



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

866 UN PLAZA, SUITE 420, NEW YORK, NY 10017
TEL: (212) 223-0676 FAX: (212) 223-0425

**Statement
of**

**H.E. Dr. Chem Widhya
Ambassador, Permanent Representative
of the Kingdom of Cambodia
to the United Nations**

on

**Agenda Item 64
Advancement of Women**

**Third Committee
60th Session of the United Nations General Assembly**

**New York
Wednesday, October 12, 2005**

Mr. Chairman,

1. At the outset, on behalf of my Delegation, let me convey our deep appreciation to you, Mr. Chairman and other members of the Committee, for the productive efforts that have been carried out so far necessary for the achievement of successful result of the work of the Third Committee.
2. Cambodia also would like to align itself with the statement delivered earlier by Indonesia on behalf of ASEAN.
3. As we all know, the issue of poverty eradication and women advancement are closely intertwined. In our society, women are more vulnerable to poverty because they suffer from inequalities in many different fronts, i.e., distribution of income, access to financial inputs such as credit, command over property, as well as gender-biases in labor markets and general communities. In addition, women do not always have full control over their basic asset, i.e., their own labor.
4. Though the issue of poverty has always been a major concern in the work of the United Nations and the Member States, the challenge of its eradication remains a priority. With a growing recognition that poverty has a significant gender dimension, strategies and policies should emphasize the importance of achieving the goals of gender equality and advancement of women in poverty eradication efforts.

Mr. Chairman,

5. As one of the worst affected post war countries, Cambodia has spent the last ten years to overcome many challenges in its efforts to eradicate poverty, in particular in addressing the dreadful imbalance in gender representation left behind by the genocidal regime of Pol Pot, where 75% of households were led by widows and women, because most men were killed mercilessly by Pol Pot's henchmen and zealous child soldiers. The importance of women in ensuring growth and progress in our economy and society could therefore simply not be overlooked. The Royal Government of Cambodia has taken the proactive approach by incorporating the Gender issue into its National Plan for Strategic Development, which has been prepared this year and submitted to the Country's Council of Ministers. This means that all ministries have to develop their plans for the next five years and look at activities, goals and indicators in order to respond to "Gender" issue in their responsible sector.

6. Furthermore, the Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs has led the efforts to reduce gender-based disparities and improve gender equity in health, education, control over agricultural resources, socio-economic and political empowerment and legal protection. Currently, the Ministry has implemented "**Neary Ratanak II or Precious Women II**" which focuses on economic sector, health care, decision making and legal protection to provide opportunities to women to equally participate in all economic, social and family activities.
7. Women took also a more active role in the political life of the country. In the 2003 General Election in Cambodia, 12 percent of female candidates were elected to the Parliament, which represented an increase by 17.80 percent when compared with the 2nd term of the National Assembly. We also had 13 percent of women as Senators, an increase of 18 percent compared with the last term. These results indicate that access of women to the policy decision making process at both local and national levels has been significantly improved.

Mr. Chairman,

8. One of the prominent issues that Cambodia is facing now is HIV/AIDS. Though the spread of HIV/AIDS in Cambodia could be reduced from 2.4% in 1998 to 1.8% in 2003, the spread of the virus has jumped from the category of people at high risk to the households, where wives and young children are the most likely victims. There are approximately 50,000 women who live with HIV.
9. I would like to seize this opportunity to extend our deep gratitude to the generous aid and assistance that has been extended by donor countries in our efforts to reduce the spread of this dreadful disease in Cambodia. At the same time, I also would like to reiterate our call for the international community to remain firm in their commitment to assist developing countries, in particular the Least Developed Countries, in the fight against this scourge of modern time. I have above all in mind the consistent implementation of the Brussels Program of Action for the LDCs by all developed countries.
10. Another issue that is crucial to gender equality as well as poverty eradication is the availability of education for both sexes. The Education Indicator for the period of 2003 – 2004 continues to show the trend that the percentage of female students in school decreases as the education level goes up (47% in Primary Level compared with 41.9 and 35.8% in Lower Secondary Level

and Upper Secondary Level, respectively.) In order to make schools more accessible for people regardless of the social and economic background, any barriers that exist must be diminished. In this spirit, we support the Quick Wins actions included in the Millennium Project Report to end user fees for primary schools and essential health services as well as to expand the school meals programs to cover all children in hunger hotspots using locally produced foods, both of which by no later than the end of 2006. However, as this problem is not unique to Cambodia, I would like to call for more efforts by the International Community, under the guidance of the United Nations, to implement more long-term initiatives aimed at achieving the result of creating environments necessary for girls to complete their education fully. At issue is how to provide the necessary incentives to enable a continuous school attendance at all levels for girls.

Mr. Chairman,

11. Despite of various strategies and policies that have been implemented over the years, we still continue to face the reality that women's involvement in all sectors of society presents a picture of imbalance. It is rather difficult to achieve the noble goal of gender equality, while in reality, although women are accounted for more than half the population, they still hold proportionately fewer jobs and are in many cases less paid for the same job. We therefore call for the consistent and concerted efforts to improve the status and welfare of women in our societies.

Thank You.