

Congratulatory Remarks

By

H.E OK Darariddh, Secretary of State and High Representative of
H.E SOK Soken, Minister of Tourism of the Kingdom of Cambodia
At the Opening of “Cambodia Branding Forum – Edition Francophonie”
Connexion, Koh Pich Island, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
11th July 2024

-H.E.....!

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

1. On behalf of His Excellency Minister SOK Soken, it is my great honor to warmly welcome Excellencies, Lok Chumteav, distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen to the opening of the “Cambodia Branding Forum – Edition Francophonie.”
2. I extend my sincere gratitude to the management and staff of Millennium Destinations, whose dedication to sustainable tourism development, marketing, and branding in Southeast Asia, especially in Cambodia, has been invaluable.

Excellencies, Lok Chumteav, distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen,

3. The Royal Government of Cambodia, under the leadership of Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei HUN Manet, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, continues to uphold peace and political stability, which have been critical for our nation's development. Adopting the **“Pentagonal Strategy – Phase I”** for growth, employment, equity, efficiency, and sustainability has facilitated progress across all sectors, including tourism. The government focuses on driving economic growth through human resources, promoting cultural and nature-based tourism, and introducing green, clean, and smart tourism initiatives alongside high-value tourism products and business tourism.
4. In this mandate, the Ministry of Tourism has adopted the **“BUILDS and 3Ds”** initiative, aiming to create a favorable environment for Cambodia to be a lively, competitive, sustainable, and inclusive destination. Our vision is to jointly promote Cambodia's prestige and resilience by transforming it into a leading tourism destination known for diversity, opportunity, and warmth.

5. To attract more national and international tourists and investors, the Ministry of Tourism launched several promotional events:

- **Cambodia-China People-to-People Exchange Year 2024** - Officially launched on January 13, 2024, in Siem Reap Province, this initiative aims to deepen the bonds of friendship between Cambodia and China.
- **Visit Siem Reap 2024 Campaign** - Launched on March 16, 2024, concurrently with the Eighth River Festival in Siem Reap City.
- **First Cambodia-India Tourism Year 2024** - Inaugurated on June 17, 2024, in New Delhi, alongside the commencement of direct flights between Phnom Penh and New Delhi by Cambodia Angkor Air.

6. These efforts have significantly contributed to the recovery of tourism. In 2023, Cambodia welcomed over 5.45 million international tourists, and 18.7 million domestic tourists. In the first four months of 2024 alone, we received over 2.1 million international tourists, a 22.9% increase. According to the World Economic Forum's Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI) 2024, the imperative for stakeholder collaboration in leveraging the Tourism & Travel (T&T) sector's transformative potential is underscored. Despite robust travel demand, the sector confronts persistent challenges such as escalating prices, labor shortages, and geopolitical instability. The sector's growth trajectory is shaped by interrelated factors including price competitiveness, labor capacity, and sustainability, rendering its development inherently complex. In order to navigate the global economic, environmental, and technological risks, the T&T sector must prioritize sustainability, inclusivity, and resilience. Achieving these objectives necessitates extensive collaboration among businesses, government agencies, and civil society, alongside the adoption of innovative technological and data management approaches to maximize the T&T sector's potential for fostering positive economic, social, and environmental change.

7. Developing countries, including Cambodia, exhibit significant potential for growth by enhancing their infrastructure to exploit their natural and cultural resources. Nevertheless, it is imperative to balance this growth with sustainability, informed by the practices of developed nations that safeguard natural resources, empower local communities, and integrate technologies responsibly. Realizing this potential requires robust collaboration among businesses, governmental bodies such as Cambodia's Ministry of Tourism and the forthcoming Cambodia Tourism Board (CTB), non-governmental organizations, and international entities. Leveraging tools such as artificial intelligence for data analysis can facilitate the management of tourism's

environmental and social impacts, thus enabling Cambodia's T&T sector to propel economic growth while preserving its unique heritage.

Excellencies, Lok Chumteav, distinguished guests, ladies, and gentlemen,

8. With around 310 million French speakers worldwide in 2024, French remains a globally influential language. From March 20 until early October 2024, over 40 countries and 400 organizations are setting up projects and events showcasing the vibrancy of Francophone creativity. This presents a unique opportunity for us to promote Cambodia's tourism potential to a broader audience.
9. Cambodia maintains a non-discriminatory foreign policy, welcoming all international tourists and investors equally. We are especially pleased to invite guests from Francophonie countries to experience the warmth and wonders of "Cambodia: Kingdom of Wonder."
10. Once again, on behalf of the H.E. Minister, the management, officials, and myself, we deeply appreciate and congratulate Millennium Destinations for their successful efforts in uniting key stakeholders from government bodies, the private sector, and associations to enhance Cambodia's brand image as a premier destination for tourism, investment, and talent attraction.
11. May the Almighty Lord Buddha bless Excellencies, Lok Chumteav, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen the four blessings: Longevity, Nobility, Health, and Strength.

Thank you!