Phnom Penh, January 27th, 2016

JOINT STATEMENT
ON
NEW ROAD TRAFFIC LAW IN CAMBODIA

Every day, at least 6 lives are lost and 17 more seriously injured due to road crashes in Cambodia. This accounts for over 30 times more deaths than malaria, dengue fever, and landmines/UXOs combined. From 2014 to 2015, we gave witness to a 5% increase in fatalities – marking continuation of a devastating trend that emerged from the early 2000s. Moreover, Cambodia loses 2-3% of its GDP each year due to road crashes.

These thousands of deaths, life-altering injuries, the immeasurable trauma, suffering, and grief caused to victims and their loved ones, the burden of lost livelihoods, damage to property and infrastructure, expensive medical and disability costs – all of this is preventable. The responsibility to do so, to protect the citizens of this country, falls on the Royal Government of Cambodia. It is only through effective legislation, law enforcement and public education that we can – and must - end this crisis.

In a recent public survey, over 97% of respondents indicated support for government enforcement of the new Road Traffic Law. Most expressed the additional wish that the Government provide public notices and reminders to support awareness raising and education on the law.

Stringent enforcement of the Road Traffic Law in Cambodia, combined with ongoing public education and awareness raising, is ultimately a “win-win” situation: the Government will save countless lives and dollars by instituting proven road safety interventions, while upholding the stated wishes and well-being of its public.

Therefore, in the interest of the citizens and the country, we urge the Government of Cambodia to consider the following:

1. Implement **stringent, targeted law enforcement** addressing the identified key risk factors contributing to road injuries, disabilities and deaths.

   Extensive reports published by Cambodia’s National Road Safety Committee (NRSC), reveal that the main contributing factors behind the road crisis are: **speeding, drink-driving, and lack of seat-belt or helmet use**. Enforcement that targets these risk factors can be highly effective in lowering injury and death rates. It is worth noting that in a neighboring country effective law enforcement was proven to increase motorcycle helmet use rates to over 90% almost overnight.

   For effective and fair enforcement, the Government must ensure that traffic police and enforcement bodies have the adequate capacity to implement their functions in an ethical, professional manner. To this end, relevant frameworks should be developed to uphold transparency and accountability in enforcement of the law.

2. In a country where 73% of road deaths are motorcycle riders, the Government should **retain the license provision for 125cc motorcycle riders**.

   Licenses are a necessary means of verifying an individual’s eligibility to operate a motorized vehicle, including in regards to proper training and knowledge of traffic laws, as well as a valid age and health status. Evidence shows that an effective licensing system results in drivers with greater knowledge and control of their vehicle and with an enhanced awareness of risk recognition and risk management. Licenses should be affordable and accessible for all citizens, preferably at the

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4 According to a July 2015 analysis by AIP Foundation of relevant Government reports.
5 Conducted at the end of 2015 by the Advocacy and Policy Institute; 1,136 persons surveyed, of which 283 were female.
6 According to the official Road Crash and Victim Information System 2014 Report.
district level. A grace period for enforcement of this requirement may be permitted as appropriate to allow for registration and issuance of documents.

3. Support **public awareness campaigns** to increase knowledge of traffic laws and affect positive road behavior.

An important aspect of effective law enforcement is the public’s knowledge and understanding – what the laws are, how they will be enforced, and why it is in fact in their very interest that this be done. Local level traffic police and the sub-national councils are in a unique position to disseminate key information through various platforms, and influence a community’s attitudes toward road safety. To this end, the government should run targeted public awareness campaigns on the aforementioned road safety risks across national broadcasting channels. The sub-national level should also be allocated a sufficient budget to implement local-level road safety awareness campaigns to complement enforcement activities.

4. **Consult key road safety stakeholders as well as the public** with regards to issues of road safety and relevant law enforcement.

The signees of this joint statement urge the Government to uphold the new Road Traffic Law and enforce it accordingly. However, any review of the law or its enforcement plan conducted by the Government should be done in consultation with key stakeholders, including road safety NGOs as well as the wider public. Citizens should be given an opportunity to present their views on issues that affect them. At the same time, policy that benefits the public interest must ultimately rely on sound evidence and data, not merely voiced public opinion. In this regard, expertise and years of experience among international and local organizations can offer a valuable perspective on road safety in Cambodia and as a global public health crisis. The Government is therefore encouraged to consult with the public and signees of this joint statement and welcome select experts as observers during working group sessions on issues related to road safety.

Sincerely, on behalf of the network of Road Safety NGOs in Cambodia,

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**Background Information for Media:** This past September, the United Nations adopted its Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which set a comprehensive “to-do” list for member countries, Cambodia included. In a landmark decision for the development community, the SDGs included two key road safety targets, recognizing road injury and death as a major global issue – one that is projected to become the 7th leading cause of death world-wide by 2030, if nothing is done now to stop it. In January 2015, the Royal Government of Cambodia promulgated a new road traffic law, strengthening previous legislation from 2007. In July 2015, a sub-decree on provisional penalties was passed stipulating enforcement fines for the different violations of the law, including speeding, drink-driving, riding on a motorcycle without a helmet, lacking licensing and registration for motor vehicles. Enforcement of the new law began from January 1st, 2016 and received public criticism, primarily on Facebook and in regards to the cost of licensure, registration, and fines. The Prime Minister swiftly responded to these criticisms by overriding the requirement of licenses for motorcycles 125cc or under, and by ordering the formation of two governmental working groups – one to review the road traffic law in consideration of amendments, and the other to devise means to increase public awareness and knowledge of the law and
how it will be enforced. Within this context, Cambodia’s network of Road Safety NGOs issues this Joint Statement to the Government.