

Anti-Corruption Action Plan for Asia and the Pacific
Third Steering Group Meeting
Jakarta, March 4-6, 2003

SPEECH OF H.E. SUM MANIT

Secretary of State, Office of the Council of Ministers
Secretary General, Council for Administrative Reform
Director of the Anti-Corruption Unit of the Office of the Council of Ministers

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

First, I would like to express my deep appreciation to the ADB and the OECD for inviting me to attend this third meeting of the Steering Group of the Anti-Corruption Action Plan for Asia and the Pacific. I have a keen interest in listening to all of you and to know the progresses you have made since we met in Tokyo on 28-30 November 2001.

Good governance is at the heart of the Royal Government development strategy. On this subject, H.E. Hun Sen, the Prime Minister, said at the last meeting between the government and its development partners on 22 January 2003: "The main objectives of our government are to reduce poverty and promote sustainable and equitable development through rigorous measures aimed at strengthening good governance". We believe that the Anti-Corruption Action Plan for Asia and the Pacific (ACAPAPA) is an important tool to sustaining Cambodia's effort.

May I briefly recall that, from the very beginning of its mandate on 1998, the present Government of Cambodia undertook to reform State institutions. Within six months of presenting its political platform to the National Assembly, the Government commissioned sets of studies to articulate specifics of its program of actions. One such study was a survey on corruption conducted with World Bank assistance. Another concurrent study carried out by the Cambodia Development Research Institute with ADB support examined links between good governance and sustainable development. These studies lead to approval of the Governance Action Plan (GAP) in March 2001 following intensive consultations involving internal and external stakeholders.

I will spare you the details of the Government's action program. The GAP and now the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS) provide ample insight into a reform program that span a very broad front. I have taken the liberty to make available to you all excerpt from the NPRS that focus on the Government's efforts to strengthen institutions and improving governance as keys to poverty reduction. Along with the Reform of Justice, the Administrative Reform and Decentralization, the fight against corruption has been singled out as one of four critical cross-cutting areas in this regard.

The GAP itself was designed as a sweeping instrument to correct causes to corrupt practices. Most planned actions, over a hundred of them, address aspects of the problem. It is, in effect, a comprehensive and ambitious program to combat corruption. It is a strategic rolling plan the Government is preparing to update to take account of progress and target evolving priorities particularly those relating to poverty reduction. For those of you familiar with the GAP, you would have noticed extensive similarities with the type of action advocated by the Anti-Corruption Action Plan for Asia and the Pacific. Our common problem is that systematic and sustained efforts are arduous. Resources are scarce, many prerequisites need to be met and we are dealing with deep-rooted issues.

The Royal Government has elected to approach corruption with a holistic set of measures that address root causes of corruption. Indeed, ways and means to increase risks associated with corrupt practices are an integral part of the strategy. But codes, rules and laws cannot do it alone. Effective and fair enforcement mechanisms are the necessary complement to any legal framework. The Royal Government is actively building such capability while it is putting the finishing touch to what would become an enforceable legal framework.

The Government's strategy to combat corruption is being articulated along the following broad strategic objectives:

1. The legal framework and procedures are set in ways that respect principles of good governance particularly as they relate to the management of public funds and the delivery of public services;
2. The salary and professionalism of civil servants, judges and prosecutors must be improved;
3. The general public and clients of public services is aware of and understand the legal framework, procedure and their rights and obligations;
4. Civil servants understand them and have the necessary skills and means to implement them effectively and fairly;
5. Oversight mechanisms are in place and institutions to control and monitor implementation are empowered and fully operational;
6. Mechanisms to sanction or prosecute wrongdoers are fair, predictable and effective;
7. Requisite logistical support in terms of equipment and operating budgets, for example, are in place and timely;
8. Cambodia takes full advantage of joint international efforts.

Early priorities are to complete the anti-corruption legal framework (the civil and criminal codes, codes of ethics, the anti-corruption law, the manual on the obligations of civil servants); to ensure its fair and efficient implementation and the strengthening of institutions (the Anti-corruption Unit at the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Parliamentary Relations and Inspection, the National Audit Authority, the Supreme Council of the Magistracy, and, in the near future, the establishment of the Office of the Ombudsman and of specialized chambers within the court system to deal with the resolution of administrative and commerce matters); and to eliminate causes of corruption by streamlining processes to deliver public services and make services more transparent, responsive and accessible –including One-Window Services). Ongoing improvements in the management of natural resources (naturally the implementation of the land law and land policy), in the control of public revenues and expenditures and in the management of the Civil Service (automated payroll, for example) are further specific examples of determined efforts by the Royal Government to do what it can with available means.

The time has come to ensure that requisite resources are in place to sustain the action.

I do not want to take much more of your time and look forward to our discussions. However, before closing I am honored to announce on behalf of the Royal Government that Cambodia endorses the Anti-Corruption Action Plan for Asia and the Pacific. The Anti-Corruption Unit at the Office of the Council of Ministers (ACU-OCM) is ready to working with all of you to combat the corruption curse. We are looking forward to a most productive collaboration in the region.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.