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OUTCOMES OF 32ND ACC MEETING AND AMM RETREAT IN INDONESIA

Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation has issued a press release on the outcomes of the 32nd ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC) Meeting and the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Retreat (AMM Retreat), held in Jakarta, Indonesia on 3-4 February 2023.

The full press release on 04 February 2023 reads as follows:

"On 3-4 February 2023, His Excellency PRAK Sokhonn, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation attended the 32nd ASEAN Coordinating Council (ACC) Meeting and ASEAN Foreign Ministers' (AMM) Retreat at the ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta, the Republic of Indonesia. Further, it was a historical moment that Her Excellency Adaljiza Magno, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, joined for the first time these ministerial meetings after her country became in principle the 11th member of ASEAN at the 41st ASEAN Summit in Cambodia.

The 32nd ACC Meeting started with a comprehensive briefing by Her Excellency Retno Marsudi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia and the Chair of ASEAN in 2023 on the key priorities under the theme "ASEAN Matters: Epicentrum of Growth." The Ministers also shared the same view that ASEAN does matter, and reassured her of their full support, and strongly believed that key deliverables of this year Chairmanship will help transform ASEAN into a region of peace, stability and prosperity.

The Meeting commended High-Level Task Force on the ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision (HLTF-ACV) for their efforts, particularly in providing Recommendations on Strengthening ASEAN's Capacity and Institutional Effectiveness, which were adopted at the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summits in November last year. The Ministers agreed for the Senior Officials' Meeting to study a possibility of establishing a Working Group to

CAMBODIA, IFAD TO CONTINUE GOOD PARTNERSHIP



Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, spoke highly of the good partnership between Cambodia and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) for 30 years.

The Prime Minister made the praise while receiving a courtesy call from Ms. Jyotsna Puri, Associate Vice-President of the Strategy and Knowledge Department at the International Fund for IFAD, at the Peace Palace in Phnom Penh on 02 February 2023 according to H.E. Eang Sophalleth, Personal Assistant to Samdech Techo Hun Sen.

In this sense, Samdech Techo Prime Minister said that Cambodia will continue its partnership with IFAD.

Samdech Techo Hun Sen also emphasised Cambodia's attention to boost the agricultural

and rural development and turn the agriculture sector into agribusiness and agri-industry.

On the occasion, he announced to increase Cambodian contribution to IFAD from US\$600,000 to US\$1 million for 2025-2028.

For her part, Ms. Jyotsna Puri thanked the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) for the decision to increase its contribution and reaffirmed IFAD's commitment to continue supporting Cambodia in the agricultural development.

She also highly valued the RGC's efforts in maintaining peace and social stability, especially during the COVID-19 spread as well as its political agenda to deploy agricultural experts at communes and strengthen the irrigation system to boost agricultural production.

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discuss how to strengthen ASEAN's ability to respond to crisis in an effective and timely manner, and further tasked the Committee of Permanent Representatives to ASEAN (CPR) to consult closely with ASEAN Secretariat and relevant bodies on other key recommendations of the HLTF-ACV.

The Meeting underscored the importance of taking concrete steps to realise the goals of the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP)

and tasked the CPR to discuss the ASEAN Roadmap for Promoting the AOIP and the follow-up to the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on Mainstreaming Four Priority Areas of the AOIP. Moreover, the ACC also exchanged view on the follow-up to the ASEAN Leaders' Declaration on the Blue Economy and agreed to develop an ASEAN Blue Economy Framework.

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The Ministers reaffirmed their commitments to strengthen regional mechanism and framework to respond to public health crisis beyond the COVID-19, including the early operationalization of the ASEAN Center for Public Health Emergencies and Emerging Diseases. The ACC also approved the amendments to the Terms of Reference of the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund, allowing member states to utilize the Fund balance to procure vaccines for other infectious diseases.

On Timor-Leste, the Ministers tasked the ACC Working Group on Timor-Leste to expedite the drafting of an objective criteria-based Roadmap for Timor-Leste's full membership in ASEAN, which is planned to be adopted at the 42nd ASEAN Summit. They also endorsed the Guidelines to Implement Observer Status Granted to Timor-Leste's Application for ASEAN Membership to allow Timor-Leste to participate in all ASEAN Meetings and make statement where and when appropriate.

Moreover, the Ministers underlined the importance of effective implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which will play a key role in regional economic recovery. The Meeting also recalled the initial idea to establish an ASEAN Green Deal, which is a practical and actionable framework that allows member states to make gradual transition toward a green and sustainable future.

During the AMM Retreat, the Ministers deliberated on the follow-up to the ASEAN Leaders' Decision and Review on the Implementation of the Five-Point Consensus (5PC), and they acknowledged the complexity and difficulty of the political crisis in Myanmar, and that it will take time to reach a long-lasting political settlement. While cessation of violence and inclusive dialogue are an important step toward enduring peace, urgently building trust among concerned parties is a must. The Meeting agreed that engagement with all concerned parties should be intensified in an inclusive and flexible manner, and in accordance with the ASEAN Charter.



