



Outcomes of the 53rd ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting and Related Meetings



Press Release MFAIC/Sep 10

Deputy Prime Minister PRAK Sokhonn, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation participated in 53rd ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting and Related Meetings via videoconference on 9-12 September.

The 53rd ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting (AMM) took note of the progress made in key deliverables including the Mid-term Review of the ASEAN Community Blueprints, the review of the implementation of the ASEAN Charter, as well as the discussion for the way forward in developing an ASEAN Community Vision Post-2025.

The Meeting emphasized the importance of the post-pandemic economic recovery, where cooperation is focused on the affordable access to the COVID-19 vaccines, supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs), unrestricted essential travels in the region, and the early signing of the Regional Comprehensive Partnership (RCEP) Agreement this year.

The Meeting approved the ASEAN intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) Five-Year Work Plan 2021-2025, Priority Programmes/Activities and Budget of the AICHR for 2021.

Continued on page (4)

INSIDE IS

ASEM Calls for Concerted Global Response to Pandemic

[Page 2](#)

Cambodia-Hungary Conference Opens Window to Trade

[Page 2](#)

Consumer Protection Law Breeds Optimism

[Page 2](#)

COVID-19 Response a 'Catalyst' To Axe Poverty

[Page 3](#)

Cabinet Approves Two Draft Laws

[Page 3](#)

New Generation School Programme Gaining Popularity

[Page 3](#)

Cambodia, South Korea Wrap Up Second Round of FTA Talks

[Page 4](#)

ASEM Calls for Concerted Global Response to Pandemic

Press Release MFAIC /Sep 09

On behalf of the Foreign Ministers of Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) partner countries, Cambodia issued a statement calling for a concerted global response to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.

The statement reflects the spirit of close cooperation among ASEM partners to respond appropriately to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The ministers recognised that combating the COVID-19 pandemic would require concerted international cooperation, effective actions by multilateral organisations, and support for multilateralism by ASEM partners, based on UN principles and values.

They reaffirmed their commitment to working together and sharing experiences, best practices and information in a free, responsible, transparent and timely manner in order to decisively and effectively control the spread of the pandemic.

In the post-pandemic phase, they committed to accelerate the post-COVID-19 sustainable socio-economic recovery, stimulate economic development and financial resilience, and minimize the potential of global economic recession by restoring growth, investment, sustainable connectivity, business travel and tourism, as well as maintaining market stability.

Continued on page (4)

Cambodia-Hungary Conference Opens Window to Trade

Phnom Penh Post /Sep 06

The first meeting of the Cambodia-Hungary Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation will be held later this year in a move to boost bilateral trade.

The meeting will be held in two sessions on November 30 and December 1 in the Kingdom.

Hungary has expressed its commitment to strengthening economic cooperation with Cambodia in key areas, including agriculture, agro-industry, irrigation management, e-commerce and education.

Meanwhile, the two sides plan to sign two Memorandums of Understanding on draft agreements related to agriculture and irrigation management, as well as an agreement on aviation services.

In 2019, Cambodia and Hungary signed agreements on economic cooperation in 24 priority areas, including trade promotion, e-commerce, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), agriculture, tourism, banking and finance. •

Consumer Protection Law Breeds Optimism



Phnom Penh Post /Sep 02

Senior government officials and development partners are optimistic that the recently enacted Consumer Protection Law will instill stronger consumer confidence and lure more investors to Cambodia.

Minister of Commerce said the law will provide the Kingdom's consumers with additional safeguards and promote fair and healthy competition.

The law sets forth rules and mechanisms that will contribute to ensuring a fair business environment that is built on a foundation of trust between consumers and traders where consumer rights and interests are well-protected.

German international development organization, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), has been working with the ministry for nearly a decade implementing initiatives under the regional "ASEAN helps ASEAN" approach and learning from experience and good practice.

The minister said the "Consumer Protection in ASEAN" project strives to strengthen national consumer protection systems in Cambodia and other select ASEAN member states.

The project's provisions include technical assistance to strengthen regional dialogue and cooperation; institutional and legal framework development; and dispute mitigation and resolution.

The Consumer Protection Law was enacted on November 2 and comprises 11 chapters and 51 articles. •

COVID-19 Response a 'Catalyst' To Axe Poverty

Phnom Penh Posts/September 02

A study published by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) said the COVID-19 pandemic has been a catalyst for the large-scale development of Cambodia's social protection schemes.

The Kingdom should be able to reduce the poverty rate to below 3% at a price tag representing at most 1.5% of its gross domestic product (GDP).

The report, entitled Meeting the Cost and Maximising the Impact of Social Protection in Cambodia, said the government's cash transfer programme represented a political and institutional development that could pave the way for permanent, more effective and ambitious programmes.

Cambodia has achieved impressive rates of economic growth over the past 15 years while keeping income inequality in check. The poverty rate has fallen dramatically from about 50% of the population in 2007 to below 10% in 2016.

In 2017, Cambodia introduced the National Social Protection Policy Framework, which demonstrated a political commitment to fixing the issue.

