



## OPENING REMARKS

by

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Advisor to the Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia

At the Opening Ceremony of the

**ASEAN-ROK Youth Exchange Visit:**

**Nurturing Youth Leadership, Cultivating Future Leaders**

10 December 2017, Siem Reap, Cambodia

- *H.E. HAHM Jeong-han, Chargé d'Affaires ad Interim of the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Cambodia,*
- *H.E. Manny Raingsey, Vice-President of the Union of Youth Federations of Cambodia, Siemreap Province,*
- *Dear Youth Leaders, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

1. It is my great honor to represent His Excellency PRAK Sokhonn, Senior Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia to preside over this **ASEAN-ROK Youth Exchange Visit** with the theme *“Nurturing Youth Leadership, Cultivating Future Leaders”* today. He asked me to convey to you all his best regards.

2. On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia and on my own behalf, let me extend my warmest welcome to all delegates and youth participants to this important event in this historical city of Siem Reap. I want to personally thank H.E. **Hahm Jeong-han** and H.E. Manny Raingsey for your presence at our Opening Ceremony this morning. I truly appreciate both of your meaningful remarks.

3. Let me share with you why I am so excited to be here with you all today. First of all, I am glad that our efforts to organize this ASEAN-ROK Youth Exchange Visit is now a reality. For those of you who may not know, this initiative was proposed by my **Prime Minister, Samdech Padei Techo HUN Sen**, at the 19<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-ROK Summit in Manila last month and his proposal was lauded by ASEAN and the ROK Leaders. His idea was to promote people-to-people connectivity as well as to celebrate the ASEAN-ROK

Cultural Exchange Year this year. As the host country, Cambodia is grateful for all ASEAN Member States and the Republic of Korea (ROK) for sending their respective youth participants to join this ASEAN-ROK Youth Exchange Visit.

4. Moreover, it is a privilege for Cambodia, as the Country Coordinator for ASEAN-ROK Dialogue Relations, to host such an important event, which I believe would certainly help promote further friendship and peer connectivity for more than 200 youths coming from 11 countries. At the political level, more importantly if I may stress, this event will act as another contribution to elevate the ASEAN-ROK Strategic Partnership to a higher level. In this regard, allow me to express my sincere appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Korea for providing funding support and for co-sponsoring this event with the Royal Government of Cambodia.

5. It is quite clear that all the ASEAN Governments and the ROK attach great importance to the role of youth in the strengthening of ASEAN-ROK Strategic Partnership because youth is the seed for future generations. You will be replacing this current generation, my generation, in its efforts to generate economic growth, to advance social progress, and to seek prosperity arising from the ASEAN-ROK cooperation and beyond. For many years, the ROK has been a strong supporter of the ASEAN Community building process, particularly in promoting many youth related activities and ASEAN is certainly quite appreciative of this continued contribution.

*Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Youth Participants*

6. The United Nations, for statistical purpose, defines “youth” as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States. For me, youth should not be entirely defined by age. Youth is the source of new and bold ideas and youth has the strength and aspirations to contribute for a better tomorrow. Allow me to quote an old Cambodian proverb, which says that “*young shoots will replace the bamboos*”. In other words, “*youth is the backbone a nation*”.

7. For that reason, it has always been a pleasure for me to be involved with youth related activities. I have on numerous occasions the opportunity to work with and mentor a lot of youth who are pursuing their dreams, whether they are students, entrepreneurs, bureaucrats or diplomats. And I can feel this relentless drive to succeed, to champion what they do or want. Over the years, I have seen many of them become successful in

their own right. Many of them are now proudly representing Cambodia as ambassadors in important posting, others have become successful CEOs, real estate developers, professors, you name it. And I am very proud of them.

*Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Youth Participants*

8. Allow me now to share a few thoughts as to why I believe youth is important in the framework of the ASEAN-ROK Cooperation. *First of all, youth can be the agent of peace and friendship.* Many of you who are in this room, I believe there are more than 200 of you coming from 11 countries, have lots of ideas, ideals and experiences and expectations. But one of the most important thing that you all should promote first and foremost is the culture of peace and cooperation. This is one of the main reasons for us being here in this Forum. You have a good opportunity to make new friends, to deepen mutual understanding and trust with other peers from various ASEAN countries and the ROK. You can connect and build a bridge of friendship and cooperation. Together, you can continue to uphold this culture of peaceful co-existence, which is built on the foundation of a long and lasting friendship. *Second, youth can be partnering in business ventures to build promising future for their respective countries.* Youth can be the true engine for growth, the source of innovation, a contributor to your country's development. The sky is the limit if you dare to dream.

*Dear participants,*

9. I will not be honest with you if I only mention these positive characteristics of youth. I recognize that there are still major challenges facing youth's participation and youth leadership role in the community. Concerns about youth are at the center of many policy debates. Inadequate employment opportunities, education disparities, poverties are some of the key challenges facing youth today.

10. That is why in this Forum, we want to hear your voices, your views, your visions as to how you see yourself in this larger framework. I encourage all of you to ask yourself why you are here and what ideas and aspirations will you bring back home. I encourage all of you to maximize your three-day workshop here. The ASEAN-ROK Youth Exchange Visit consists of three main activities, namely **presentations, site visits and cultural performances.** I sincerely hope that the events will promote greater awareness and

stronger sense of close friendship and good neighborliness and will enhance people-to-people linkages between ASEAN and the ROK.

11. So, please enjoy each and every moment that this programme has to offer you. With this, I would like to bring my speech to a close and I now declare the “ASEAN-ROK Youth Exchange Visit: Nurturing Youth Leadership and Cultivating Future Leaders” opened. Please enjoy your time and have a pleasant stay in Siem Reap!

*Thank you.*



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