The Ministers reaffirmed the commitment to maintain ASEAN Centrality and Unity in the handling of the political crisis in Myanmar in all circumstances, and they also expressed their full support for Her Excellency Retno Marsudi and her Office of the Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair on Myanmar. In addition, the Meeting welcomed the draft implementation plan for the 5PC, which is a living document that can be further updated in light of progress and development in Myanmar.

The Retreat also exchanged views on various regional and international issues of common interest and concern including the situation in Myanmar, Korean Peninsula, the war in Ukraine, and the South China Sea, among others. The Ministers underlined the need to strengthen and promote multilateralism, constructive dialogue and win-win cooperation to overcome these unprecedented challenges. Furthermore, the Retreat emphasised that initiatives of partners have to be in line with the ASEAN Charter and the AOIP, and should contribute to regional peace, stability and prosperity.

On the sidelines of the 32nd ACC Meeting and the AMM Retreat, His Excellency PRAK Sokhonn also had bilateral meetings with Her Excellency Adaljiza Magno, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, and His Excellency Bui Thanh Son, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam to discuss a wide range of issues of mutual strategic interests, and the efforts of member states to advance the ASEAN Community building process.

CAMBODIA EYING FOR MORE BILATERAL FTAS

The Royal Government of Cambodia has been pushing for the establishment of more bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs) with main trade partners in order to access wider markets for the Cambodia-made products.

Arab Emirates, India, Japan, Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), Canada, and American Latin countries are in the plan for bilateral FTA negotiations, said H.E. Aun Pornmoniroth, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and Finance.

At the closing ceremony of the Ministry of Commerce's annual meeting early this week, he asked the ministry to continue boosting the export of goods and service to the existing markets and expanding new markets.

The ministry has to conduct extensive consultations with stakeholders on the benefits from the bilateral trade agreements, he added.

Currently, Cambodia has two bilateral FTAs with China and Korea, which came into force in January and December 2022, respectively. The bilateral FTAs along with the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a mega regional trade pact composed of 15 Pacific countries, which entered into force on 01 January 2022, expand a wider market for Cambodian products, said H.E. Penn Sovicheat, Under-Secretary of State and Spokesperson at the Ministry of Commerce.

"When we have bilateral free trade agreements with many developing countries such as China, it is a positive sign for our economy and products," he stressed.

CAMBODIA, UN TO BOOST PARTNERSHIP IN MINE CLEARANCE

The Kingdom of Cambodia and the United Nations (UN) have agreed to boost their partnership and cooperation on mine clearance.

The agreement was made in a meeting on 2 February 2023 between Cambodian Senior Minister and First Vice President of the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA) and H.E. Joseph Scheuer, UN Resident Coordinator in Cambodia.

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CAMBODIA, UN AGENCIES IN CAMBODIA REAFFIRM TO FURTHER ACHIEVE SCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN CAMBODIA AND SDGS



Cambodia and relevant United Nations (UN) agencies in Cambodia have reaffirmed their commitments to work closely together to implement existing initiatives, projects, and new programs to attain socio-economic development of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The commitment was made during a meeting between H.E. Pan Sorasak, Minister of Commerce, and outgoing UN delegation, led by Mr. Joseph Scheur, Newly Appointed UN Resident Coordinator to Cambodia, with participation of Ms. Alissar Chaker, Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Cambodia, Mr. Sok Narin, Country Representative of United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Mr. Antonio Schiavone, Head of Operations of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, in attendance, at the ministry office on 07 February 2023.

H.E. Pan Sorasak congratulated Mr. Joseph Scheur for his new appointment as Resident Coordinator to Cambodia, and appreciated close cooperation and good partnership between the Ministry of Commerce, and relevant agencies of the UN in the past with an expectation that such the cooperation and partnership would be additionally strengthened to contribute to Cambodia's development.

H.E. Minister stressed that in addition to its efforts to recover economy after COVID-19 crisis, RGC has also been working hard to promote further growth and socio-economic development of Cambodia.

In this regard, H.E. Pan Sorasak mentioned about the readiness of RGC, including the Ministry of Commerce, to work closely with the United Nations Development Coordination Office (UNDCO) and other development partners to develop and implement strategies and detailed work plans for successful graduation from the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) status.

H.E. Pan Sorasak also highlighted significant progress in trade sector in Cambodia such as development of E-Commerce to increase the resilience of supply chain and efforts in Geographical Indication (GI) registration for a number of fishery products.

On the occasion, the Cambodian minister thanked UNIDO for its continued support and technical assistance provision for feasibility study of potential GI registration. For his part, Mr. Joseph Scheur emphasized the continued support for Cambodia in the process of graduation from LDCs status, especially the continued enhancement of inclusive economic growth, by focusing on the participation of micro and small and medium enterprises, the participation of women entrepreneurs, and support for the RGC in establishing digitalization transformation.

The UN Resident Coordinator to Cambodia also underlined a number of key priorities, including the process of formulating new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2024-2028 between UNDCO and the RGC in order to support relevant ministries/institutions to carry out RGC's strategies and policies effectively and efficiently, with key private sector participation to achieve SDGs.

