



**KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA**  
**PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

**327 East 58<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10022**  
**TEL: (212) 336-0777 FAX: (212) 759-7672**



*Please check against delivery*

STATEMENT BY

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

Ministerial Meeting of the Least Developed Countries

New York

17 September 2020

**Mr. President,**

**Distinguished Delegates,**

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would like to begin by thanking the Republic of Malawi, Chair of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), for virtually organizing the Ministerial Meeting of the LDCs today.

As we gather to reflect on the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs for the Decade 2011-2020, and its overarching goal of promoting sustainable development with a view to enabling graduation of countries from the least developed country category, the unprecedented nature of our virtual meeting cannot be left unnoticed.

The coronavirus disease pandemic (COVID-19) has shut down economies large and small, impacted health care systems, and drastically changed our way of life. It has not only impacted the way in which we conduct our UN business today but has also seriously undermined global implementation efforts of relevant development actions, including the Istanbul Programme of Action for the LDCs.

COVID-19 has exacerbated economic and social inequalities among countries, reversing the many development gains achieved to date while, at the same time, stalling the positive progress of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. As such, this pandemic represents one of the biggest challenges to least developed countries and their development going forward.

Before the virus had impacted the global community, Cambodia was enjoying steady development progress. In 2016, Cambodia transitioned into the lower-middle-income country bracket, with a view to graduating from the status of an LDC in the near future. Having achieved this significant accomplishment, the unprecedented scale of COVID-19 now threatens to seriously undermine Cambodia's consistent economic growth of over 7% per annum in the last decade.

According to the World Bank, COVID-19 will plunge the global economy into its worst recession since World War II. The price of commodities, manufacturing, rate of foreign direct investment, and the tourism sector have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, which are the sectors most heavily relied upon by the LDCs. This development is certain to have a long-term ripple effect among LDC economies.

As such, developed countries, together with the International Monetary Fund, the UN development system, and the private sector, must ensure that adequate financial support is accorded to LDC economies.

Some of the measures most necessary to ensure economic sustainability of LDCs include the lifting of trade barriers and scaling up aid for trade, while enhancing the functioning of food and medical supply chains. Debt forgiveness coupled with provision of preferential trade treatment to LDCs would allow for steady global economic recovery. At the same time, countries graduating from the least developed category should be accorded scaled up international assistance to promote development gains.

Development goals as well as countries' graduation efforts must be supported by the international community so as to enable LDCs to overcome their development-related challenges. In this context, LDCs must be full and effective participants in the global economy. As such, we urge all development partners to engage actively in ensuring that global economy is restored and that LDCs are on track for timely graduation into the next sphere of their development.

In this light, the Royal Government of Cambodia remains committed to the key priority areas under the Istanbul Programme of Action, the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We will continue to develop and implement robust policies that will bring Cambodia closer to the achievement of our national and international commitments.

Finally, looking into the future, the Fifth United Nations Conference of the Least Developed Countries, scheduled to be held in March 2021 in Doha, Qatar, presents an important opportunity to strengthen development action among LDCs. We hope that all development partners will seize this opportunity to engage proactively so as to ensure that no country is left behind.

**Thank you.**