

## NGO Statement on priority issues towards the 4<sup>th</sup> CDCF

This NGOs statement and remark is complimentary to the 20 sectoral NGO Position Papers submitted to the Third Cambodia Development Cooperation Forum.

Phnom Penh, June 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010

*Samdech Akak Mohasenapadei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia,  
Excellency Keat Chhon, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Finance,  
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

The NGO community wishes to convey its high appreciation to the Royal Government of Cambodia for including us in Cambodia's Aid Coordination Mechanisms, namely the CDCF, the quarterly GDCC, and through NGO participation in the majority of the Technical Working Groups.

The contribution of NGOs consists of 20 position papers that have been submitted to the Council for the Development of Cambodia, and have been shared with all participants at today's meeting. More than 200 NGOs have been actively involved in this process, which started in January this year, just after the Ministry of Planning released the first draft of the National Strategic Development Plan Update 2009-2013. In the position papers, NGOs provide their perspectives on the implementation of national policies, reform programs, the 2008 Joint Monitoring Indicators and other issues that deserve the attention of this meeting.

*Samdech, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen:*

The previous CDCF meeting held in December 2008 was in the midst of the food crisis. The economic down-turn that followed has brought additional hardship on poor and vulnerable communities in Cambodia, as many family incomes reduced with job losses in the construction, garment and tourism sectors. In this difficult environment, NGOs continued teaming up with Government health and education service providers that have translated into noticeable and tangible improvements. A variety of health outcomes have significantly improved, including a reduction of infant and under-5 mortality; a considerable decline of HIV prevalence among the general population aged 15-49 and an increase in birth delivery attended by skilled providers. In addition, more schools are being built and more children are enrolled in the primary schools although there are continued concerns about education quality and retention rates among marginalized groups.

NGOs are convinced that successes and progress made in these sectors can be replicated in governance, land and natural resource sectors. The NGO position papers clearly show broad support for the Royal Government's various reform agendas and the priorities outlined in the National Strategic Development Plan 2009-2013. Building on these promising foundations, the Royal Government, the NGO community and development partners should jointly work towards enhancing stronger mutual trust and engage constructively in more result based consultations.

While individual position papers provide considerable details and a number of case studies, this statement highlights cross-cutting priorities that, if well considered, could strengthen collaboration between the Royal Government, its development partners and NGOs to another level of success. Firstly, NGOs across sectors are keen to see further improvements in the enforcement of Cambodia's existing legal framework, especially the land law (incl. the sub-decree on economic land concessions), forestry law, the law on mineral resource management and exploitation, and Law on Environment Protection and Natural Resource Management. In this regard NGOs welcome the Government's continued attention to legal and judicial reform as pledged in the NSDP Update. NGOs request development partners give their full support to this priority, as implementation of the existing legal framework has the potential to positively contribute towards the improvement and

upgrading of the lives of millions of poor and vulnerable Cambodians, particularly indigenous communities that are present in 15 of our Provinces.

NGOs recognize that the judiciary needs to be strengthened which, in turn, would increase the public's trust in our court system. Effective and efficient enforcement of the current legal framework can solve and avoid conflicts around urban settlements, agricultural land, mining, fisheries and forests. Strengthening the judiciary system is indisputably the greatest priority for the coming period and an area that could benefit significantly from development partners' support. Looking at the agenda for today's meeting, NGOs noted that Legal and Judicial Reforms were absent from the list of priority reforms to achieve NSDP priorities and the CMDGs. However, NGOs would like to suggest that some of these issues are discussed in the first session during the dialogue on the NSDP Update. In addition, important aspects of it could be discussed in the second session on agricultural productivity, which should include empowering small scale producers, the provision of secure land tenure, with the overall goal of improved food security.

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While enforcement of the existing legal framework is the most pertinent issue, NGOs welcome other concrete actions by the Royal Government, with Development Partner support, that foster upholding of democratic principles, open and constructive dialogues and deepen the compliance to good governance. In this regard, NGOs working in health, education, natural resource and governance sectors sincerely appreciate ongoing work on access to information and we trust this will soon be promulgated as legislation in the not so distant future.

Access to information is a crucial ingredient in achieving the Royal Government's admirable key goal of good governance. It allows people to acquire important data and information managed by the civil service and improves overall transparency and accountability of all stakeholders. NGOs congratulate the Royal Government on making more budget-related information to the public during the last 18 months specifically the 2006 Audit Report and aggregate monthly revenues from companies in the oil, gas, and mining sector. To further promote such transparency and accountability across all sectors, Cambodia would benefit from an Access to Information Law. Such legislation would help encourage trust and confidence between the Royal Government and the Cambodian people, and would empower more people to engage with the political and development processes that contribute to our sustainable development. In the meantime, NGOs propose that the Royal Government and its development partners continue to prioritize public access to information in all sector reform programs.

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We would like to conclude this statement by drawing your attention to the Joint Monitoring Indicators themselves. NGOs congratulate the Council for the Development of Cambodia with the new and improved format of the JMI's, a translation of deepen understanding and stronger partnership between the Royal Government and its Development partners. We applaud joint efforts from both parties thereby improving mutual accountability and the drive for results. In the view of NGOs, the new format does not render commitments made during the first and second CDCF obsolete. To ensure credibility of the CDCF, NGOs wish to express its view that critical JMI's which have not been achieved, are automatically rolled over into the new format. In this respect, we would like to draw your attention to past JMI's for the land and forestry sectors, which do not seem to feature in the proposed new JMIs. We sincerely hope that this Forum will take this into consideration during their discussion in the fourth session on the adoption of the JMIs, prior to the presentation of the Multi-Year Indicative Financing Framework.

We thank you and look forward to high consideration from Royal Government and Development Partners.