Two models of social protection were raised as examples: either allocating cash transfers alone or providing a balance of cash and asset transfers, so-called graduation-based programmes.

Even if the cash transfer programme was temporary, it promised to achieve significant poverty reduction in both rural and urban settings. For as long as it lasts, the new emergency social protection scheme created in response to COVID-19 could lift over one million Cambodians out of poverty and improve the livelihoods of many more. •

Cabinet Approves Two Draft Laws



Khmer Times/September 05

Two draft laws have recently approved by the cabinet of ministers of Cambodia.

The first document is the draft law on government bonds while the second is the draft law on the organisation and functioning of non-bank financial services authority.

The draft of law on government bonds is a key financial tool for the government to mobilise both domestic and foreign financing from the private sector for economic and social development.

It is also to provide a common framework for the management of the issuance, trading and management of securities in a transparent, accountable, efficient and effective manner, as well as to ensure the sustainability of public debt management.

The draft law on the organisation and functioning of non-bank financial services authority is aimed at integrating the mechanisms of management and control over the non-bank financial sector, including insurance and private pension, bond sector, social security, trustee industry, accounting and audit, among others. •

New Generation School Programme Gaining Popularity

Khmer Times/September 01

The New Generation School programme, implemented in early 2015, initially received a mixed response from teachers and students. Currently, its momentum is steadily increasing alongside its newfound reputation of delivering "quality education".

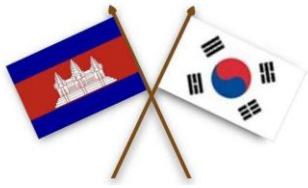
Following the formal announcement to reopen schools on September 7 by the Ministry of Education, there has been a spike in student registrations for the NGS programme this year. However, due to the limited number of spaces on the programmes, around 1,200 student applications will be rejected.

The reforms made by the NGS programme move away from the previous heavy reliance on textbook-based learning by reforming the curriculum to include different teaching methods for 'greater transparency and accountability'.

The programme aims to address the modern challenges that the Cambodian education system faces, including increased technological use, urbanisation, and the expansion of private schools.

The programme is implemented in 10 provinces across the country. While there are plans to roll out the programme in all provinces, it remains too ambitious given the limited funding and resources available. •

Cambodia, South Korea Wrap Up Second Round of FTA Talks



Khmer Times/September 04

Cambodia and South Korea has recently ended the second round of their negotiations on free trade agreement (FTA) with positive progress.

It was a remarkable progress after four days of virtual meeting held from Aug. 31 to Sept. 3. The two countries held the first round of their negotiations in July this year.

The talks came after Prime Minister Hun Sen proposed the bilateral free trade pact during his summit with South Korean President H.E. Moon Jae-in in Phnom Penh in March 2019.

At least two more rounds of FTA negotiations are needed to finalise the pact before the end of 2020.

The two-way trade between both nations reached an all-time high of US\$1 billion in 2019, up 6% from a year earlier. Cambodia exported US\$336 million worth of products to South Korea and imported US\$697 million from the country. Cambodia is South Korea's 58th-largest

Continued from page (2)

ASEM Calls for Concerted Global Response

As the host of the ASEM 13 summit, Cambodia attached paramount importance to upholding the momentum of the ASEM process and maintaining ASEM visibility and relevance. Through the concerted efforts of all ASEM partners, Cambodia organised a series of video conferences, including one full ASEM Senior Officials' Meeting and three ASEM Regional Coordinators' Senior Officials' Meetings, in order to achieve these ministerial outcomes, in line with ASEM's spirit of equal partnership and consensus.

Cambodia extends its utmost appreciation to all ASEM partners for their collaboration to deliver this ASEM ministerial statement.

The ASEM 13 summit was initially scheduled to be held on November 16 and 17 in the capital under the theme of "Strengthening Multilateralism for Shared Growth". Due to the pandemic, it has been postponed to the middle of next year. •

Continued from page (1)

Outcomes of the 53rd ASEAN...

In promoting ASEAN's external relations, the Meeting endorsed France's and Italy's applications for Development Partnership.

The Foreign Ministers also exchanged views on regional and international issues of common concern and interest such as maritime security, Korean Peninsula, Rakhine State, including promoting the ASEAN Community Building, peace and prosperity, and strengthening engagement with external partners utilizing the ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP), among others.

In his intervention, Foreign Minister PRAK Sokhonn suggested that ASEAN should work towards the creation of "travel corridors" to facilitate business travel, in a safe and gradual manner during COVID-19 pandemic, and it should be translated into a concrete action plan as soon as possible. He stressed that amidst the escalating tensions between major powers, and deep setback on multilateralism, ASEAN is not interested in taking sides, and ASEAN has to firmly uphold the spirit of ASEAN unity and centrality to exercise our "ASEAN Way" principles.

He also needed that the ASEAN Regional Mine Action Center (ARMAC) will have a new Executive Director in mid-October of 2020, and expressed appreciation to Viet Nam for initiative on the "Friends of ARMAC" in order to mobilize more support for the Center. •