



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
NATION RELIGION KING



**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

**Statement of the Spokesperson of the
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
of the Kingdom of Cambodia**

1. The spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is utterly dismayed by the announcement on 6 December 2017 by the US Department of State on additional visa restriction in response to legal actions taken by the competent authorities within the sovereign rights of the Kingdom of Cambodia.
2. Cambodia noted with deep regret that the latest decision made by the US Department of State did not take into consideration Cambodia's recent political development from legal and factual dimensions, and that the move was politically motivated with prejudice and double standards. The decision ran counter to the ongoing efforts to improve Cambodia-US relations in the wake of the unjust visa sanction instituted by the US government in September 2017 over a simple fact that Cambodia sought more consideration from the United States on humanitarian and compassionate aspect with regard to the repatriation program.
3. It is undeniable that promotion of democracy and respect for human rights must be in parallel with the enforcement of the rule of law. Therefore, the legal measures against a handful of law-breaking individuals, NGOs and media outlets should not be construed as an attempt to undermine Cambodia's democratic space. These actions have been taken to safeguard Cambodia's sovereignty, peace, stability and national security. Other politicians, media outlets and NGOs, including the Cambodia Center for Human Rights that do not breach the laws continue carrying out their respective jobs freely across the country. In this connection, any support for such law-violating individuals and organizations is tantamount to the killing of Cambodia's peaceful democratization process under the rule of law.
4. The issue of foreign interference into domestic affairs is as sensitive to Cambodia as to any other sovereign states. The case of Paul Manafort and Rick Gates clearly demonstrates how sensitive the US is in regard to foreign interference. Historical facts

have proved that the foreign interference often results in destructive consequences as in the case of Cambodia and other nations that have, in recent time, fallen prey to the counterproductive agent of change. The bitter experience of wars and genocide for nearly three decades has made it the top priority of Cambodia to maintain the hard-earned peace and stability and to strengthen the rule of law in order to ensure that our rapid national development will continue unimpeded.

5. The US allegation that the Royal Government of Cambodia is taking anti-democratic action is paradoxical given its past policy of undemocratic changes leading to destruction on this small nation and its people. The most glaring irony of justice is the fact that the then US administration was spearheading a coalition that supported the Khmer Rouge regime, which ruled the country with complete contempt for human rights and democracy, to occupy the Cambodian seat at the UN, and engendering the adoption of the UN Resolution that prohibited development aid to a nation devastated by the American bombings.
6. The US reaction to Cambodia's recent political development does not appear to be about democratic values considering its different treatment towards various countries on the matter of democracy and respect for human rights. Such assessment was clearly highlighted in the question session during the Press Briefing of the Department of State on 17 November 2017.
7. With many political parties thriving in Cambodia, the democratic space and multi-party system still prevail. Cambodia is committed to pursuing multi-party democracy in conformity with Cambodian Constitution and to holding the upcoming Senate election and general election on 25 February and 29 July 2018 respectively in a free, fair, and orderly manner which is acceptable to Cambodian constituents.

Phnom Penh, 7 December 2017

