



**H.E. MOM Thany,
Secretary of State, Ministry of Environment
Cambodia Branding Forum _ Edition Francophonies**

KEYNOTE SPEECH

- **Excellencies, Lok Chumteav,**
- **Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen**

Today, I have an honor and pleasure to participate in this important **Cambodia Branding Forum Edition Francophonies** organised here in Phnom Penh. On behalf of H.E. Dr. Eang Sophalleth, Minister of Environment, I would like to express our sincere thanks to the Millennium Destination for inviting the Ministry of Environment to this forum.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

We are living in a very challenging world. We have just emerged from the global disruptions caused by Covid-19 pandemic. Our efforts to recover from its impacts and to promote further development are hampered by the on-going geopolitical tensions and other environmental challenges, particularly climate change. In this regard, I want to highlight some of the trends that were noticeable a few years ago and have now become even more prominent:

- First, the development of the green economy is forging ahead, with unprecedented levels of investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies, and with the introduction of higher environmental and climate change standards in major international trade instruments. The European Union is very much a pioneer in this field, with the recent adoption of a carbon border adjustment mechanism, and of the decision on imports of deforestation-free commodities. And we need to develop our capacities for Cambodian products to meet these requirements;
- Second, competition to attract high quality investment is becoming more and more fierce. Cambodia is set to graduate from Least Developed Country status in the next few years and to lose the corresponding trade privileges. This will put us in direct competition with more advanced developing countries in the region and beyond. We need to be ready to compete in this new environment;
- Third, we are seeing increasing geopolitical tensions and a trend towards deglobalization, with some advanced economies seeking to re-localize production to reduce their vulnerability to global shocks. All of these trends are still playing out, and they are creating uncertainty.

Our government is well aware of the threats and opportunities created by this very fluid environment. While we cannot predict with certainty where these trends will lead us, it is our responsibility to ensure that our economy grows greener towards more resilience and more

sustainability. This will require diversification, better resource efficiency, and a capacity to innovate.

Just to name a few initiatives, in the last few years we have adopted a Long Term Strategy for Carbon Neutrality, an Industrial Development Policy, a Digital Development Policy, and a National Energy Efficiency Policy. Our new Investment Law provides incentives for investments that promote green economy, address climate change and protect the environment. Our government of this mandate adopted the Pentagonal Strategy-Phase 1 which extensively incorporates green, resilient and low carbon considerations into all key sectors. Recently our government approved a National Policy on Electric Vehicle Development 2024-2030. Concrete mechanisms have been launched under the leadership of the Ministry of Economy and Finance to support entrepreneurship, including the Techo Start-up Center, the SME bank, Khmer Enterprise and the Entrepreneurship Development Fund. The Ministry of Economy and Finance in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment are working together to establish a Cambodia Climate Financing Facility to channel green finance from the Green Climate Fund and other sources to our entrepreneurs through the Agricultural and Rural Development Bank. We are also working on a range of initiatives to promote a circular economy, in partnership with the private sector.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

All key sectors of the Cambodian economy can benefit the adoption of more sustainable approaches. Tourism is a key driver of our economic recovery, and the promotion of eco-tourism is a growing priority for the government, as a way to attract high quality tourism, but also crucially as a way to involve private sector in the sustainable natural resources management.

In industry, we already have high demands from investors to adopt high social and environmental standards, including reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in line with the commitments to net zero emissions made by many multi-national companies. We expect this trend to continue, as we seek to diversify into higher value-added industries, and as developed countries increasingly incorporate social, environmental and climate change standards in their trade instruments.

The construction sector also has a critical role to play in increasing the resilience of our economy. Better resource efficiency in the use of energy and water can help reduce our vulnerability to external shocks, both economic and climatic. The recently adopted energy efficiency policy sets some ambitious targets for both public and private buildings. Related to this is the urban development agenda. If Cambodia wants to become an attractive investment destination, we need attractive cities. This means cities which are less vulnerable to extreme climate events, have low carbon transport systems, and efficient waste management.

Last but not least, I want to mention the agriculture sector. It is a sector where Cambodia has clear potential for exports, but also a sector that is essential to our poverty reduction and food security objectives. Sustainability in agriculture is an absolute must. Without the adoption at scale of sustainable practices, we risk the depletion of our soils and our water resources. And there are viable solutions. Our challenge is to put in place actors at all levels of the value chain to support these practices with appropriate inputs, advisory support, and financing.

All these contribute to building apposite branding for Cambodia as a green investment destination for investors with a sustainability mindset, including those with innovative technologies that could contribute to our vision of a green, low carbon, resilient economy.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

Green development is becoming even more important as consumers are more environmentally conscious and demand that companies take a stand on climate action and sustainability. They are no longer content with just purchasing products. But they want to support brands that reflect their values and contribute positively to society and the environment. Thus, brands that prioritize sustainability and climate action and biodiversity protection enjoy a competitive edge.

A unique branding associated with environment is getting more attractive. The Ministry of Environment, for example, enhances the green destination with focus on diversifying products and brandings to attract tourists. Green destination corridors are being established within protected areas. Another example is the “One Village One Product” which is a government strategy to promote branding and tourism.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Environment launched a nationwide campaign to reduce the use of plastic under the theme "Today I do not use plastic bags" on 1st September 2023. So far, this successful campaign has been attended by more than 8 million people, including students, teachers, monks and factory workers across the country. On 15 May 2024, the Ministry of Environment launched another nationwide campaign called “Clean Cambodia! Khmer Can Do!”. This new campaign runs in parallel with the campaign "Today I do not use plastic bags". We also declared an initiative for cleaning up Tonle Sap from plastic pollution. Recently the Ministry of Environment launched a nationwide campaign, call “Ponlok Baitong” to start planting at least 1 million trees per year to contribute to achieving 60% of forest cover by 2050. Today, as we are standing here, the campaign “Ponlok Baitong” is being organized in front of the Ministry’s Building. So, please take your time to visit our exhibition and collect tree seedlings, then plant them for our next generation.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Millennium Destination for inviting the Ministry of Environment to this event. The Ministry of Environment is ready to cooperate with all stakeholders in promoting environmental branding in Cambodia.

I wish the Forum a great success!

Thank you.