

Opening Remarks by H.E. Nim Thot

Secretary of State, Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation and Vice
Chairman of the Cambodian National Council for Children;
During the Opening Session of the Consultation Workshop
“A Legal Framework for Addressing Child Sex Tourism”

24 February 2012, Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation

My respect to:

- Your Excellencies, Chairman of the children working group, Cambodian National Council for Children
- Representatives from UNODC
- Representatives from World Vision Cambodia
- Representatives from INTERPOL
- Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, representatives from relevant ministries, institutions and organizations!

On behalf of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation as well as the Cambodian National Council for Children and on my own behalf, I am extremely glad and honored to attend the opening session of the consultation workshop “A Legal Framework for Addressing Child Sex Tourism” today.

I would like to express my warm welcome to the presence of Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen from various ministries, institutions, Children Working Group, Cambodian National Council for Children, Child Protection Working Group, Justice Working Group, Legal Working Group and relevant member organizations of the National Committee to lead the suppression of human trafficking, smuggling, labor exploitation, and sexual exploitation in women and children (NC-STSLs).

As briefly touched upon by **H.E. Khiev Borey**, Secretary General, Cambodian National Council for Children, today’s workshop aims are:

- 1). Informing key officials and policy makers of the Royal Government of Cambodia on the *Project Childhood* which is a regional initiative and its relevance to combat child sex tourism and strengthening cooperation and
- 2). Present the results of the legal analysis conducted by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and obtain feedback from the participants on the scope and process of the legal framework review in relation to child sex tourism.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

The Cambodian tourism industry has been a key contributor to national revenue and has generated a lot of employment opportunities for local businesses, community members and poor people. The number of national and international tourists has been increasing constantly, especially in the past few years. Due to the potential of tourism, the Royal Government of Cambodia considers this sector one of its six priorities for economic and social development.

Development and the promotion of tourism have been considered one of the strategies of the Royal Government of Cambodia to increase local employments as it could contribute to the implementation of the National Pro-Poor Strategy (NPRS), Cambodian Millennium Development Goal (CMDG) and National Strategic Development Plan II (NSDP II).

Despite the fact that tourism contributes to the national economy, increases employments for people and revenues from tour services, the growth from tourism industry creates a number of economic and social problems in the country. The problems happening in the society include trafficking in children and women for sexual and labor exploitation. The frequent causes for trafficking and child labor are related to rural poverty and urbanization which takes place in urban areas and cities within the country and various areas in the neighboring countries.

After having ratified the Child Rights Convention and other relevant international treaties and being the signatory of international instruments, Cambodia shall abide by and implement those international instruments.

Following the Child Rights Convention and other relevant international treaties, the Royal Government has made a lot achievements including the development of laws, national plans, national mechanisms and programs and released a great number of measures for the best interests of the children and their justice as children are the pillars and the future of the country, meaning that children play a crucial role in the protection, construction and development of the country and requiring families, communities, the Royal Government and children themselves to endeavor and join in the synergy for the best interest of the children, following the constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

Global child protection law evolves very quickly and it practices child rights based approaches which include special protection measures and acknowledge children's capacity to take part in decision making. In Cambodia, the policy and legal framework for child protection remains fragmented. Various legal instruments developed in the past five years as a number of important codes and key legislation has been adopted namely the civil code 2007, the civil code procedure 2007, the penal code procedure 2007, penal code 2009, law on the prevention of domestic violence and victims protection 2005, law on drugs control 2005, law on the suppression of trafficking in person and sexual exploitation 2008, law on education 2007, law on the protection and promotion of the rights of people with disabilities 2009, and law on inter-country adoption 2009...etc. Relevant policies and standards include policy on alternative care for children 2006, minimum standard on alternative care for children 2009, principles for the protection of the rights of child victims of trafficking of the Kingdom of Cambodia 2007, policy and minimum standard on the protection of the rights of victims of trafficking 2009...etc. and other regulations in the forms of Prakas and guidelines which have recently been adopted by the Royal Government. Furthermore, the draft law and policy related to child protection pending for adoption include the draft law on juvenile justice and draft national policy on Cambodian youth...etc.

The adoption of the above laws and policies, considering the whole aspects of the issues and child protection concerns, requires a systematic review over the whole legal framework and policy on child protection in the Kingdom of Cambodia and strengthening the system to ensure full compliance with the Child Rights Convention, especially laws, policies and regulations related to child protection shall be reviewed so that they are in line with international standards and consistent with each other, aiming to identify weaknesses and gaps which could be addressed by a new law and amendment of the law. The Government agencies and development partners have endeavored to identify gaps in Cambodian laws related to children

and provided recommendations for a legal reform which could be incorporated in this process. Although, these studies and recommendations require another review in relation to the new situation within the country's political atmosphere and the growing concerns of child protection.

The thorough analysis on the gaps of the legal framework related to child sex tourism in Cambodia is an important step to find out the legal and policy reform necessary to establish an effective child protection system in the Country. To ensure consideration of the various options in the reform within the Kingdom of Cambodia, it is necessary to review the content and format of the good model of global child protection law, bearing in mind relevance to social, economic, political and cultural context of the Kingdom of Cambodia. The possibility to strengthen or improve the law which also improves child protection requires a review of the legal and regulatory framework on top of the selection and establishment of the laws which aim at complementing and improving the existing legislation.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

I would like to take this opportunity to call for development partners and various organizations to cooperate with the Cambodian National Council for Children to further develop this area in all processes aiming to make our children fully enjoy their rights.

I, therefore, hope today's consultation workshop "A Legal Framework for Addressing Child Sex Tourism" will receive good recommendations, which is a good step towards a clearer measure to protect children from traveling child sex offenders.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and AusAID for co-organizing this workshop and I would also like to extend my thankfulness to World Vision, INTERPOL and other partner organizations taking part in delivering the presentations on child sex tourism and I would like to wish Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen the four gems of Buddha's blessing.

I hereby declare the consultation workshop "A Legal Framework for Addressing Child Sex Tourism" now open.

Thank you!