

Statement of
H.E. Mr. PRAK Sokhonn, Sr Minister,
Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
on Political, Economic and Cultural and Social Cooperation
(Manila, 06 December 2017, 10:00 minutes)

- *Excellency Alan Peter S. Cayetano,*
- *Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. Cambodia and the Philippines have enjoyed a long-lasting friendship and good cooperation for the last 60 years since our diplomatic relations were officially established on 20 August 1957. Today, I am glad that we are holding our second JCBC in the year that we are celebrating our 60th anniversary.

(Exchange of Visits)

2. Let me state at the outset that, irrespective of the passage of time, friendship does not grow by itself. Friendship needs nurturing. In the case of our bilateral relations, it was clear that both countries' governments and peoples have made considerable efforts to strengthen our friendship ties, starting from the top-level visits down to people-to-people exchanges.

3. The high-level State visit of H.E. President Rodrigo Roa Duterte last December to Cambodia, followed by his participation at the World Economic Forum on ASEAN last May marked a significant contribution to the deepening of our friendship. On our part, Samdech Techo Prime Minister Hun Sen visited the Philippines twice this year to attend the 30th and 31st ASEAN Summits and Related Summits and he also managed to pay a visit to Clark at the invitation of former President Macapagal Arroyo.

4. Moreover, both of our countries have maintained frequent engagement at various senior policy and technical

levels. Concrete working mechanism has been put in place to coordinate such bilateral engagement. The case in point is the 2nd Meeting of JCBC that gathers us all here today.

– *Excellency Co-Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

5. On **Defense and Security**, Cambodia and the Philippines have enjoyed good cooperation, especially in terms of human resources development. Cambodia has dispatched several officers to attend courses offered by the Armed Forces of the Philippines Command and the General Staff College, namely the “Infantry Officer Advanced Course”, and the “Public Affairs Course”. Vice versa, the Philippines has sent its officers to participate in a training course on mine field management at the Cambodian Training Center for Multinational Peacekeeping Forces.

6. At the policy level, I would like to recall the fruitful discussions last December between General Pol Saroeun, Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces (RCAF), and General Educardo Año, Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. Moreover, last October, we had the visit to the Philippines of Major General Hun Manith, Director of the Cambodian Intelligence and Research Department (CIRD) of RCAF. As a result, good progress was made to advance more cooperation and exchanges between the armed forces our two countries. I believe we are now in a good position to sign the MoU on Defense Cooperation.

Excellency Co-Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

7. On **Economic Cooperation** front, I noted with satisfaction a positive upward trend in bilateral trade. While noting an increase of our bilateral trade, I am of the view that this trade volume is still low and I agree with Secretary Cayetano that there are tremendous opportunities for expanding this two-way trade. To that effect, I am optimistic that the renewal of the Memorandum of Agreement on Rice Trade between our two countries and its subsequent

implementation will contribute to the augmentation of our trade volume.

8. In terms of investment, Cambodia is now home to more than 40 Filipino companies operating in various sectors, like construction, transport, import-export, real estate, food, microfinance, garment and service. I am encouraged to learn that our two countries have agreed to work on an Agreement on the Avoidance of Double Taxation. Pre-negotiation is already in motion with the first meeting due to be held from 13 to 15 December 2017 in Phnom Penh. When concluded, and I hope it will be soon, such agreement will go a long way to give extra incentives for both of our businesspeople to consider investing more in our respective economies.

9. you have noted, Excellency, the MOU on Agricultural and Agribusiness cooperation that was signed in September 2015. Since then, a Joint Technical Working Group was established in our respective country and the first meeting will be held in Cambodia in early 2018. You will be glad to know that we have had already some initial results. Just last month, our Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has received a delegation from the Philippines' Department of Agriculture, which was keen to explore setting up a pepper plantation in Cambodia.

Excellency Co-Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen,

10. **People-to-people exchanges** have been on the upswing trend. Currently, there are 4 direct flights per week servicing between Siem Reap and Manila and as a result, Cambodia was able to welcome more than 108,000 Filipino visitors last year. I anticipate that in the near future, we will conclude a direct air connection between Phnom Penh and Manila, at which time, I am confident that we will be able to boost not only more two-way tourist flows but also facilitate more economic and business interactions between our two capitals.

11. On **Tourism Cooperation**, both of our tourism ministries are working hard to finalize our tourism cooperation framework. For instance, the Joint Working Group has met three times already for the last two years in Siem Reap and Manila. Their fourth meeting is due to be held next year in the Philippines.

12. In the field of **Culture Cooperation**, we have already in place an Agreement on Culture and an Executive Program for Cultural Agreement covering the period of 2016-2019. In fact, right after this meeting, on behalf of the Cambodian Minister of Culture and Fine Arts, I will have the pleasure to sign an Agreement on the Prevention of Looting and Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property with the Hon. Virgilio Almario, President of the National Commission for Culture and Arts (NCCA). For the records, I would like to recognize the successful trip of the Hon. Virgilio Almario to Cambodia last August when he led a delegation of art troupes to showcase Filipino culture as part of the activities to commemorate the 60th anniversary of our diplomatic relations. I would also like to thank you for the prospect of training our athletes.

Excellency Co-Chair,

13. Cultural heritage preservation and protection means a lot to Cambodia. In addition to the existing two World Heritage sites of Angkor Wat and Preah Vihear, Cambodia was honored last July to have another Temple Zone of Sambor Prei Kuk inscribed on the World Heritage List. May I take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the Philippines for its valuable support during our lobbying stage in UNESCO to get this site inscribed.

14. Let me wrap up my intervention by touching briefly in **other possible areas of cooperation**. For my part, I can see that we have ample possibilities to increase cooperation in

the fields environment, healthcare and legal matter. I understand that both sides agree to start negotiating a few important instruments, such as an Extradition Treaty, a Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters and a Treaty on Transfer of Sentenced Persons. I hope to see some early outcomes in the very near future. I also wish to explore partnership between our newly-established National Institute of Diplomacy and International Relations and the Philippines Foreign Service Institute.”

Thank you!