mechanisms to collect multifaceted inputs for the benefit of national construction, including among others the establishment of the Supreme Consultative Council and the creation of a public consultative forum within the process of legal and policy formulation.

At the same time, the Royal Government has also called on the judiciary as an independent body to expedite the trial proceedings of persons who are being sued or charged according to the prevailing court procedures so as to safeguard their rights as guaranteed under the Constitution.

2. The Royal Government is strongly committed to promoting genuine partnership with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in all aspects of social development. In this spirit, the Ministry of Interior has initiated several important measures such as:
 - Removing requirement to notify local authorities three days in advance of CSOs' planned activities;
 - Holding regular consultative fora with civil society every six months or when necessary. The second meeting is planned in January 2019. Similar format of such consultative platforms will also be organized at the municipal/provincial level;
 - Establishing an inter-ministerial working group led by the Ministry to address CSOs' requests and concerns, including issues related to the Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations as well as suggested amendments.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation will also organize a similar consultative forum with international NGOs.

3. The Royal Government has introduced a number of steps to address matters related to labor and trade union rights. Among those, the Royal Government has established a National Committee for the review of international conventions which Cambodia has ratified to consult with relevant stakeholders as well as the International Labor Organization (ILO). The Ministry of Labor and Vocational Training had also submitted a roadmap to ILO last July to respond to the 10-point recommendations adopted at the 106th International Labor Conference in 2017.

Moreover, the Ministry will set up a working group to organize consultative fora with professional organizations, representatives of employers and



employees as well as relevant stakeholders to address their challenges in the implementation of the Trade Union Law. The Working Group will also conduct consultations to collect suggestions from stakeholders to improve the Trade Union Law as necessary.

For the unions that are embedded in court cases, the Royal Government has been paying close attention to expedite the resolution in accordance with existing laws and procedures to ensure promotion of the rights and freedom of the unions in protecting workers' rights.

4. The Royal Government always cherishes promotion of freedom of press and freedom of expression in accordance with the Constitution and laws in force.

Previously, there were complaints that freedom of press has been restricted, particularly regarding The Cambodia Daily, Radio Free Asia and Voice of America. For these cases, here are the facts:

- The Cambodia Daily shut down its publication on its own due to its failure to fulfill tax obligations in accordance with the Law on Taxation. In the event that such liabilities are legally met, the newspaper can resume its operation.
- The closure of Radio Free Asia' and Voice of America' representative offices was self-initiated. The two radio stations are free to reopen their offices in Cambodia.

5. Although the land management system in Cambodia has been completely destroyed by wars and genocidal regime, the Royal Government has introduced policy and legal frameworks to manage the land sector so as to ensure the rights and interests of people and proper land use.

Pertaining to sugarcane ELCs, the Royal Government has made great efforts to coordinate and to completely resolve the outstanding claims.

For the remaining cases in Koh Kong and Preah Vihear provinces, the Ministry of Land, Urban Planning and Construction will establish a working group to settle all those issues and welcome the participation from representatives of the European Union, CSOs as well as the local communities.

Moreover, the Royal Government will continue to address other pending land disputes, promote and accelerate nation-wide land registration, including that for indigenous communities, provide social land concession and land for production to landless people, as well as provide incentives to the development of affordable housing.

The Royal Government of Cambodia is counting on the support of all relevant stakeholders to contribute in the above efforts to ensuring a peaceful and harmonious society with full respect for the rule of law.

Phnom Penh, 03 December 2018

