

Opening speech by His Excellency Ly Thuch Senior Minister First Vice-president of CMAA

Mine Free World

26 November 2019

Speech notes

Greeting:

Your Royal Highness, Excellency, Ladies and gentlemen

Speech:

- First of all, allow me to **personally congratulate Norway** and to offer my sincere wishes for a successful hosting of the Fourth Review Conference of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention. It is one of the most important events since the Convention was adopted 22 years ago in Oslo.
- Humanitarian Mine Action is a lot more than an expert engineering operation. It comes from the heart. That's why it is named '**humanitarian**'. For all the people who do mine action, it starts from their **compassion**. It is an act of compassion for the people whose land and lives are healed—from injury, fear and restriction of movement. I cannot think of a more noble act.
- Our good friends in Thailand Mine Action Centre have a statement which I find incredibly inspiring: *One Mine Cleared: One family saved!* How true that is. Yet it is even wider than one family saved. The land is cleared for the prosperity of the whole community... children, farmers, builders, newcomers, border security officers, travellers.
- Even before I began leading the Mine Action portfolio in Cambodia, I had connections through my other government roles, for maybe 20 years. If you asked me "What is the most *sustainable* form of development?" I would answer "Mine clearance!". Mine clearance is the most sustainable form of development because it opens the space permanently.
- Where would we be without the Ottawa Convention? I am sure we would never have come this far in 2019. Without that and the further Conventions which have strengthened the first Treaty would not have achieved the amazing results that we have achieved today.
- Why are we all here for the next four days? I hope we can make the most of making future plans, making new friends, making connections and making progress towards a Mine Free World.
- In Cambodia whenever I see a man with one leg. I get a feeling. A feeling that I cannot describe in English. But that is the feeling that drives me every day. I am sure you understand and empathise. This is what drives us.

Your Royal Highness, Excellency, Ladies and gentlemen,

- mine action is so important today as it was some thirty years ago. just hours ago in my country near the Thai border, an anti-tank mine blew up a harvesting machine, seriously injuring a farmer. I don't know if he still alive or not.

- This is just one compelling example of how mine action and especially MRE must adapt and find ways to confront new variations of dangers. It is complex. But I am damn sure Cambodia is not alone with this problem. I'm sure that other countries are confronting a similar problem and we can share new ideas, new solutions, creative approaches, new technology. I believe this Conference can help to tackle such new challenges. By sharing innovations, sharing best practice, sharing creative ideas. But to do this we need to talk to each other. We need to build cooperative networks between countries. So that we're not alone and isolated in tackling our similar problems
- After a quarter of century of implementing humanitarian mine action, Cambodia is still facing extensive problems However, we are committed to render Cambodia mine free by 2025.
- Going forward, it is essential that we continue to work together to reach this noble objective, not only for our own countries, but a mine free world.

Closing:

May I take this opportunity to thank all countries that have provided assistance and support which allowed us to be where we are today; also new pledges for us to tackle tomorrow. Finally, thank the organizing committee for seamlessly facilitating this amazing conference.

Thank you and God Bless you