

Statement

**H.E. Mr KET Sophann,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Kingdom of
Cambodia to France and Portugal
At “High-Level 2022 United Nations Ocean Conference” to Support the
implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14: Conserve and
sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable
development
27 June – 1 July 2022, in Lisbon, Portugal**

Mr. President

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

WHAT ARE THE ISSUES:

- Our ocean is too often taken for granted. It is such a vast area, covering 71% of the globe’s surface, that it is easy to assume that its resources are limitless. They are not.
- The scale of the climate change challenge is enormous, but the ocean also faces other threats. According to the FAO, 88% of fish stocks are either overfished, or fished at their maximum sustainable level already. Unregulated fishing is also a major issue in many areas, and developing countries often lack resources to efficiently enforce fishing regulations in their maritime domain. Without strong action to make these practices sustainable, the livelihoods and food security of hundreds of millions of persons are at risk.

- We have the marine pollution issue. Most of it originates on land. Nutrient pollution creates zones where marine life becomes near impossible. Marine debris, including plastic debris, also threatens wildlife and creates health and safety issues for us. Addressing this will require major changes in behavior, particularly in the management of waste, agricultural practice, and modes of consumption.

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR CAMBODIA

- This has very concrete consequences for Cambodia.
- 10% of our population live in coastal areas;
- Our four coastal provinces and more than 60 islands play a crucial role in our economy, not only for food security through the production of fisheries, but also as a key focus area for tourism, which is one of the most important and profitable sectors of the Cambodian economy;
- Cambodia's coastline spans 440 kilometers and our marine and maritime sector includes fisheries, port and shipping, and coastal tourism, accounting for approximately 16% of the country's GDP, of which coastal tourism accounts for 85%. Furthermore, our commodities trade is heavily reliant on maritime shipping. This depicts an ocean-based economy with plenty of room for expansion and improvement. Preah Sihanouk has a lot of such potentials to be our new locomotive of growth: beautiful beach, deep sea port, railway, international airport and other supporting infrastructures. The Royal Government thus aims to transform this

province into another national growth pole, a model multi-purpose special economic zone, an international gateway as well as logistics center that links with the ASEAN and global markets, in line with the principles of a smart and liveable city, environmental protection and sustainability. A lot of investments have been made in building climate-resilient infrastructures and constructing wastewater treatment stations to protect the environment;

- Coastal communities are vulnerable to impacts of climate change, particularly by sea level rise and salt water intrusion, which threatens their livelihoods and existing agricultural practices;
- The ocean-related issues above will directly affect the country's economy as well as the livelihood of the people.

CAMBODIA'S COMMITMENT AND CHALLENGES

- With peace, security and stability as well as the pro-active national development policies, the Royal Government of Cambodia is very aware of these challenges, and we have taken a number of measures in recent years to play our part in addressing the issues affecting the ocean;
- **Sustainable Development Policy Framework:** Despite disruptions caused by Covid-19, Cambodia remains highly committed to promoting inclusive and sustainable development, as reflected in our socio-economic policy agendas, such as the Rectangular Strategy-Phase 4 where environmental protection and climate actions have a high priority, National Strategic Development Plan, National Policy on Green Growth, National Environmental Strategy and Action Plan, and Cambodia Climate Change Strategy. Cambodia

also recognizes the need for international cooperation to foster and sustain healthy and resilient coasts and oceans through integrated management solutions and partnerships

- **Conservation Efforts:** In addition to the consolidation of our efforts in terrestrial and fresh water protected areas, the country's first large scale marine protected area was initiated in June this year, covering 405 square km around the islands of Koh Rong. A number of coastal and marine conservation programmes are underway, in partnership with development partners and the private sector;
- Within Ministry of Environment, we have established a dedicated Department of Marine and Coastal Areas Conservation. A new Environmental Code is being drafted, including strengthening of the legal framework for marine environment protection and marine biodiversity conservation;
- **Efforts to Combat Marine Pollution from Land:** An initiative has been launched to improve waste management practices at sub-national level, with dedicated funding from our national budget;
- The RGC is also cooperating with development partners and NGOs to reduce the use of plastic bags and packages throughout the country;
- As a contribution to better regulation of maritime activities, including fishing and pollution, Cambodia's "flag of convenience" system was terminated last month, and as of September 2016 all ships previously certified under this scheme are forbidden to operate;

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GLOBAL ACTION

- **Monitoring the Risks:** Our ocean is a global public good. It is not an issue that we can solve by acting in alone at national level. This is why today conference is so important. We need to make clear commitments at global level, and put in place strong mechanisms to monitor progress and address challenges of marine environment protection, biodiversity conservation and maritime activities as well as the risks of climate change on an annual basis;
- **Increased Collaboration & Multilateralism Activities:** Cambodia has been a very active supporter of climate change negotiations and has ratified the Paris Agreement in 2016. We were very pleased to see the agreement ratified by the United States and China, and hope that all other large emitters will follow suit;
- As we are putting our utmost efforts in the socio-economic recovery, adjusting to the new normal of living with Covid-19, it is more important than ever that we strengthen closer collaboration and multilateralism as a foundation for regional peace and stability, and inclusive, low-carbon, sustainable development.
- This should be done in a spirit of cooperation, with technologies made available and resources allocated to support action in developing countries, where coastal communities are particularly vulnerable to the changes affecting the ocean, and where additional resources to enforce maritime regulations are often needed.

- Technical and financial support is required to scale-up our protection and conservation efforts, help protect coastal communities from the impacts of climate change, improve environmental and waste management practices in coastal areas, and strengthen monitoring and policing of illegal maritime activities, including illegal fishing;
- We anticipate more coordinated efforts to achieve the SDGs, including significant improvements in effective coastal and marine management, support for sustainable economic growth and the blue economy, ecosystem rehabilitation, protection, and adaptive and resilient communities, food security and livelihood opportunities, pollution and waste management, and water use and supply management.