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SPEECH

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**Addressed
at**

The Opening of The ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA)

**Seminar on
Accelerating the Achievement of MDG-5
Through Role of Women Parliamentarians**

Peace Building, Council of Ministers, Phnom Penh, 10th May 2011



- *Your Excellency Mrs. MEN SAN AN, Permanent Deputy Prime Minister, President of the Cambodian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (CAPPD),*
- *Your Excellency Mr. ANTONIO CUENCO, Secretary-General of AIPA,*
- *Excellencies Women Parliamentarians Delegations from ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly-AIPA,*
- *Excellencies Members of the Senate, National Assembly and the Royal Government,*

– *Excellencies, Ambassadors, Ladies, Gentlemen, National-International Distinguished Guests.*

Today, I have great privilege and pleasure in participating in the seminar of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) on **Accelerating the Achievement of MDG-5 through the Role of Women Parliamentarians** at this moment just after we celebrated **the March-8 International Women's Day**. Taking this opportunity, I would like to express my sincere admiration and high evaluation to Women Parliamentarians Delegation of AIPA, Excellencies, Lokchumteavs, Ladies and Gentlemen who are members of the Senate, the National Assembly, the Royal Government, the General Secretariats, the 24 Provinces-Municipality Deputy Governors, UN's Agencies and civil societies for sparing their valuable time to participate in this significant workshop, which we have been actively striving to achieve the Millennium Development Goals-5 (MDG-5) for each individual country and the world. In fact, the theme of this workshop is truly appropriate and timely where developing countries are putting their utmost efforts in achieving the MDG by the year 2015, particularly in **supporting Maternal, Newborn and Child's Health** who are **the most vulnerable** in the world.

I believe that our workshop which brings together participants from country's members of AIPA and focal delegates on maternal health will discuss on highly effective implementation, sharing experiences and compiling all good comments aimed at seeking for a strategy to accelerate the MDG-5 as well as to over come issues concerning **Maternal, Newborn and Child's Health**. At the same time, I would like to request members of the workshop to discuss directly on major points as has been prepared in agenda and then put forward for further implementation and enhancing the participation from all country's members of the AIPA and women parliamentarians.

Excellencies, Lokchumteavs, Ladies and Gentlemen !

In our present world, birth's delivery is the most serious challenge in term of health which women are facing. For instance, women live in developing countries experience with challenges or life's threats during pregnancy or delivery 100 times more than women live in developed countries. Every year, there are approximately 500,000 women in the world lost their lives due to these issues which in fact it can be avoided, if there are appropriate interventions at the right time. In this spirit, I believe that developing countries do not only need interventions and necessary measures but they need to adopt the implementation of those interventions and necessary measures with high effectiveness in order to prevent difficulty delivery, rescuing the lives of mother, newborn and child on time.

Apart from that, the issue on maternal and child's health in Cambodia is also a health's challenge that has received high attention and priority from the Royal Government as has been set in its Cambodian Millennium Development Goals. It is worth while to note that Cambodia has achieved the MDG-6 in preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS and she could possibly achieve her MDG-4 in 2015 too. At the same time, poliomyelitis has come to an end since 2000 and now Cambodia is implementing the program to eliminate infant's tetanus and measles with the prospect to eliminate them in near future.

In addition, Cambodia has considered the promotion of reproduction and maternal & child's health as the first priorities in its health sector and is strongly committed to decrease this maternal mortality rate to 250 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2015. To that end, the Royal Government has approved that the Ministry of Health recruits fresh graduated midwives to work for the government without conditions in order to deploy them to all health centers throughout the country, ensuring the provision of 24 hours services to all women and children. As results, birth delivery by trained midwives in public sector has increased from 34% in 2004 to 65% in November 2010 whist reproduction services have also been improved.

It is true that the above achievement of MDG can not succeed by itself without contribution from other achievement. I believe that each goal is interlinked and complementary, for instance observation report and clear evidence indicate that if women live a decent life with talents and education, faithful husband, no domestic violence, support from family and community and environment and hygiene then they always seek and receive health care with quality, safety and effectiveness. However, if women live in poverty with little knowledge, in isolated areas or improper places, with regular violence and discouragement then they will seek illegal health providers or depend on superstition which leads them to risks and threats of mother and child's lives.

At the same time, the Achievement of MDG 5 can be attained by engagement from the National Assembly, the Royal Government, stakeholders, UN's agencies and development partners in partnership and good cooperation. Previously, as well as at present and in the future, the Cambodian Red Cross has always collaborated with the Royal Government in Health sector in particular to promote mother and child's health. Taking this opportunity, as the President of the Cambodian Red Cross, the National Champion of the Asia-Pacific Leadership Forum in Responses to HIV/AIDS in

Cambodia and the National Champion for the UNSG's Joint Plan of Action for Women's and Children's Health, I would like to appeal and commit myself to continuous engagement with the Royal Government, the National Assembly and all stakeholders in supporting maternal and child's health in accordance with the Health Strategic Planning in achieving the MDG-5 as planned. Based on this vision, we will continue to disseminate, educate and organize movements to draw the attention of all Cambodians to be fully aware of challenges that are facing women, women at the reproductive age, pregnant women, village's volunteers as well as all levels local authorities on information about volunteered birth spacing, risks during pregnancy and post delivery, sending pregnant women to Health Center and Referral Hospitals on time for delivery.

Excellencies, Lokchumteavs, Ladies and Gentlemen!

