

Speech delivered by

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General Debate

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

Honorable Chairperson

Distinguished delegates

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. International law has played a significant role in advancing peace and prosperity in the world especially since the second half of the 20th century. Though there have been conflicts, wars, and atrocities at various regions throughout the decades our world has stopped short of any global arm conflict since the Second World War. The beginning of the Decolonialization that coincided with the Cold War and its ‘end’ also saw the rise of political and economic liberalization across the globe; and many countries have benefited from embarking on these major transformation though we must admit and respect each country’s varying degree of acceptance and implementation of the systems. However it may be, it is clear that the success of the market economic system has allowed emergence of new economic powers that have paved the way for our new reality – that is of a multipolar world. In such circumstance, international law plays an ever more important role in fostering understanding and peaceful coexistence between countries particular those with different political systems, different concepts of the economic role of the state and different religious beliefs.

This general debate puts forth a conscious calling that is both timely and of utmost importance.

Honorables, Ladies and Gentlemen

2. Cambodia is a country that has benefited from the concerted efforts of the international community, namely since early 1990s. After being caught in the destructive force of the Cold War, our new Constitution- largely inspired by the political and economic liberalization of the West -was ushered in with the 1991 Paris Peace Agreement and the assistance of the United Nations 1993 General Election.¹ With the *utmost Cambodian leadership*, the embedded systems of ‘multiparty liberal democracy’ and the ‘free market economy’ have brought much needed peace and prosperity to the Kingdom.² *Cambodia today remains committed to protect and preserve our Constitution – defending our national sovereignty while ensuring peace, democracy and sustainable and inclusive development.*
3. Cambodia has been continuously working hand in hand with all international institutions and communities. On top of being an active member of numerous global and regional initiatives, please allow me to further share with the distinguished Assembly three notable achievements.
4. First, in the field of justice. The United Nations and Cambodia reached a historic agreement in 2003 to set up the Extraordinary Chambers in the Court of Cambodia (ECCC). It is an international standard hybrid court set up in Cambodia that acts as a model court allowing international participation in establishing a trial to prosecute the top leaders of the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime responsible for the deaths of millions of Cambodian or nearly one third of the entire population.³
5. Second, in global peace and security. Cambodia sincerely appreciate the international community in supporting our country’s peace and development efforts and wish not to see our hardship and suffering repeated anywhere else in the world. It is with such empathy that since 2006, 6 300 Cambodian arm force

¹ 2018 General Election had 83.02% voters’ turnout – unquestionably representing the will of the Cambodian people. It is worth mentioning that General Elections are held regularly every 5 years since.

² Cambodia has also signed onto the World Trade Organization since 2004 and has since introduced laws and policies in line with WTO guidelines paving the way for the Kingdom’s current economic phenomenon seen today – becoming among the fastest growing economy in the world with 7.7% GDP growth over the past 20 years, an unemployment rate of just around 1% and a poverty rate of less than 10%.

³ Case 001 and 002 have been concluded as recently as 2010 and 2018 respectively. 16 million Cambodian people living in Cambodia today are humbled and welcome this historic achievement in seeking justice for the entire nation and humanity as a whole.

personnel have joined the United Nations blue helmet peacekeeping efforts currently deploying in 8 African countries.⁴

6. Third, in the preservation of humanity's cultural heritage. Our close collaboration with UNESCO has been tremendously successfully with Cambodia being given the presidency of the 37th Session of the World Heritage Committee in 2013 and with the listing of our World Heritage Sites including the Angkor Archaeological Park and the Temple of Preah Vihear in 1992 and 2008 respectively. The subsequent creation of the International Coordinating Committees with France and Japan, and China and India as co-chairs respectively are inspiring platforms and acted as models for international solidarity and collaboration.

Honorables, Ladies and Gentlemen

7. In conclusion, like many other countries Cambodia and our people have wholeheartedly demonstrated our belief and commitment to international law and rule-based multilateralism. We remain optimistic that international institutions including the IPU will be able to adapt itself to the constantly changing world while maintaining equal respect for all nations and upholding the principles of international law; thus continue to play key roles in our common mission to pursue global peace and prosperity.

Thank you the esteemed Assembly for your kind attention!

⁴ Despite our level of development and size, Cambodia is ranked among the top contributors of blue helmet personnel in the world (i.e. 2019: 29/122 in the world; 3rd in ASEAN).