

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS
ON
THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM
FOR ACTION (1995)
AND
THE OUTCOME OF THE 23RD SPECIAL SESSION OF
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY (2000)

- by-

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AT THE HIGH LEVEL PLENARY SESSION
THE 49TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON
THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Madam Chairperson,

1. On 16 July 2004, Cambodia announced its new government for the Third Mandate. The Ministry of Women's Affairs has prepared a new Five Year Strategy for the period 2004-2008 and a new Sub Decree on the organization of the Ministry, and the role and responsibilities of the departments in the Ministry.
2. We established the Ministry in 1996. In 1999, the Beijing Platform for Action was influential in setting our priorities. Now in 2004, we are in a position to slightly reorder those priorities on the basis of the progress made in the past six years. Thus, the promotion of gender mainstreaming in the development of national policies and programmes, and legal protection of women and girls from all forms of violence and trafficking, will have greater prominence, while in health and education, we will be very selective about the focus of our attention. Let me briefly elaborate on these points.
 1. Since about the year 2000, Cambodia has been engaged in major policy developments. These have included Socio Economic Development Plan II; the Governance Action Plan; the National Poverty Reduction Strategy; and the nationalizing of the Millennium Development Goals. We have increasingly been successful in having gender mainstreamed in these policies and, as a result, under the Medium Term Expenditure Framework, the Ministry of Women's Affairs has become one of the six priority ministries. This means that we will be able to access loan funds under the agreement with the Asian Development Bank. In 2004-2005, we will be involved in the next major policy formulation which will be called the National Strategic Development Plan 2006-2010. This will incorporate all the other development plans and the CMDGs. We will be working to ensure that gender does not fall off the agenda and to ensure that we fill the remaining gaps.
 4. Poverty underlies many of the challenges facing Cambodia. The Ministry has a programme to increase the income women can generate and, in some cases, also, to improve food security. These activities include value adding to agricultural production; finding reliable markets for agricultural and handicrafts production; and ensuring

better post harvest storage facilities. We will convert our existing WID Centres in the provinces to Women's Empowerment Centres. These Centres will conduct multi faceted programmes of training in micro and small enterprise skills including market research; business planning; and assistance to access credit; as well as literacy and life skills development.

- 5. Violence against women and trafficking of women and children is growing in significance as our region consists of sending, transit, and receiving countries. The Ministry of Women's Affairs was responsible for drafting a Law against Domestic Violence but it was still being discussed in the National Assembly when the election was called in 2003. When it is passed, there will be a number of associated activities including implementing a Prevention Plan and the training of counselors to provide professional help to victims. There are a number of programmes involving Cambodia and the countries of the Mekong region focused on preventing of trafficking and MoWA is deeply involved with these programmes, as well as the development and implementation of Memorandum of Understanding with countries in the region.**
- 6. Since 1999, the Ministries of Education and Health have developed comprehensive planning documents and, in the case of Education, this has included a gender mainstreaming action plan, with a committee chaired by a Secretary of State, sex disaggregated statistics and budget allocations. The Ministry of Women's Affairs will still be active in Education but our focus will be on making provisions, and advocating for provisions, to encourage girls to continue to lower secondary schooling. These provisions include dormitories, scholarships and school feeding programmes. MoWA is also concerned about adult female illiteracy and vocational skills development and will be working with the new Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training to expand the provision of skills training for women.**
- 7. In Health, our focus will be on reproductive health promotion, the fight against HIV/AIDS and on better nutritional practices.**
- 8. With an estimated of 72% of our population under the age of 30 years, we have huge pressure on our schools and health services, as well as to generate jobs. With the end of the Multi Fibre Agreement in**

December 2004 and Cambodia's accession to the WTO, we are in danger of having many young girls thrown out of work (Young women make up at least 80% of the labour force in the garment factories.) In addition, 200,000 more young people come onto the labour market every year. The Government believes there is an urgent need for Cambodia to have a Youth Policy and the MoWA will be working with the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport, other ministries, NGOs and donors to develop and support such a policy.

Madam Chairperson,

- 9. Building on our achievements of the past ten years, we are ready to face the challenges listed above. We now have peace and stability. We also have a much better foundation in terms of basic statistics and their analysis on which to base our gender policies; we have an increasing number of young people who have a better education than many of the older generation and are receptive to ideas of gender equality; and we have a small but increasing budget, together with considerable donor support to meet the challenges of working for the women of Cambodia.**

Thank You.