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STATEMENT

BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY MR. SOVANN KE,
AMBASSADOR AND PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**Preparatory Committee for the Fifth United Nations Conference on the
Least Developed Countries (LDC5 PrepCom)**

New York, 8 February 2021

**Thank you, Co-Chairs,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,**

At the outset, I wish to join the previous speakers in thanking **H.E. Ms. Fekitamoeloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu**, Under Secretary-General of the United Nations, for her opening remarks.

I would like to congratulate **Ambassador Rabab Fatima**, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh and Ambassador **Robert Rae**, Permanent Representative of Canada on your election as Co-chairs of LDC5 PrepCom. I am sure you will steer the process of this Preparatory Committee to a successful conclusion.

Cambodia wishes to align itself with the statements delivered by the Representative of Malawi on behalf of LDCs and the Republic of Guinea on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, respectively.

Co-Chairs,

Allow me to make the following points in my national capacity:

First, COVID-19 has severely hit every country across the globe, and Cambodia is no exception. This pandemic has resulted in both social and economic consequences in Cambodia. Speaking of the social impact, COVID-19 has affected educational systems worldwide, thereby shifting towards e-learning which, has resulted in the uneven access to the devices and internet access critical to learning online. The digital divide has made it virtually impossible for rural and urban students to learn during the pandemic.

During the 75th Session of UN General Debate and the 31st Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Covid-19 in September and in December 2020 respectively, Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN SEN, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, joined other world leaders in calling for access to free and equitable vaccines as "*public goods*". It was stressed that the vaccines made available as public goods will not only combat the spread of the virus, it will also help our children get back to school and every person to get back to their workplaces without fear.

Secondly, the Royal Government of Cambodia has introduced many important economic measures to address the economic impacts of Covid-19, including exemption from payment of taxes for businesses and using considerable amount of its reserves to sustain, boost and restore our economy. The RGC has also provided low-interest-rate loans to banks and micro-finance institutions. Recently, the Government has announced \$500 million for credit guarantee scheme and Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) loans. It is important for the international community to step up in support of the call by the Group of LDCs for a global stimulus package for the Least developed Countries. This is critical for our economic recovery process.

Thirdly, despite the devastating impacts caused by COVI-19, Cambodia, like other Member States, is committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its SDGs. Multilateral cooperation and solidarity to address the consequences of the pandemic are

fundamental in complementing the efforts of my Government in achieving the SDGs. Therefore, the involvement of the international financial institutions is so important in re-building economies and resiliency in LDCs, amidst Covid-19 and post Covid-19. Not only will they help foster the increase of financial stability, but also provide time-bound suspension of debt service payment and measures to ease the debt burden of the LDCs.

Fourthly, developed countries shall continue to provide all LDCs with their trade preferences, including duty free and quota free along with simple rules of origin. This will tremendously help develop their economies, create employments and alleviate poverty. Also trade and economic measures should not be imposed against LDCs as these will hinder their economic and social development, especially during this unprecedented time.

Fifthly, technology transfer: Digital technologies generate opportunities to increase access to our necessity during this pandemic such as healthcare, education, and e-commerce. More importantly, many LDCs, including Cambodia, are moving towards manufacturing and therefore transfer of technology is fundamental for our success and economic growth. In this regard, we hope that the United Nations Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries will play an important role in facilitating the transfer of technologies to LDCs.

Lastly, Cambodia's graduation from LDC status: Cambodia has met only one of the three criteria as per Committee for Development Policy, which is Human assets Index accumulating 68.9% that exceeds the graduation rate (66 or above). Although Cambodia is not entirely ready to graduate from LDC status at the moment in view of the current global crisis, we do have a strong commitment to achieving this graduation at an appropriate time.

Cambodia's view is that having fulfilled all the criteria in graduating from LDC status, there must be a proper and adequate transition period for the graduating countries that will help them mitigate their internal and external shocks. During the transition period, the LDCs that have graduated should be allowed to enjoy all existing benefits such as trade preferences, concessional financing and technical and financial assistance to ensure that they will firmly make further progress without falling back to the LDC status again.

Co-Chairs,

In conclusion, I would like to stress that Cambodia will continue to actively engage in the preparatory process in the lead-up to the LDC5. I am confident that with the supports and engagements of all relevant stakeholders, the LDC5 will deliver its expected and successful outcomes.

I thank you!
