



**KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
NATION RELIGION KING**

**MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION**

Press Release

Outcomes of the 27th ASEAN Regional Forum and Related Meetings

12 September 2020, Via Videoconference



On 12 September 2020, His Excellency PRAK Sokhonn, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, participated in the 27th ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) 10+1 Session with the European Union (EU), and ASEAN PMC10+1 Session with India, which were held on the sidelines of the 53rd ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting and related meetings.

The 27th ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)

The Meeting exchanged views on regional and international issues and discussed future direction of the ARF. The Meeting noted the significance of the ARF contribution to the maintenance of peace, security and stability in the Asia-Pacific through dialogues and consultations to promote confidence building and trust among and between the participants. The Meeting also noted with satisfaction the ongoing work of ARF through the progress in the implementation of the Ha Noi Plan of Action and reviewed the cooperation under ARF framework amidst the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak.

On regional and international issues, the Ministers touched upon issues of common interest and concern that constitute as a threat to peace and stability in the region such as nuclear issue in the Korean Peninsula, nuclear disarmament, irregular migration at sea, counter terrorism and transnational crimes, Rakhine State issue, South China Sea issue. They highlighted efforts and called for concerted actions to promote multilateralism in safeguarding peace, security and prosperity in the region. The Meeting also anticipated that cooperative activities in the areas of disaster relief, counter-terrorism and transnational crime, maritime security, non-proliferation and disarmament, and security of and in the use of



information and communication technologies (ICTs) as well as cyber security, will be resumed after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Meeting expressed commitment to support ASEAN as the driving force of the ARF process.

As for the future direction of the ARF, the Meeting adopted the ARF Ha Noi Plan of Action II (2020-2025), which renewed the ARF commitment to foster constructive dialogue and cooperation on political and security issues of common interest and concern in the region, as well as promoting confidence building measures and preventive diplomacy to maintain peace, stability and prosperity in the region. The Meeting also noted the Guide to ARF Processes, Procedures and Protocol which provides a set of measures to shape the ARF framework towards a more effective process.

The Meeting also adopted ARF Statement on Enhancing Cooperation to Prevent and Respond to Infectious Disease Outbreaks, ARF Statement on the Treatment of Children Recruited by or Associated with Terrorist Groups, and ARF Statement on Cooperation in the Field of Security of and in the Use of ICTs in the Context of International Security.

The Meeting recognized increasing important role of the ARF mechanism, as a platform for dialogue and consultation and multilateral cooperation, amidst the growing challenges and unprecedented global uncertainty.

H.E. Deputy Prime Minister highlighted two major security challenges, namely the COVID-19 pandemic, and the big powers rivalries and unilateral disengagement from international commitments at a time the world needs more galvanized efforts. He recalled the ASEAN Foreign Ministers Statement on the Importance of Maintaining Peace and Stability in Southeast Asia that expressed strong desire to maintain regional peace, security, stability and neutrality.

He emphasized Cambodia’s earnest determination to avoid taking side in great power competition and being trapped in this rivalry, bearing in mind the tragic past that Cambodia had learnt. He reiterated Cambodia’s Constitutional principles of permanent neutrality and non-alignment, which do not allow Cambodia to host any foreign military base on her territory or join in any military alliance and treaty.

He expressed Cambodia’s support for international efforts to achieve a peaceful, complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization in the Korean peninsula, in particular through the ARF.



On the South China Sea, he underlined that as a non-claimant state, Cambodia aligns itself with the common aspiration that the South China Sea remains a sea of peace, stability and prosperity. Cambodia encourages all parties, especially the parties directly concerned, to fully and effectively implement the DOC in its entirety as a way to reinforce trust and confidence, emphasizes the importance of continued dialogue between parties directly concerned and the peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law, including UNCLOS 1982.

ASEAN PMC10+1 Session with the European Union (EU)

The Meeting reiterated their commitment to further strengthening partnership and cooperation through the full and effective implementation of the ASEAN-EU Plans of Action for 2018-2022. To celebrate the robust ASEAN-EU engagement, the Meeting agreed to work towards the formal elevation of the ASEAN-EU ties to a Strategic Partnership. The Meeting also expressed hope to finalise and announce the conclusion of the ASEAN-EU Comprehensive Air Transport Agreement (CATA) that will enhance aviation cooperation as well as aviation development in both regions. The Meeting underlined the importance of the ASEAN-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and agreed to work towards the expeditious conclusion of the Agreement.

ASEAN Member States also appreciated the EU’s announcement that it has mobilised a “Team Europe” package of over €800 million (US\$1.29 billion) to combat the spread of COVID-19 and mitigate its impact in ASEAN.

Cambodia took the opportunity to thank the EU for the financial assistance of €443 million in grant and loans to support Cambodia economic recovery and job creation during this difficult time. Cambodia also reiterated support for upgrading the ASEAN-EU relations to Strategic Partnership level. On economic aspect, Cambodia urged for the early conclusion of the ASEAN-EU CATA as well as the ASEAN-EU FTA. Cambodia commended the EU its exemplary actions in addressing the issues of climate change, and encouraged the EU to promote sustainable development and efforts in narrowing the development gap under the new IAI Work Plan IV.

ASEAN PMC10+1 Session with India

The Meeting noted with satisfaction the implementation of the 2016-2020 ASEAN-India Plan of Action (POA) and welcomed the adoption of the new POA for the period of 2021-2025. The Meeting welcomed the initiative to review the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA), and looked forward to



the expeditious conclusion of the ASEAN-India Air Transport Agreement (AI-ATA) and the ASEAN-India Maritime Transport Agreement (AI-MTA).

To enhance multimodal transport between ASEAN and India, the Meeting looked forward to the timely completion of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway as well as its possible extension to Lao PDR, Cambodia and Viet Nam.

Cambodia recalled **Samdech Techo Prime Minister Hun Sen’s** appreciation to India for its strong commitment to forge a global alliance to combat the COVID-19 pandemic through the recent telephone conversation with **His Excellency Prime Minister Narendra Modi** of India. Cambodia emphasized that India, with her vast experience and deep knowledge in the field of pharmaceuticals, is playing a key role in maintaining the global supply chain of medicines and medical equipment during this health crisis.

Cambodia also emphasized the necessity to deepen our trade and investment through the ASEAN-India Business Summit and the ASEAN-India Business Council. Cambodia stressed on the need to enhance people-to-people connectivity as the basis to strengthen tourism and human capital development in our region. On hard connectivity, Cambodia looked forward to more progress on the completion of the extension of the Trilateral Highway project to Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam. Cambodia encouraged more support on capacity building for women and young entrepreneurs in the framework of the IAI Phase IV especially in support of narrowing the digital divide within ASEAN.

Phnom Penh, 12 September 2020

