

Samdech Hun Sen At the Ceremony to Demolish Weapons and Ammunition of the Phnom Penh Capital At the National Olympic Stadium (May 05, 1999)

This is the second time, we celebrate a ceremony to destroy weapons, while the first one was held before the general election in 1998. This second time is being held five months after the formation of the new Royal Government and only five days after the Kingdom of Cambodia was admitted as full member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to report to Venerable monks and dear compatriots, and international communities the issues relating to peace, security, and social order, as well as weapons and ammunition which we are now destroying.

On August 18, 1997, at Sihanoukville under the topic of creating a neutral political atmosphere and security for the holding the election, I myself issued an 8-point security measures, which resulted in the confiscation of illegal weapons and arms from the local militia. At that time, although war still existed in some parts of the countries, created by the Khmer Rouge, we still had the courage to destroy thousands of weapons.

After the establishment of the new Royal Government and the collapse of military and political organizations of the Khmer Rouge, the war has ended, the territory being united, and peace being strengthened. However, the insecurity created by criminals, such as armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom along with the anarchic use of weapons at home, on the streets, at public and entertainment places, etc,... have compelled the Royal Government to apply more measures in order to strengthen peace and social order aiming at assuring the state legality, security and safety of the people in general.

The war has been ended, but it doesn't mean that there is complete peace if the robbery and stealing have not been abolished, the public order has not yet been strengthened and the people are still living in fear. Based on the above mentioned reasons combined with concrete situation, the Royal Government has issued many new measures during the last few months.

The cancellation of licenses and their validity to hold all kinds of arms is one of the new measures in the first step to ban both legal and illegal weapons being carried on the streets, and in the public and entertainment places. Since then, except the competent forces, any individual who carried weapon outside his/her residence will be confiscated. The competent forces also have to leave their weapons at their units when they are not on duties, so they do not have weapons with them anymore.

To carry out these new measures, Excellency Deputy Prime Minister Sar Kheng has been assigned to personally lead this operation. In the municipalities and provinces, the joint provincial and municipal committees are led by the provincial and municipal governors, except the capital of Phnom Penh, Excellency Chea Sophara leads a mechanism with the participation of the government institutions.

What has been the pleasure and success of these new measures was the celebration of the new year without any firing to welcome new Devoda like past years. Previously, the new Devodas were welcomed by gunfires at residences and units, in the streets as well as at the public places caused lots of casualties, creating public disorder, and disturbing the joy and happiness of the people on every New Year's days. On the other hand, after applying these new measures, we have not noted any shooting on the streets, at restaurants, at public places caused by minor quarrels such as stepping on each other's feet while dancing, disputing for girls, or minor traffic accidents. Groups of teenagers who have arms also fired or threatened each other at schools, which are serious threats on their studies.

Another point of pride of the Royal Government is the people's movement to voluntarily submit their weapons to the competent authorities. In particular, in the capital of Phnom Penh alone, thousands of arms have been submitted. This reflected a strong movement of the people to contribute to maintaining social security and their confidence in the Royal Government in carrying out the measures to strengthen public security.

In the name of the Royal Government, I would like to express my profound gratitude to all the people, all families who have voluntarily submitted their weapons to the Royal Government. I also would like to take this opportunity to praise to Excellency Deputy Prime Minister Sar Kheng and other leaders who have overcome all difficulties and achieved success in these tasks. I also would like to compliment Excellency Chea Sophara and members of the Explosives and Weapons Confiscation Commission of Phnom Penh and all forces taking part in the operation, who have efficiently carried out their tasks. This efficiency is not only of importance as an administrative measure, but also the creation of a large mass movement which con-

tributes to the strengthening of the security and public order...

Although successes have been achieved, it is only the first step. Social security is still a priority for the Royal Government to solve. The illegal carrying and keeping of weapons, illegal trade of weapons, violence, armed robbery, and kidnapping for ransom will occur again if we do not continue to carry out the existing measures. That is why, the meeting of the Council of Ministers held on the April 30, 1999 have issued a new sub-decree aiming at continued strengthening the management and control of weapons and ammunition. In the name of the Royal Government, I would like to appeal as follows:

1. Strictly carry out the spirit and contents of the sub-decree 38 ankr.pk dated April 30, 1999 concerning the management and the control of import, production, sales, distribution and use of all kinds of explosives and weapons.
2. Appeal all government officials, armed forces and the people who have kept and carried weapons illegally to submit those weapons to the competent institutions. Our compatriots should not be worried but to submit weapons to the competent authorities as soon as possible. Those government officials, military officers, police officers, military police officers, who have been permitted by the new sub-decree to carry weapons for self-defense must keep their weapons properly. Avoid

letting weapons to be used by their children, relatives or friends for whatever goals. Past experiences have shown that children and relatives of some leaders have used their weapons against the weaker and the people. These cases should be ended.

