



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA

Nation Religion King

COUNTRY STATEMENT

By **H.E. Say Samal**

Minister, Ministry of Environment, Cambodia

at Fifth GMS Environment Ministers' Meeting (EMM5)

Chiang Mai, Thailand 30 January- 1 February 2018

- *Excellency General Surasak Karnjanarat, Minister, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE), Thailand,*
- *Excellency Dr. Supachai Panitchpakdi, former Deputy Prime Minister, Thailand and former Secretary-General, World Trade Organization*
- *Honorable Environment Ministers, Vice Ministers and Head of Delegation of the GMS Countries,*
- *Dr. Ramesh Subramaniam, Director General, Southeast Asia Department, Asian Development Bank (ADB),*
- *Distinguished Development Partners, Delegates and Participants,*
- *Ladies and Gentlemen!*

1. On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia and Cambodian delegation, I would like to take this opportunity to convey my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Government of Thailand, for hosting this Fifth GMS Environment Ministers' Meeting under the theme ***“GMS Environmental Cooperation Towards Inclusive and Sustainable Growth”*** in this beautiful city of Chiang Mai. Also, we highly appreciate the warm hospitality extended to us by the local government of Chiang Mai. Our appreciation also goes to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) and GMS Environment Operations Centre for excellent arrangements for this event.
2. Sustainable development in the GMS region is constrained by several challenges including pollution, wastes, inefficiency use of resources and energy, insecure financing for green road freight, uncertain investment in environment and natural resources management and conservation and ecosystem services, and the complexity of climate change and disaster risks.

3. We from the six GMS countries gather today to review progress made and at the same time determine ways forward for natural resources and environment management and conservation. The GMS Core Environment Program Strategic Framework and Action Plan (2018–2022) had now been developed to provide directives for the next phase of the program, and it has adopted green growth as its underlying guiding principle. We have already developed green growth strategy for guiding sustainable and inclusive development in Cambodia.

Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. Today I am proud to share with you that the Royal Government of Cambodia in her fifth mandate had achieved remarkable progress in socio-economic development. Peace and political stability, sustained annual economic growth of around 7 percent and freedom of information have opened up new opportunities for the Government to effectively carry out various reforms including the environment and natural resources sectors. These achievements have helped cultivating and reintegrating Cambodian people with international communities.
5. The government’s commitment for mainstreaming the environment and natural resources sustainability into the national development framework is demonstrated through the establishment of the National Council for Sustainable Development in 2015 and the formulation of National Environment Strategy and Action Plan (NESAP) 2016-2023.
6. The Ministry of Environment has been modernised through the restructuring of its management structure and additional policy development namely NESAP and Environment Code. Moreover, the Ministry’s human resource capacity has been substantially developed to cope with the increasing workload. At the same time, the annual public budget allocation for the environment sector has been steadily increased.
7. In this term of the government, we have focused on environment protection, biodiversity conservation and sustainable development by promoting the development and implementation of relevant policies responding to the Sustainable Development Goals of Cambodia and the United Nations. For environment protection, we have strengthened the implementation of Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) for both public and private development projects, as well as enforcing the laws and regulations concerning pollution control. For natural resources management, biodiversity conservation and local communities’ livelihood improvement, we have increased the number of our national parks and wildlife sanctuaries from 23 to 50 and established 3 biodiversity conservation corridors making the size of our protected areas system to around 7.5 million hectares (some 40 percent of our country surface areas) – a sizable protected areas not just for Cambodia but our region and the world as a whole. Recognizing the role of natural capital for socio-economic development, National Forums on Protection and Conservation of Natural Resources have been organized annually since 2016 under presidency of Samdech Techo Prime

Minister.

8. Moreover, effective management of economic land concessions and natural resources has been strengthened. We have ceased all logging operations in the country and no logging licences to be renewed or issued. Our forest degradation rate has dropped to below one percent in 2016 and we aim to neutralize emission from forest sector by 2040. We are not issuing any new economic land concessions for rubber or palm oil plantations and existing economic land concessions are being strictly monitored and evaluated. We have put an end to the land disputes and curbing illegal logging and land encroachment. Carbon trading schemes are being implemented and our protected areas have been turned into ecotourism destinations across the country. We applied one dollar per air tickets and payments for ecosystem services for biodiversity conservation and environmental protection services.
9. The Royal Government of Cambodia has delegated waste management, pollution control and natural resources management functions, with provision of necessary resources, to sub-national administrations. We are cleaning up our industrial sites. Our people are generating less wastes these days, recycle more than ever before and more environmentally conscious. We are making cities across Cambodia environmentally sustainable and liveable. Four of our cities were recognised by the ASEAN for their outstanding achievements on environmental commitment. They have followed previous achievements and in turn they set example for others to follow.
10. Together with GMS member countries, Cambodia continues to actively participate in water resources management, both freshwater and marine resources, which are vital for the well-beings of our people. Furthermore, Cambodia continues to promote cooperation among GMS member states in the areas of trans-boundary biodiversity conservation, green growth and environmental education.
11. We have achieved remarkable progress and proud to be a responsible member of the GMS community.
12. However, there are various regional and global challenges to be jointly addressed in a timely manner. In this regards, our hard works today and in the future will go a long way in creating a more sustainable and green environment for our people.
13. Finally, we stand ready to work in a more strategic partnership with GMS member states, and other existing dialogue partners for the sake of our environment and biodiversity towards “Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in the GMS region”.
14. I am confident that with our collective commitments and efforts, we will be able to make further substantive progress in sustainable development in the GMS region.

Thank you for your kind attention!