

Remarks by Hon. Khuon Sudary

Second Vice-President of the National Assembly of Cambodia

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On “Strengthening international law: Parliamentary roles and mechanisms, and the contribution of regional cooperation”

- *Honourable Ms. Maja Gojković, Speaker of the National Assembly of Serbia and President of the 141<sup>st</sup> IPU Assembly*
- *Honourable Ms. Gabriela Cuevas Barron, President of IPU*
- *Mr. Martin Chungong, Secretary General of IPU*
- *Esteemed Speakers and Members of Parliament*
- *Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. On behalf of the National Assembly of the Kingdom of Cambodia, let me express my heartfelt gratitude to the Parliament and people of Serbia for the warm hospitality extended to me and my delegation. I wish to congratulate Honourable Gabriela Cuevas Barron and Mr. Martin Chungong, for their dedication to the mission and mandate of IPU.

2. On the occasion of the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of IPU, let me solemnly declare that Cambodia is fully committed to advancing the core values of IPU of “*equality, inclusiveness, respect, integrity, and solidarity*”. I would also add “*diversity and respect of sovereign equality*” as two other essential pillars of global peace and prosperity.

3. The theme of the IPU Assembly this year is as timely and as pertinent for the obvious reason that the rules-based international order is presently under assault from rising unilateralism, protectionism, unpredictable great power politics and rivalries.

4. These unprecedented global challenges are threatening to dismantle the foundations of multilateralism and the international order that the world has painstakingly built over the past 70 years.

*Distinguished Delegates , Ladies and Gentlemen,*

5. *“International law matters”*. It matters for all states irrespective of their size, wealth and strength. Different countries have their own traditions, security interests and aspirations.

6. I believe that the destiny of peoples and nations are closely intertwined in their pursuit of national security, economic development and progress. We are all bound by one UN Charter. And that makes international law matters even more, for two reasons:

- *First*, the disrespect of international law will unavoidably lead to conflicts and violence.
- *Second*, states have the right to choose their own sovereign path to achieve their core national interests provided, of course, they respect the obligations under international law.

7. As a matter of fact, there is neither a *“one-size-fits-all”* model nor a *“standard definition”* of a rules-based international order. *And this has always been a challenge!* The UN Charter provides us only the normative basis for relations between states. Together with the wider body of international law, it provides us with a structure for the conduct of international relations based on the principles of non-interference, mutual respect, and sovereign equality.

8. Even though, Cambodia is a small state, she abides steadfastly to these international values and principles. Cambodia is committed to advancing an open, inclusive, effective and rules-based multilateral system. For that matter, we have embraced a flexible and pragmatic foreign policy under the slogan, *“reforming at home and making friends abroad on the basis of independence”*.

*Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

9. **Strengthening international law starts at home!** At the national level, Cambodia has a firm and clear political commitment to enhance the rule of law, which is the cornerstone of good governance and resilient democracy. In our last general election in

July 2018, twenty different political parties were contesting the seats in the National Assembly. We are proud to have a thriving “stable functioning democratic process”.

10. It is our political conviction that peace, development, democracy, and the rule of law are interconnected. There can be no long-lasting peace and security without international law.

11. As a post-conflict country, Cambodia values peace and stability as these are pre-conditions for development. We would not have a steady 7 percent growth over the past two decades had we not have peace, stability and a healthy regional cooperation.

12. At the present time, our *hard-earned peace remains fragile and vulnerable* as it is facing multiple challenges stemming from rising political extremism and populist politics as well as interferences from powerful countries, including some western countries, in Cambodia’s internal affairs. Despite the fact that our country is under pressure from the threat of being sanctioned, through the use of excuse of **democracy** and **human rights**, the Royal Government of Cambodia still stays together with the people in all circumstances.

13. We, Parliamentarians, have a critical role to play in connecting our people with the policy makers, especially with regards to foreign policy formulation and strategic responses to external changes. As countries and regions are becoming more inter-dependent, I think that, it might as well be a “*positive inter-dependency*”!

*Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

14. In terms of our **Parliament’s contribution to regional cooperation**, we are proud of our role in the enhancement of norms and principles of the rules-based international order by actively participating in various regional and international platforms.

15. Toward the end of next year, we will have the honor to host the 11<sup>th</sup> Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership meeting with the aim of strengthening multilateralism and partnership for sustainable development and shared growth.

16. With this spirit in mind, let me close by encouraging our global IPU parliamentary family to work together with our respective national governments and our constituents

to protect, preserve and advance the multilateral system that is rules-based, inclusive and respectful of the universally recognised norms and principles of international law.

I thank you for your kind attention.