Taking the opportunity of our workshop just to start in a moment, I would like to contribute some ideas for discussion and solutions-seeking in according to the objectives of the workshop in pushing through the role of women parliamentarians to accelerate the achievements of MDG-5 and other key factors for success in fulfilling these duties.

In regards to the role of women parliamentarians, I believe that women parliamentarians are the representatives of women in seeking protection and recurring interests for women nationwide especially in their constituencies and they are the ones who know these concerns clearly in relation to maternal and child's health. For instance, women parliamentarians can engage and cooperate with the National Assembly, the Royal Government, Judiciary, Private Sectors, Civil Societies, and Communities in promoting maternal and child's health through education, enactment and dissemination of laws and regulations. Moreover, women parliamentarians also can directly monitor programs implementation and especially work as messengers to convey women's concerns and request to the Publics, to the National Assembly, and the Royal Government seeking supporting resources, technical and financial to promote maternal and child's health. At the same time, women parliamentarians can also engage themselves with the sub-national assembly parliaments particularly women members of the sub-national Councils to incorporate agendas on maternal and child's health into the laws, development plans and other programs of sub-national authorities, civil societies, and development partners and to push for active contribution from people in community especially women in promoting maternal and child's health.

Moreover, women parliamentarians can play important duty in promoting more women's participation in politics and decision-making at national and sub-national level. Also, women parliamentarians can be educators to women leaders and decision-makers, helping them to be more capable in establishing and adopting strategy and other programs aiming to promote maternal and child's health.

In fact, the role of women parliamentarians in promoting mother's and child's health and accelerating the achievement of MDG-5 do not limited to only national level. It has to be regional and international in mobilizing concerted support from international communities, turning it to be one voice to draw wider attention such as this workshop which we are now conducting. I also believe women parliamentarians of each country can collaborate with each other in sharing experiences and good practices to find out potentials ideas and programs to accelerate achievements of the MDG-5.

However, the above duty can not be successful if we do not count on important factors which can lead us to achievement. I consider the following factors as *fundamentals for fulfilling duties of women parliamentarians*:

1. Political Willingness : is the first fundamental which women parliamentarian must demonstrate and be active in promoting mother's and child's health through putting in efforts to push for good governance, transparency and information's dissemination on leadership and management of programs to promote maternal and child's health of the Royal Government, stakeholders and other development partners. At the same time, political parties also must have clear willingness in incorporating agendas on maternal and child's health into their political platforms and encouraging women to become parliamentarians.

2. Laws and Regulations Enforcement : are the fundamentals which give opportunity and possibility to women parliamentarians to involve in process of making laws and monitoring laws enforcement through establishment of the National Assembly's Commission to make laws and other regulations, to organize meetings and consultations between parliamentarians and relevant ministries/institutions and civil societies on laws enactment and enforcement relatives to maternal and child's health ensuring that the enactment and enforcement of laws are in line with MDG-5.

3. Financing: which refers to the resources for women parliamentarians in fulfilling their duties to accelerate the achievement of MDG-5, such as national budget for promoting maternal and child's health and resources for women who

face challenges on their own health and children's health including budget for free services or tolerated fee to women and provision of loads to institutions that take care of mother and child.

4. Education and Promoting comprehensive understanding: to all members of parliaments on MDG-5 and provide them the possibility and opportunity to training. All stakeholders have to understand the importance of this MDG-5. Also, they must promote all activities to ensure that the community particularly women taking part in the process of promoting maternal and child's health and these issues must incorporated into school's programs.

5. Promotion of partnership for women parliamentarians: through conducting meetings with ministries-institutions, development partners and all level of civil societies and also encouraging engagement from men parliamentarians on MDG4-5. This requires the National Assembly or the National Assembly Commission to play an important role for coordination so that women parliamentarians can give information on women's requests and share their experience with development partners. Thus they can involve themselves in the process of laws enactment and enforcement, monitoring the implementation of laws and program which are relative to MDG-5.

Once again, prior conclusion, I would like to deeply thank you all for the high attention of Excellencies, Lokchumteavs, Ladies, Gentlemen and members of the entire seminar . I believe that this seminar will be conducting successfully and receiving potential comments, experiences and recommendations as elements for developing strategic planning, strategic activities, measures and creating coordinating mechanism and lead to other implementations for accelerating the achievements of MDG-5. Taking this opportunity, I would like to appeal to all members of the whole seminar to review on capacity of sharing good experiences from previous ASEAN's members to help to seek and mobilize necessary resources in contributing to the reduction of mortality rate of mother and child in Cambodia as well as other countries of ASEAN's members.

On this auspicious occasion, may I humbly pay my respects and pray to the Three Jewels of Buddhism, the Sacred Spirits of the world, the Angels looking after the white parasol and the power of the former Kings and Queens to bless **His Majesty the King of Cambodia, Their Majesties the King Father and Queen Mother of the Khmer Nation** and wish Their Majesties Good Health, Nobility, Longevity and Wisdom.

Finally, I would like to wish Excellencies Women Parliamentarians of ASEAN's countries, Ladies and Gentlemen, National & International Distinguish Guests and the whole conference with good health and success all the time and I would like to wish all delegations of AIPA with pleasure and safe visit in Cambodia.

I now would like to announce the opening of the Seminar on **Accelerating the Achievement of MDG 5 through the Role of Women Parliamentarians !**

THANK YOU !