

Statement by
H.E. Mr. PRAK Sokhonn, DPM and FM
At the High-Level Segment
The 49th Session of the Human Rights Council
28 February 2022, Geneva

Mr. President,
Madam High Commissioner,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

1. 2022 is another year in the grip of particular challenges with lingering uncertainties and far-reaching repercussions. Over the past two years, the coronavirus and its variants have wreaked havoc in terms of public health, socio-economy and politics.
2. Globally, the pandemic costed millions of lives and put a heavy strain on the health system. The gain in poverty reduction was reversed. Gender, educational, digital and social disparity was further widened.
3. The intensified power rivalries cause further stresses upon the delicate peace and security. To make things worse, human rights and democracy are weaponized against the out-group through the

application of legislative and economic tools with shameless hypocrisy and double standards.

Mr. President!

4. When assuming this Council's presidency, you highlighted the politicization of this body, a growing phenomenon that could polarize and paralyze its work as happened with its predecessor, the Human Rights Commission which refused, during more than ten years, to condemn the crimes against humanity and the genocide committed in Cambodia between 1975 and 1979. The Council must be a fulcrum of genuine and respectful dialogues to deepen understanding of our commonalities and differences about human rights.
5. The politicization puts Cambodia at a crossroads of markedly divergent perceptions. To the fair and moderate observers, Cambodia is recognized as a "success story" of a country devastated by armed conflicts and genocide, a country which has reconciled amongst its own people, and achieved enormous socio-economic transformations.
6. Our response to the health predicament holds human rights at the core, especially right to life, health and survival. Rounds of social protection

interventions to the vulnerable and disadvantaged is a top priority of our government to leave no one behind. Among them are cash scheme for the impoverished, monthly support income for employees affected by the Covid-19 in the field of tourism and women-dominant garment factories.

7. Our free national vaccination campaign, including for children and foreign nationals, has achieved 90% of the total population, well ahead of the target set by the WHO. Since last November, the kingdom has re-opened full socio-economic activities on a step-by-step approach and in a vigilant manner.
8. While walking the talk, “No one can be safe until everyone is safe”, Cambodia has donated millions of masks along with vaccines and other medical gears to several countries in our solidarity and collective efforts to contain the infection surge.
9. Last year, Cambodia renewed the three-decade-old operational presence of the OHCHR’s field office and the mandate of the Country Special Rapporteur, attesting to our goodwill to cooperate with the human rights mechanism of the UN and our resolute commitment to all human rights in the country. The process toward the creation of the National Human Rights Institution is progressing with a draft law

being broadly consulted with all stakeholders. Cambodia accepted to become “a champion country” in implementing the Global Compact for Migration. The Kingdom for the first time met the LDC graduation criteria.

10. Unfortunately, all positive stories of Cambodia are hardly reflected in the highly selective reports of the UN human rights mechanisms. Unfortunately, to a few biased others, they only frame my country in terms of the shortcomings in the values of perfect human rights, an exemplary standard that even their own countries could not hope to achieve. The critics at all times portray certain opposition politicians and NGOs as martyrs of the human rights and democracy and unfortunately, they never condemn their wrongdoings, namely harmful populist rhetoric, fake news, foreign collusion, racial incitement and provocation to sedition, all of which are well penalized in the Western countries.

11. Secretary-General Guterres emphasized that “Human rights must never be a vehicle for double standards or a means to pursue hidden agendas.” Regrettably, some countries construed our application of laws, aiming to shield the law-abiding citizens, as clampdown of freedoms. Paradoxically, the same measures, when employed in their own

countries, are considered necessary and lawful to maintain public order, social stability and national security.

Mr. President!

12. Democracy cannot grow by itself, nor it can be conjured. Democracy is neither an imported nor exported goods. Democracy is a shared value achieved from learning, built and strengthened gradually, taking into account national particularities and context.

13. Human rights are shared values for all humanity. But no country can claim the monopoly of the model of human rights and democracy. Centuries-old democracies have been struggling on with their systematic human rights mess.

14. To conclude, Cambodia remains resolute in defending what it believes the rightful path, that is to uphold its sovereignty, guarantee rights to life and survival, shield law-abiding citizens and protect its hard-won peace. The Kingdom remains steadfast in pursuing our irreversible democratic journey with pluralism, including ensuring that the coming elections will be free and fair, peaceful and reflect the will of the people. ENDS