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Statement
by

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**High-level meeting and comprehensive review of the progress achieved in
realizing the targets set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS**

United Nations General Assembly 60th Session

New York
June 2, 2006

Mr. President,
Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia and myself, I am very delighted for having the privilege to participate the UN General Assembly High Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS. I am very pleased to report the progress and challenge where Cambodia has made in responding to HIV/AIDS including Cambodia commitment in the work of the Universal Access.

Under the HIV/AIDS Laws, the Royal Government of Cambodia has established the National AIDS Authority (NAA) which has the mandate to prevent and combat the spread of HIV/AIDS in Cambodia. Moreover, owing to the “The Three Ones Principles”, the NAA:

- 1- Acts as One National AIDS Coordinating Authority;
- 2- Is leading One HIV/AIDS Action Framework, and
- 3- Provides support for One Country level Monitoring and Evaluation System.

In 1997, Cambodia was confronted with a serious epidemic with 3% of the adult population living with HIV. Since then, HIV prevalence has steadily declined to 1.9% in 2003. The HIV infection among most-at-risk people has been consistently declining and mortality due to AIDS has stabilized. Cambodia has been known as one of the few countries in the world that are on the track to meet the Millennium Development Goals for HIV/AIDS.

In February of last year, after the end of the National Strategic Plan I 2001-2005, the Royal Government of Cambodia has launched the National Strategic Plan II 2006-2010. The achievements of the National Strategic Plan I in response to HIV/AIDS have been done with the mutual coordination and cooperation of development partners and civil society in the context of Cambodia’s nation building and development challenges:

- First, the Cambodian political leadership has created the environment for individuals, communities and civil society to own and drive the response;

- Second, the technical leadership has ensured sound evidenced-based work and wise investments in national capacity development;
- Third, the close collaboration between and within sectors has worked towards common targets. This includes the strengthening of health systems and partnership between HIV, tuberculosis and maternal and child programmes in the country;
- Fourth, the partnerships between government and non-government organizations has established the needs of communities and especially people living with HIV at the centre of the Cambodian response to HIV;
- Fifth, the good governance has produced and implemented an HIV Law and a Code of Conduct;
- Sixth, the silence and denial surrounding HIV have been confronted to reduce stigma and discrimination; and finally
- There has been a consistent commitment by the development partners to resource the priorities established by the Royal Government of Cambodia and civil society.

Today, Member States, Observers and Civil Society Organizations gather in this Assembly to also assess progress against the targets set by the UN General Assembly and to affirm the efforts to attain the 2010 Universal Access for their citizens to prevention, treatment and care.

For Cambodia, to enable us to reach our Universal Access targets, it will be important that the dynamic Development Partnership is sustained over the long-term. Our message for today meeting- that where there is political will and vision, as well as focused coordinated resources and action- Universal Access can be a reality, not merely a slogan. I would like to highlight and share- from Cambodia's perspectives- three examples of how Cambodia has been meeting the call for Universal Access:

- 1- Voluntary testing and counselling are now available to many more Cambodians than ever, with 110 voluntary counselling and testing sites covering all provinces by the end of 2005;
- 2- The 100% Condom Use Programme covers 22 provinces with 20 million condoms sold each year;
- 3- The national Continuum of Care programme conducted in some 18 sites throughout the country is bringing hope as never before to thousands of people living with HIV.

Currently, over 12,000 Cambodians are leading full and healthy lives because they are able to access the anti-retroviral therapy and a range of allied support services. By 2010, Cambodia will meet and may even exceed its own Universal Access Target of 19,000 people receiving treatment.

As Cambodia is being fairly satisfied with the achievements of the last National Strategic Plan I, we- our government, civil society and development partners- know that there are big challenges ahead in meeting our country's goals for overcoming HIV/AIDS. The test will be our willingness to meet these challenges with creative solutions and action over the life of our Cambodia's National Strategic Plan II as well. Our challenges in days ahead are:

- Husband and wife transmission is increasing- almost half of all new infections occur among married women, and one third of new infection occur from mother to their infants;
- Condom use in brothels is higher than ever before, and fewer men visit sex workers, but men are increasingly turning to indirect sex workers and sweethearts for sex, with whom they are less likely to use condom;
- Concentrated epidemics are now occurring among men-having-sex-with-men and among young people who use amphetamines and who are turning to injecting drugs;
- Gender inequities and gender-based violence continue to place Cambodian girls and women at an unacceptably high risk for HIV;
- Poverty continues to drive men to leave their families and wives; and women to sell sex in order to survive;
- Family livelihoods remain severely affected by the epidemic. Each day, 50 Cambodian die due to AIDS-related illness. There are about 77,000 orphans and vulnerable children, many of whom lack adequate health, education, social support and protection. Our efforts in this area are still too fragmented. A better informed and cohesive multi-sect oral programme is needed that is integrated into our national Poverty Alleviation and Decentralization Policy and development efforts;
- Much more work is needed to decentralize action and ensure local ownership and accountability.

Mr. President,

The vision of the Royal Government of Cambodia under the leadership of Samdech Prime Minister Hun Sen- for the country's economic development and social well-being- is contained in the Government Rectangular Strategy 2004-2008. The inter-connectedness of the HIV epidemic and development should be evident through this strategic framework, which serves as a guide for the priority areas selected for the focus of the HIV/AIDS response in the coming years.

Through this very important High Level Meeting, I would like to conclude my speech by stating that strong leadership is considered as an entry point for introducing breakthrough initiatives in different areas for HIV/AIDS response especially human resource and institutional capacity building from a basic premise that the potential strengths to combat the epidemic lie within individuals and institutions.

In the next five years, we are confident that the solution for response to HIV/AIDS can be found from dynamic involvement of people in breaking the silence within the family and their active participation in public discourse, policy planning and programmatic implementation. We are also hopeful that at this July G-8 Meeting in St. Petersburg, Russia, the world powerful economic leaders would discuss and continue their support in respond to global HIV/AIDS. We are very pleased that the UN's efforts are being effectively coordinated through the recently finalized UN joint Support Programme 2006-2010.

Finally, on behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia, I would like to take the opportunity to convey my sincere gratitude to all Member States, Development Partners and Civil Society for the continued cooperation and support in respond to global HIV/AIDS including Cambodia.

Thank you.