

Script for Recorded Video
By H.E. Prak Sokhonn
Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and
International Cooperation
On the Celebration of the ASEM Day
01 March 2021

**Distinguished ASEM SOM Leaders,
ASEF Executive Director,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

1. Today marks the auspicious 25th anniversary of ASEM. As the Host of the ASEM Summit (ASEM13), we organized a special celebration of the ASEM Day in Phnom Penh last year to showcase the ASEM process and promote its significance and visibility to some 5,000 members of the diplomatic corps, Cambodian public and private institutions, young entrepreneurs and students.
2. This year, the celebration of the ASEM Day is even more special as it coincides with the ASEM Senior Officials Retreat. The Retreat signifies the unity and solidarity of ASEM Partners in jointly addressing the public health crisis and socio-economic fallouts from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Retreat helps bring momentum to the ASEM progress and at the same time energize our preparation for the ASEM13 Summit.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies, and Gentlemen,

3. The ASEM process has indeed come a long way since its inception on 1 March 1996. Throughout its existence, ASEM has become integral to multilateralism and global governance, as 53 ASEM Partners from both Asia and Europe exchange views on a broad range of regional and global concerns. In the process, we have strengthened and deepened our cooperation for the mutual interests of our peoples and beyond.

4. Over the past several years, however, multilateralism has been under mounting pressure due to rising unilateralism, protectionism and political populism. We have also witnessed the weakening of some countries' commitment to multilateralism and other countries turning away from multilateral solutions. As UN Secretary-General António Guterres stated during the recent Davos Agenda 2021, I echo him that “we need one global economy with universal respect for international law, and a multipolar world with strong multilateral institutions.”

5. COVID-19 pandemic and our connectedness are a stark reminder that no country is safe unless every country is safe and that multilateralism does matter and is ever more relevant. We, therefore, must uphold multilateralism and the rules-based trading system that have been the cornerstone of global peace and prosperity over the last seven decades. At this moment of unprecedented global challenges, I am pleased that ASEM remains committed to these principles as reflected in the ASEM Ministerial Statement on COVID-19, which was adopted last September.

6. I firmly believe that the theme of the ASEM13 Summit, **“Strengthening Multilateralism for Shared Growth”**, has proven to be more relevant than ever. As we are hit hard and suffer from the crisis, all ASEM Partners need to work together in a new normal and vulnerable world to promote multilateralism in order to overcome COVID-19, advance the post-pandemic socio-economic recovery, and address existing and emerging regional and global issues with the aim of attaining the UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

7. Cambodia stands ready to host the historic ASEM13 Summit and related Side Events. I hope that all distinguished delegates will be able to visit our Kingdom,

experience our warm hospitality, cherish the fruition of peace and stability, witness our socio-economic progress, and enjoy our magnificent natural beauty and cultural richness. Samdech Techo Prime Minister Hun Sen and I, myself, look forward to welcoming you all to the ASEM13 Summit in Phnom Penh this year.

8. On this positive note, I am delighted to join you all to commemorate the ASEM Day and I wish the ASEM SOM Retreat a great success.

Thank you!