Public Administration Reform
Remarks on behalf of the Development Partners
By UN Resident Coordinator Mr. Douglas Gardner
Consultative Group Meeting in Phnom Penh, 06 December 2004

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to offer some brief remarks on Public Administration Reform that represent the consolidated views provided by a number of your international partners.

We are pleased to note that public administration reform along with fighting corruption and legal and judicial reform are placed at the heart of the Royal Government's "Rectangular Strategy". Progress in public administration and civil service reform is important for all development issues that we discuss during the CG. It is here in this reform sector that the delivery of public services, so vital for progress on Cambodia's Millennium Development Goals, will be developed to best serve citizens.

Civil servants are the ones that make sure that children are taught, that roads are built and that rich and poor ideally have equal access to all services the State provides. Civil servants are people like you and I, who look to their gainful employment to provide a decent living for themselves and their families. They are the teachers, nurses, extension agents, court clerks, and secretaries that make things happen.

In addition to a decent wage, they seek motivation and job fulfillment. In these noble positions of service providers, there is the potential for that special reward that comes from contributing to the betterment of ones community and country. This is the heart of "public service".

After emerging from decades of conflict and having reestablished peace and security, this possibility of public service is now within Cambodia's grasp. But the reality for many civil servants is different. Some have second jobs and rely on the collection of informal fees to supplement their salaries. Others feel ill equipped to do their job in an unpredictable environment. Furthermore, there are many areas in this country where schools and health centers are not staffed since teachers and nurses prefer to be in city centers where alternative income opportunities are better.

As Cambodia's development partners, we believe that a carefully charted civil service pay and employment reform must be accelerated if the Government's vision of poverty reduction and achieving the CMDG's is to become a practical reality for all Cambodians. The moment is ripe to translate the Government's commitment into visible action with measurable results.

In line with the Government's National Programme for Administrative Reform, appropriately titled "Serving People Better", we highlight three priority issues, the implementation of which should help to improve service delivery:

1. **Ensure civil servants receive a pay, that is broadly competitive, so that the civil service can attract and retain skilled staff**. This is the basis for the development of a professional, responsive and responsible public administration that will serve citizens when and where needed. Given the present fiscal situation and in line with the Medium Term Expenditure Framework, we recommend to target and reward high performing civil

servants working in priority areas including health, education and public financial management. This should include an agreement to phase out donor funded salary supplements over time and a plan for redirecting these resources in support of pay reform in high priority sectors. In rationally, moving beyond salary supplementation towards a more comprehensive reform of civil service salaries, the onus will also be shared with Cambodia's development partners to ensure harmonization, transparency and comparability of incentive schemes currently under discussion. Ultimately, the Royal Government must, however, assume responsibility for raising sufficient revenue to support competitive pay levels for civil servants.

Full and timely release of monthly remunerations can best be ensured by commercial bank transfers or cheque payments.

2. **Ensure that the right people are selected for the right job**. This can be undertaken at the key stages of recruitment, promotion, and transfer - all points when skills are matched with the requirements of the job. This merit-based administration of the workforce goes hand in hand with the introduction of performance evaluation, to ensure that well performing staff are rewarded and weaker staff are either trained or replaced. Human resource management would thus benefit considerably from the development of an establishment control system. In this context, it is worth commending the government's commitment to gender equity in the civil service, especially at the decision making level. This is very important and strongly encouraged.

3. **Ensure that civil servants are equipped and trained to do their jobs well.** As part of its wider human resource policy and management systems, the Government will have to identify development needs of civil servants against specific job profiles and develop a comprehensive approach to capacity development of the civil service workforce. By responding to the sectoral reform programmes already in place capacity development initiatives would ensure that the new skills acquired are actually put to use on the job. Information Technology represents an exciting tool for training of civil servants as well as an asset for more effective service delivery and for the transparent sharing of information with all citizens. Greater transparency and public availability of basic information, such as the number and level of civil servants by ministry, would help to improve accountability and strengthen management.

These three elements of remuneration, employment reforms and capacity building are mutually reinforcing and should be undertaken simultaneously.

The coming year will be crucial to demonstrate Government has the focus and determination to proceed with public administration and civil service reforms in a coherent and coordinated manner, with the support of Cambodia's development partners. We, the development partners of Cambodia, stand together, committed to support the development of a public administration that provides adequate pay and is based on performance, merit and fairness principles, and dedicated to helping improve the quality of services for the citizens of this great Kingdom.

Thank you.