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H.E. Ly Thuch expressed his gratitude to the UN for its support for Cambodia's mine action efforts, contributing to saving millions of lives from landmines and explosive remnants of war.

H.E. Senior Minister also laid stress on the Samdech Techo Project for Mine Action (STP-MA) and Cambodia Mine-Free 2025 Foundation to achieve the Kingdom's set goal in 2025.

Cambodia considers UN as a key partner in its peace-seeking and development process as well as for mine action, he underlined, inviting the UN resident coordinator to conduct a field visit to see mine clearance activities at his appropriate time.

CAMBODIA SENDS 216 PEACEKEEPERS TO LEBANON

Two hundred and sixteen (216) peacekeepers of engineering forces Unit 827 on 05 February 2023 departed for the Republic of Lebanon to replace their counterparts.

At the same time, engineering troops Unit 829 arrived home after completed successfully their one-year UN peacekeeping mission in Lebanon.

H.E. Gen. Sem Sovanny, Director General of the National Centre for Peacekeeping Forces, Mines and ERW Clearance (NPMEC), presided over the send-off and home-coming ceremonies at Phnom Penh International Airport.

Speaking on the occasion, H.E. Gen. Sem Sovanny advised the new troops, to do their best to successfully fulfill their mission, which will further enhance Cambodia's image on the international scene.

He also spoke highly of Unit 829 for their hardworking, good discipline, and strict adherence to the UN standards, making their mission a success.

Since 2006, Cambodia has deployed more than 8,000 peacekeepers to nine countries: Sudan, South Sudan, Chad, the Central African Republic, Cyprus, Lebanon, Mali, Syria, and Yemen.

Currently, some 800 Cambodian peacekeepers have been fulfilling their missions in South Sudan, Lebanon, Central African Republic, and Mali.

CAMBODIA AIMS TO EXPORT 1 MILLION-TON MILLED RICE BY 2025

The Cambodia Rice Federation (CRF) has set its goal to export at least a million tons of milled rice by 2025 while the quantity in this year is 750,000 tons.

The news was revealed by Oknha Chan Sokheang, President of CRF, while he was reporting CRF's action plan for the fourth mandate to boost rice production and export, to H.E. Pan Sorasak, Minister of Commerce, at the ministry office on 07 February 2023.

The President of CRF further mentioned about more strengthening CRF's governance by formulating five-year strategic plan (2023-2027), and continuing to collaborate with Ministry of Commerce through Green Trade Company to open new markets, especially markets in the Philippines, and expanding other potential export markets through participation in trade fairs in Dubai of United Arab Emirates (UAE) this month, Thailand in May, Germany in October, and on business trips to some destinations of Indonesia, the Philippines, Hong Kong, the United States, Canada, Australia, and more.

According to Oknha Chan Sokheang, CRF plans to expand over 400,000 tons of milled rice export to Chinese markets from this year onward, particularly continue to diversify into wider new markets like the United States, Canada, the Middle East, Hong Kong, Indonesia, and the like, as well as promote registered milled rice brands such as premium "Malys Angkor", collective rice "SKO", and glutinous rice "DSMK".

For his part, H.E. Pan Sorasak spoke highly of efforts and achievements of CRF in the past mandate, stressing great attention paid to highest priority of rice sector of the Royal Government of Cambodia, and the important topic and point of rice sector for discussion in dialogues with both bilateral and multilateral leaders.

To promote the rice export sector, H.E. Pan Sorasak said that the Ministry of Commerce has been working hard to open markets for rice and processed products sourced from milled rice by adding these products to inventories of free trade agreements (FTAs) such as Cambodia-China FTA, Cambodia-Republic of Korea FTA, Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in bilateral discussion meetings with countries such as the signing of a memorandum of understanding to export rice to markets of China, Timor Lester, the Philippines, Bangladesh, and so on.

The minister also informed his guests that the ministry is currently negotiating new agreements for Cambodia UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership, where rice is a priority goods that is expected to expand potential new markets in the Middle East, which is presently limited, which hopes to increase Cambodia's rice exports.

At the end of the meeting, H.E. Pan Sorasak advised CRF to additionally boost rice exports to existing Chinese markets, and gave some recommendations for CRF's more work effectiveness.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF WATER BIRD CENSUS: 125 SPECIES RECORDED

Some 125 species of water bird have been registered, according to the preliminary results of the 2023 Asian Water Bird Census.

The annual census was conducted in the 3rd week of January by NatureLife Cambodia in cooperation with park rangers at Boeung Prek Lapouv and Anlong Pring Protected Landscape Areas, said NatureLife Cambodia.

Ninety-one (91) species have been found in Boeung Prek Lapouv Protected Landscape Area in Takeo province and 34 others in Anlong Pring Protected Landscape Area in Kampot province, the source pointed out.

Covering an area of 8,305 hectares and 217 hectares, respectively, the Boeung Prek Lapouv Protected Landscape Area and Anlong Pring Protected Landscape Area were established in May 2016.

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