

Speech at the 2010 Stocktaking and 2011 Direction Setting Conference of the Ministry of Rural Development

Phnom Penh, 29th December, 2010

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, distinguished national and international guests!

Today, I am pleased to be here in the ***Closing of the 2010 Stocktaking and 2011 Direction Setting Conference*** of the Ministry of Rural Development which has been held to review this year's achievement and identify key strategies and mechanisms for implementation success in 2011. Taking this opportunity, I personally and on behalf of the Royal Government highly appreciate the management and all officials of the Ministry of Rural Development who have been working hard to fulfill their role and accomplish many achievements for the nation and the people. The workshop is held while the people across the country braces for the commemoration of 7 January 1979, the day the lives of people were rescued from the 3-year-8-month-20-day Pol Pot Regime. Along with this, the workshop is also held while the Royal Government is working with great determination to promote development in all sectors, especially in the area of rural development and poverty reduction.

In this spirit, I personally and on behalf of the Royal Government congratulate the people on the achievement made over the last 30 years. I also highly appreciate the management and officials of the Ministry of Rural Development, related institutions, development partners and the people who have been cooperating closely with each other to make a tremendous impact in 2010. I think this workshop does not only provide us with good lessons, experiences and recommendations for the implementation success of policies, strategies, action plans, and other measures in 2011 but it also benefits rural areas that will see rapid growth and poverty reduction, and reduced gap between the urban areas and rural areas.

As raised by ***H.E. Chea Sophara***, the Minister of Rural Development, numerous rural development achievements have been made over this year, including socio-economic infrastructure, human resource development, preparation of development policy, creation of laws, preparation of documents as well as coordinating mechanisms for implementing all rural development-related action plans. The achievement has been reflected through better living standard of the rural people. In particular, rural infrastructure development such as rural water

supply and sanitation, education and consultation networks, medical treatment and health care, and the establishment of village hospitals, communal health centers and referral hospitals as well as closer proximity of primary schools, high schools, higher education institutions, vocational training centers, human resource development, community and rural economic development, and development programs specifically designed for the northern and western parts of the country all made a tremendous contribution to improving people's welfare and living standard, according to the vision and policy programs of the ***Rectangular Strategy***. These achievements, apart from its role in reducing the gap between the rural and urban areas, help us prevent urbanization. In this spirit, I hereby instruct all ministries-institutions, competent authorities, all related organizations, especially sub-national organizations to increase effort to make rural areas a place with better opportunity to absorb benefits from the favorable context of national, regional and global development and accelerate rural development for rural people's improved living standard, poverty reduction and narrower gap between rural and urban areas.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to recall some of the progresses of the rural development in Cambodia. Since 1979, remote areas in Cambodia have gradually improved, from nothing at all to agricultural production centers, to tourism sites, to light industry areas, to commerce areas with hydropower plants many roads crossing, schools starting from primary schools, hospitals, health centers, irrigation system, clean water supply, lakes, reservoirs, and toilets at home and public. This factor shows that we have steadily enhanced the living standard of people at the remote areas. In addition, we have transformed remote areas into places with peace, security, safety, new faces, and poles of development with new potentials for speeding up the development of our economy.

In this regard, the Royal Government has considered the rural development as an important priority among other priorities including agriculture, education and health care as such that we necessarily have to provide special attention. Parallel to this, rural development is a multiple-sectors work requiring active and robust involvement and cooperation from all relevant ministries and institutions. In this spirit, the Royal Government has a sharp and urgent focus in the following tasks (1) Rehabilitation and reparation of rural infrastructure including: rural roads, bridges, schools, health centers, rural markets (2) Clean water supply network and rural sanitation serving the needs of people from all walks of life, especially people in rural areas that lack of hygiene and clean water sources (3) Construction of irrigation system and water springing system for agricultural farms, especially rice farms to promote the production of yields (4) Promoting services for consultation, cares, and treatment for people at the rural communities, educating and promoting the change of habits and embedded thinking for living, eating and cooking and (5) Development of human resources capability and laws, standard letters, other policies and measures aimed to promote the rural development with transparency, accountability and effectiveness along other policy programs and ***Rectangular Strategy*** of the Royal Government.