3. All units of the armed forces should have their own warehouses or places to keep their weapons after fulfilling their missions.
4. The competent forces that have the tasks to control and confiscate weapons and ammunition should carry out their duties in accordance with their mandates. They must not transform their duties into extorting money from passengers or obstructing their movement without reason. Around the capital of Phnom Penh and other towns where weapons have been prohibited to bring in, there should be places to keep weapons left by those authorized to carry arms and return to them when they leave the cities or towns. The competent authorities should be polite to all people who have been checked and especially respect the immunities of members of the Senate and parliament, and other politicians, whom I hope that Excellencies and Lok Chum Teav will not allow any illegal weapons to be covered under your immunities.
5. While gathering all illegal weapons and ammunition along with the movement of the people to submit their weapons and ammunitions to the state, competent authorities at all levels should increase their cooperation to safeguard the security for the people at any places from the urban to the rural areas, strictly cracking down stealing, armed robbery, and kidnapping for ransom. Try all efforts for the people to live without fear created by criminals. The strengthening of the local police posts, the discipline and morality of the police forces who carry out their duties along the roads and bridges are necessary measures to maintain the security for the people.
6. Firmly control the confiscated weapons and ammunition, prohibit the exchange of old weapons for new ones, and bringing them out for use. The aim of the Royal Government is to destroy those illegal weapons. Any confiscated illegal weapon can be held only if there is a proposal from the Ministry of Defense or Ministry of Interior in accordance with the requirement of national defense and security only.
7. The Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces, the Director General of National Police, the Commander of the Military Police must issue orders for checking within the units and submitting anti-personnel mines to the Cambodian Mines Action Center (MAC) to be destroyed, so that all Cambodian Armed Forces will have no more to keep or use. This is the implementation of Ottawa Treaty on Mines, and the new law which was just adopted by the National Assembly on the non-use of anti-personnel mines. In the meantime, we must strengthen the management of explosives, which are allowed for production and public services, and try to avoid using these explosives as bombs to kill the people or to destroy buildings, bridges, railways, or fishes in water, etc...

The strengthening of security, social order, the abolition of keeping weapons and carrying of illegal weapons, and the destruction of weapons are not only part of the security issue, but also part of the political reform, and the reforms of public administration, justice and

also the armed forces. This is to carry out a long-term vision for the nation which has great influence to the socio-economic development and the enhancing of social morality and the respect of human rights. The destruction of weapons is in fact a loss of budget, but it has contributed to the reduction of crimes and violence caused by lethal weapons... Weapons will only be used by competent armed forces and will be kept at the units, and not be allowed to be taken out as in the past...

We have decided to reduce the number of army and police, but we have not thought about the modernization of weaponry for our armed forces, but instead we are destroying weapons.

We believe in our policy and the policies of our neighbors that there will be no use of force to solve the conflicts between states, and we have even more trust on this policy when we become official member of ASEAN.

The experience of developed countries, which still have violence such as bomb explosions in London, England and the shootings which killed scores of school- children in the United States recently have clearly shown that the keeping of many weapons in an anarchic way are not good at all.

Especially for our country which is famous of violence, and the declining social morality since the war in the 70s, with so many weapons, we must be more careful and have the obligation to gather and destroy them.

Weapons and ammunition which are kept for the national defense and security must be managed and controlled in a proper and firm manner. I would like to conclude my speech by dedicating today as the day of action for cultural peace toward a Cambodia free of violence and crimes.

Letter of Samdech Prime Minister Hun Sen
to the Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan
April 28, 1999
His Excellency Kofi A. Annan
Secretary General of the United Nations, New York, UN Plaza
Excellency,

Further to our previous communication on the issue of bringing the Khmer Rouge leaders to justice, I have the honor to bring to your kind attention the present position of the Royal Government of Cambodia on issue as follows:

1. The trial of Ta Mok, the notorious Khmer Rouge leader, is to be conducted by the existing national court of law of the Kingdom of Cambodia with the assistance from foreign countries, in which foreign judges and prosecutors would be allowed to take part fully, thereby, ensuring that trial meet international standards of due process.

2. The possibility of further indictment and prosecution of other Khmer Rouge leaders is rested in the sole competence of the court to decide.
3. To make it possible for the foreign judges and prosecutors to take part in the judicial proceeding against the Khmer Rouge leaders, a draft law is going to be submitted to the National Assembly of Cambodia for enactment. After then, both national and foreign judges and prosecutors will conduct together an investigation and prosecution against the offenders in accordance with an independent prerogative of the judicial branch. The Royal Government of Cambodia will not influence or interfere into the legal proceeding of the court.

Please accept, Excellency, the renewed assurances of my highest consideration.