

Country Statement

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On behalf of the Cambodian delegation

At the 2006 Asian Regional Forum on Aid Effectiveness

18-20 October 2006

Asian Development Bank, Manila, Philippines

Madam and Mr. Co Chairs

Distinguished Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. I am grateful for this opportunity to make a short statement on behalf of the Cambodian delegation. It is encouraging that our discussions during the last two days have produced better understanding, though sometimes tension, among both donors and partner countries, on the way to move forward the aid effectiveness agenda and make it deliver results.

2. Please allow me to pick up three points that came out of the two day discussions and which are very important for the aid effectiveness agenda in Cambodia, before concluding with some observations on how we, in Cambodia, intend to move forward.

3. First, we must ask ourselves the question: aid effectiveness for what? There is a risk perhaps that the focus on aid effectiveness is becoming a process in itself—take a life of its own.

4. Our challenge is to put all the expressed commitments into action to bring about impact on the indicators that really matter—child and infant mortality, reduced HIV/AIDS prevalence rates, and all the other poverty indicators that countries like Cambodia have identified in their national development strategies. It does not matter whether the Paris Declaration is eighteen months or three decades old. What really matters is that Paris Declaration indicates an era where the practice of aid as "business as usual" has to be changed. In countries like Cambodia, this requires increasing delegation of authority to donors' country offices, drastic behavior change on the part of our development partners to respect government ownership and leadership and with mutual accountability.

5. Second, Cambodia must acknowledge that donors have fiduciary responsibilities, and the use of national systems is not always easy for them. It is not that we haven't done anything about this. A Public Financial Management Reform Program is being implemented to improve and strengthen these systems. But we must realize that some aspects of this effort require a longer term commitments from both sides—from the government, the commitment to reform,

from donors coordinated and drastically improved technical cooperation as well as predictable long term finance. We have noted one common point that came out of the Forum's discussion, that weak country system should not be an excuse for parallel management structures.

6. Third, we have also noted in many of our discussions that capacity development lies at the heart of what we are trying to achieve. This is perhaps the area where stronger partnership and an increased focus on results are most of all required. Of all forms of ODA, the track record of TA is perhaps the most disheartening. In Cambodia, where aid coordination mechanism has been put in place which comprises Technical Working Groups at the sector level, donors are urged to use the structure to ensure that TA is provided based on demand, not duplicated and does help build local capacity.

7. Finally, Ladies and Gentlemen, a few words on Going Forward in Cambodia.

8. In Cambodia, our aid effectiveness priorities are closely aligned to—some even predated—the Paris Declaration principles. Though a lot still need to be done, we feel we are well placed to significant progress in implementing them, having well established policy and institutional frameworks—we have the government Action Plan on Harmonization, Alignment and Results; we have the on-going, in-country structured mechanism of dialogue comprising the government donors joint Technical Working Groups, and the higher Government Donors Coordination Committee, for regularly monitoring progress and solving constraints in a joint manner. We are also closely guided by the priorities articulated in our National Strategic Development Plan. As we develop the associated monitoring and evaluation framework, there will be a strategic opportunity to put the aid effectiveness work into action and with results.

9. In this regard, we must acknowledge important support we have received from our development partners, some of them are here today. We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with them.

Thank You.