

Congratulatory Address
H.E. Nhim Vanda, Senior Minister, First Vice President of the
National Committee for Disaster Management
Addressed in the 6th ADRC International Meeting
Siem Reap, 4-6 February 2004

Your Excellencies, Lok Chumteav, Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguish delegations!

Today, I have the great honor and immense pleasure to address to the 6th Asian Disaster Reduction Center International Meeting. I would like to pass on a congratulatory message and best wishes from Samdech Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Cambodia and President of the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM) to you, Ladies and Gentlemen, who have presented in this 6th Asian Disaster Reduction Center International Meeting on the glorious land of Angkor of Siem Reap Province, The Kingdom of Cambodia.

To the inception, on behalf of Cambodian Delegation, I would like to express my respectful welcome to Your Excellencies, Lok Chumteav, Ladies and Gentlemen who attend this meeting in the capacity of a disaster manager.

Your Excellencies, Lok Chumteav, Ladies and Gentlemen!

Cambodia is a tropical country; border to Thailand, Vietnam and Laos, with its population of 13 millions and 181,035 km² of total land area, consists of 24 provinces / municipalities, 185 districts / khans, 1,621 communes / sangkats, 13,707 villages that has become one of the member countries of the Asian Disaster Reduction Center since year 2000.

Cambodia is also one of the countries that are vulnerable to a number of natural disasters, and have experienced with the most severe natural disaster such as floods and droughts. For the last three years, Cambodia has been continuously affected by both floods and droughts; year 2000, 2001 and 2002. The flood in 2000 was the worst natural phenomenon in more than 70 years that put the death toll at 347 lives that 80 percent of who were children. It damaged and destroyed public properties, livestock and impacted severely to the national economy with estimated damage cost of USD\$ 150 millions. The most severe damages caused by floods were in year 2000 and 2001. On the other hand, the drought that affected Cambodia in 2002, impacted most of people, about 84% of those who live in the countryside that livelihood rely only on farming.

Natural disaster in 2000, 2001 and 2002 has publicly revealed the importance of the leadership of Samdech Prime Minister Hun Sen in his capacity of mobilizing resources for disaster preparedness, response and rehabilitation activities. His leadership has made line ministries, concerned agencies, all levels of local authorities, United Nations Agencies, International Organizations, World Bank, Asian Development Bank and others actively involve in various images and by all possible means.

In capacity of a developing country, the Royal Government of Cambodia has deliberately paid attentions to the natural disastrous hazards since the damages caused by natural phenomena enforced the Government to spend a lot of funds for response and recovery, and they retarded the velocity of the country development.

Situation of natural disasters can result in pulverization as quickly as a wiggling of an eyelid to the wealth that took so many years to gain, therefore we shall no longer accept such dreadful situation. To tackle the wicked situation of natural disasters, the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM) was established and chaired by the Prime Minister to take responsible for the management of all pre, during and post-disaster situations. This is the agency that has structure of disaster management from the national, provincial / municipal, district / khan to the commune / sangkat level. Within this, the NCDM also established an inter-agency coordinating group called working group for emergency response and rehabilitation that consists of five sub-group to take responsibility in disaster management activities by sectors. The five sub-group, each has different UN Agencies, IOs and NGOs participated as members that are mandated to provide coordination, collaboration and help in response to the disaster events. Last year, disaster management activities were integrated into the 5-year socio-economic development plans (2001 – 2005) of the Government of Cambodia.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

Taking from this opportunity, I would like to express my profound gratitude to the Asian Disaster Reduction Center for its continued heed and magnificent contribution of both spirit and materials to the capacity building of NCDM of Cambodia. Being a member country, Cambodia will continues its regular disburse of membership contribution to ADRC for the sustaining of its excellent activities in disaster reduction.

Along with my sincere gratitude, I also would like to affirm my acknowledgement to the high value of the 6th Asian Disaster Reduction Center International Meeting, which is now as an approach for a broader disaster management that would help lead the country member toward a total disaster risk management; an approach that can prevent or mitigate disaster events, eliminate or lessen risk and prevent or reduce losses from disasters or avoid hazards from the vulnerabilities. The 6th ADRC International Meeting will strengthen partnership for the coordination and collaboration in disaster management since it is a vital area for economic development of a low-level economic country. This event will contribute into the poverty reduction process of the government in the developing country where their people are still living under the poverty line and will gradually help alleviate the poverty of countries in the region.

Once again, in the name of the people and the Government of Cambodia, I would like to vow my unlimited support to the 6th Asian Disaster Reduction Center International Meeting and continue my cooperation in all aspects of disaster management activities.

Lastly, I would like to warmly welcome and wish the meeting a fruitful outcome and also wish Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen a nice time during your stay in our mysterious land of Angkor with full of safety.