Fifteenth Meeting of the
Government-Development Partner Coordination Committee (GDCC)
Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 29 September 2009

Opening Remarks

by Deputy Prime Minister KEAT CHHON, M.P.
Minister of Economy and Finance
First Vice-Chairman, Council for the Development of Cambodia
Chairman, GDCC
Royal Government of Cambodia

- Excellencies and Colleagues from the Royal Government
- Excellencies Ambassadors and Distinguished Representatives of Development Partners
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Welcome to the Palais du Gouvernement for our fifteenth meeting of the Government-Development Partner Coordination Committee.

Since our April meeting the efforts of the Royal Government have been directed towards mobilising an effective response to our economic challenges. Our meeting today provides an opportunity for further reflection and discussion but it also looks more broadly at economic and social development priorities. We will first take stock of the main issues covered at our last meeting in April, considering the Update of the NSDP for the period 2009 – 2013, as well as the integration of planning and budgeting processes. These initiatives are essential to putting in place the foundations that are required to promote the coherency and rigor that will ensure continued progress in all sectors and related reforms.

We will review the first round of reporting on the projects that are central to ensuring an effective response to the economic downturn, which will be taken up further in our second agenda item. As we are now at about the half-way point between the last CDCF and the third CDCF meeting scheduled to take place in the middle of 2010, we also have an important opportunity to review progress in the Joint Monitoring Indicators. Within the context of the JMIs agreed last December, we will have a focused discussion on land, and on governance and accountability. Finally, and as time permits, we will also receive an update on progress in developing the Strategy on Agriculture and Water, which will play an important role in responding to current social and economic challenges in the context of a longer-term approach to developing a key sector on which many people depend for their livelihoods.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

There is an important common theme in all of these topics. I hope that you can see that the Royal Government is moving step-by-step to put in place the central and sectoral mechanisms that will guide effective implementation of both short-term and long-term development goals. The Rectangular Strategy, in its second phase, remains the corner-stone of our work and its implementation, monitoring and review is the underlying theme of our meeting today.

The Rectangular Strategy represents an ambitious development agenda. This is entirely appropriate and the Royal Government is right to set its sights high. But this will mean that we need to work hard to respond to challenges; we will need to reconcile different priorities and perspectives; and we will need to coordinate diverse and different stakeholders to identify and agree the way forward. Only then can we consolidate progress and unlock new potentials for growth and social advancement. This is not always easy. Differences must be acknowledged and underlying interests must be clearly understood. The divergent positions we sometimes take must be viewed in their full and proper context. Recently we have confronted some difficult issues – we must acknowledge this – and this has presented a challenge to our partnership. But I trust that we can still identify a common interest and work on that basis to review experience, learn together and identify new approaches that can bring us together to address our common goals. National development must be viewed over the long-term, looking deep into the past to understand the historical and cultural context, as well as far into the future to maximise and sustain benefits for Cambodia and its people.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

I am pleased that we have this opportunity today to collectively review progress. In the tradition of our GDCC meetings I am confident that we will have a forthright exchange of views and I hope that our dialogue enables us to explore them in greater detail as time permits. Our meeting today is therefore a valuable opportunity for dialogue – but only one amongst many. In the past we have used a range of mechanisms – at senior-level as well as in technical fora – and my message today is that these need to be used to their fullest potential in cases

where challenges are of particular significance. I would encourage my colleagues in the Royal Government to maintain their readiness to meet with development partners at all levels. Only then can information be exchanged and verified in order to find consensus and solutions to the challenges that we inevitably face in such a complex environment. Our meeting today will be conducted with these principles in mind.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen

I thank you for your kind attention. I would now like to ask Mr Qimiao Fan, World Bank Country Manager, to say a few words in his capacity as Lead Development Partner Facilitator before we begin our first agenda item.