Truly, Cambodia has potential for natural resources and agriculture sector, which have foundations in almost all places in the Kingdom of Cambodia and most Cambodian people are living in rural areas. In this regard, we all can see clearly that our primary capital for rural development is natural resources and agricultural expertise that make us sufficiently capable of, with our best ability, to effectively and efficiently managing and using our resources. Parallel to this, we have to find and strengthen other factors in order to complement the potential of natural resources and our existing workforce, that is financial resources, management skills, and entrepreneurship. In the past, I believe Ministry of Rural Development and ministries-institutions and authorities at all levels have already done many things and cooperated together to use the four factors, “ **Natural Resources, Labor Force, Capital and Entrepreneurship**” in order to develop our rural areas and achieve fruitful results at a remarkable level. However, I think among the four factors we should care and focus more on the development human capital and development of vocational skills in rural development sector such as the establishment of training center or rural development institute at the national and sub-national level as “Human resources is a way, a hope and conscience of progress”. Hence, the development of human resources is to contribute to the rural development, and as a result the rural development will contribute to the development of human resources as well, in short, “**We develop people for rural development, and rural development is for people**” because people provide leadership for development and thus receiving yields in return.

Taking this opportunity, in order to ensure rural development with involvement of all stakeholders and ensure effectiveness in poverty reduction and gap narrowing between city areas and rural areas I would like to provide following recommendations:

1. The Ministry of Rural Development and relevant ministries and institutions with authorities at all levels need to construct rural roads and find financial aids in order to improve rural roads by using two layers rubber (DBST) instead; because in the past we had budget packages for rural roads maintenance in annual and regular forms but quality of our rural roads was still vulnerable, as a result we require us to have a lot of budget in the reparation.
2. The Ministry of Rural Development need to promote the supply of clean water and sanitation in accordance with the plan determined by the cooperation between relevant ministries- institutions, in line with the national policies on the rural water supply saying “ **Every person needs to have access to clean water service, and lives in environment with hygiene in 2025**” and Millennium Development Goals of Cambodia that has determined that in 2015 “ **50% of citizens living in rural areas will have clean water to use and 30% of citizens living in rural areas will have good sanitation**”.

3. The Ministry of Rural Development need to give more focus on administrative reforms and capacity promotion including strengthening leadership, managing the development capacity of lower level institutions, training government officials and people in rural areas by establishing training centers or rural development institutions at the national and sub-national level.
 4. The Ministry of Rural Development should keep improving the capacity of village development committee through training focal point at capital-province, city, khan-district. At the same time, the Ministry of Rural Development should take account on restoring canal, repairing village road, digging pond, providing crop seed and animal's breeding stock and fruit trees and grain crops and continue to cooperate with development partners and NGOs to provide rural credit to other provinces besides target provinces in where implementations are underway.
 5. The Ministry of Rural Development and inter-ministerial committee must make further effort to successfully develop western and northern border regions of Cambodia by collaborating with ministries-agencies concerned, private sector, civil societies and the kind-hearted such as building physical infrastructure and clean water network and rural sanitary, electricity, development of agriculture, tourism, health, education and employment generation for the people.
 6. The Ministry of Rural Development should formulate and successfully carry out rural development strategic plan, policy paper on rural roads, guideline on sanitary improvement for rural community, national strategy on rural clean water provision and sanitary, rule on the establishment and function of village development committee, as well as principle on water usage from Mekong and Tonle Sap for rural development goal.
 7. The Ministry of Rural Development, the Ministry of Economy and Finance and relevant ministries should collaborate to promote public investment in rural development and agriculture, research and extension service by paying attention to more cropping through upgrading skills and capacity of agricultural enterprises and agriculture-based enterprises; and raise efficiency of irrigation system that is managed by farmers and expanding microfinance service.
 8. The Ministry of Rural Development must prepare and build the model villages for ethnic minorities and other leading and well-designed model villages in the context of rural development according to the objectives and strategy of the Ministry of Rural Development and poverty reduction such as creating the "***Model Village Competition Movement***".

Once again, I would like to appreciate and highly evaluate the efforts made by the Ministry of Rural Development and related Ministries who have successfully organized this conference. I would also like to admire and highly appreciate the Ministries/Institutions, inter-ministerial committee and municipal/provincial, district/khan and commune/sangkat authorities as well as

all levels of competent authorities and all people, who have closely cooperated in the work of rural development and poverty reduction. I would like to recommend the Ministry of Rural Development and all related Ministries/Institutions to transform good recommendations, comments and experiences gained from this conference to be the practical plan of action in order to ensure success for rural development and poverty reduction of the people. At the same time, I would like to appeal to all national and international development partners, civil societies and all private sectors to continue supporting and further contributing to the Royal Government and people of Cambodia to achieve success with ownership in the process of national socio-economic development.

At the end, together with the *Closing of the 2010 Stocktaking and 2011 Direction Setting Conference* of the Ministry of Rural Development, I would like to wish Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen during this coming Universal New Year 2011 the four gems of Buddhist blessing: *Longevity, Nobility, Health and Strength*.

EndItem