

**Statements**  
**on**  
**Experiences, Challenges,**  
**and Cooperation in Partnership Dialogue**  
**Mrs. Sin Putheary**  
**Executive Director of Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC)**  
**On**  
**Government and Civil Society Organization Partnership Dialogue (5<sup>th</sup>)**  
**10 January 2023**

- **Samdech Krala Hom Sar Kheng, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior**
- **His Excellency Bun Hon, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Interior**
- **Excellencies, Lok Chumteavs, Ladies and Gentlemen**
- **Representative of the Ministry of Interior (General Department of Administration, General Department of National Police)**
- **Representative of the Ministry of Economy and Finance**
- **Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation**
- **Representative of the Ministry of Justice**
- **Representative of the National Bank of Cambodia**
- **Representative of the Council for the Development of Cambodia**
- **Representative of Accounting and Auditing Regulators**
- **Representative of Phnom Penh Capital Hall**
- **Excellencies, Lok Chumteavs of the Board of Governors of the Capital and Provinces, Ladies and Gentlemen, Representatives of the Local and Foreign Non-Governmental Organizations, Representatives of Provincial Networks, Development Partners, National and International Guests**

Today, I have the great honor and I am pleased to provide the statements on the experiences, challenges, and cooperation in the 5th Partnership Dialogue between the Government and Civil Society

On behalf of the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC), established in 1990, which has more than 200 members local and foreign non-governmental organizations; and a coordinating secretariat for the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), NGOForum, CPDD, which are the membership based organizations at the national and sub-national networks, we would like to express our appreciation to the leadership of the Ministry of Interior for organizing this "5th Partnership Dialogue between the government and CSOs."

**Samdech, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, Presiding Committees, and Distinguished Guests!**

We would like to express our thank to the Ministry of Interior for enhancing the cooperation by organizing the first Partnership Dialogue Forum on 21 June 2018, in which 12 requests from the CSOs were submitted. The Ministry of Interior responded to those requests and recommendations at the second Partnership Dialogue Forum on 17 January 2019, and to our request to allow the partnership dialogue forum between the government and CSOs at sub-national level twice a year. At the Third Partnership Dialogue Forum on 29 August 2019, the Ministry responded to the requests and recommendations from CSOs by establishing the mechanism of inter-ministerial meeting to address those challenges, requests, and recommendations. Fourth Forum was on 03 February 2020, and a large number of requests and recommendations were addressed and answered. Unfortunately, the spread of COVID-19 in 2020 and subsequent years has been obstructed the physical gathering for three years.

At the same time, we would like to congratulate the Royal Government of Cambodia through the implementation of Path IV of Rectangular Strategy in the past year. The Royal Government has achieved the political stability, economic growth, human resource development and poverty reduction. With the successful implementation of these top priorities, Cambodia has become a low-middle-income country by 2015; and will move toward a high-middle-income country by 2030 and a high-income country by 2050.

To achieve this goal, a number of reforms has been developed and implemented especially the decentralization and deconcentration reforms in Cambodia through the implementation of the National Program for Sub-National Democratic Development Phase II (2021-2030). In all the concepts and policies mentioned above, all the indispensable development actors are highlighted, including the role of CSOs.

According to the annual financial report of more than 200 NGO members, between USD 500 million to USD 600 million a year was spent on the contributions of the development in Cambodia. According to the Ministry of Interior, there are more than 5,000 CSOs in Cambodia, and it is certain that the total amount will be hundreds of millions of dollars per year for the development in Cambodia.

**Samdech, Excellencies, Lok Chumteavs, Ladies and Gentlemen, Presiding Committees, and Distinguished Guests!**

The Partnership Forum between the government and CSOs is one of the enabling environment for all of us to come together to reflect the best practices, challenges, and find common solutions by promoting a spirit of cooperation in a comprehensive partnership, inclusiveness and solidarity.

We acknowledge that Ministry of Interior has always responded to the challenges of the civil society organizations through forums, gatherings, and key meetings. For example, the responses of the technical working groups on amending the law on associations and non-governmental organizations.

Although the situation of the COVID-19 has been eased, the challenges in carrying out our roles and responsibilities continue, so we would like to summarize them as attached to the request and recommendations from NGO members and networks as the following below.

We sincerely hope that raising these common challenges is a proposal to find the common solutions to the implementation of laws and policies that can help our CSOs continuing to play their vital roles in contributing to the national development.

### **Common Challenges**

1. Administration and implementation of the Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations and taxation laws are complicated for the CSOs and non-profit institutions.
2. The consultation and admission of the inputs collection in the legislative process is limited.
3. Mechanisms for communication and cooperation between the individual ministries, associations, and local and foreign NGOs are still not timely in accordance with the law; such as the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia with the foreign organizations. In addition, the visa applications for foreign employees are complicated.
4. Cooperation between sub-national authorities and associations and non-governmental organizations is limited, with some provincial and district administrations requiring associations or non-governmental organizations to apply for a work permit prior to their activities. This requirement is contrary to the notification of the Ministry of Interior dated on 27 November 2018, directing its sub-national administration not to require associations and non-governmental organizations to submit a letter of approval – they simply just need to inform the authorities. There were some photoshooting and asking for information about the activities of CSOs in the meeting place by the authorities without any formal letter of the purpose and guidelines.

### **Civil Society Organizations Requests**

- 1) To request the Ministry of Interior to highly consider accepting the inputs and recommendations of the CSOs to the proposal to amend the Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations as had been doing so in the past.
- 2) To request the implementing and strengthening for co-organizing the partnership dialogue forums between CSOs and the provincial administration at least twice a year to accept suggestions, recommendations and to address the challenges that have arisen at the sub-national level.
- 3) To request the Royal Government and the national authorities to disseminate the guidelines, documents, and regulations widely so that the administration or sub-national authorities can

strengthen the cooperation with non-governmental organizations through the implementation of the Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations.

4) To provide supports and open space for the activities of associations and non-governmental organizations by avoiding stigma by linking CSOs with political parties.

5) To propose the dissemination of the Royal Government's project budget to non-governmental organizations so that the NGOs can contribute to the development projects with the Royal Government.

6) To accelerate the procedure for the draft law on the Access to Information to submit to the National Assembly for approval.

We have the belief and hope that today's partnership dialogue forum will bear fruitful results through the strengthening of solidarity and unity in continuing to solve common problems and achieve a common vision.

Finally, we would like to bless Samdech, Excellencies, Lok Chumteav, Ladies and Gentlemen, National, and International guests who are participating in this event to meet the four blessings of the Buddha: longevity, prosperous, healthy, and successful perpetually.

Thank you!