

**Speech by Deputy Prime Minister Yim Chhay Ly**  
**Chairman of Council for Agricultural and Rural Development**  
**Addressed on the Celebration of the 4<sup>th</sup> National Nutrition Day**  
**(November 6, 2014-November 6, 2017)**

**Under the Theme “GROW AND CONSUME DIVERSE AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD TO BE  
STRONG AND HEALTHY”**

- Excellencies, Lok Chumteav, Members of the Royal Government of Cambodia!
- Excellencies, Lok Chumteav, Leaders of the Development Partner Organizations!
- Excellencies, Lok Chumteav, Ladies and Gentlemen! Students and Members of the Event!

1. Today on behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) and the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development, I have a great pleasure to express my profound appreciation for the honorable guests, Excellency, ladies and gentlemen, national and international distinguished guests, members of the event for taking your valuable time to take part in the celebration of the 4th Anniversary of the National Nutrition Day (November 6, 2014- November 6, 2017) under the theme “GROW AND CONSUME DIVERSE AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD TO BE STRONG AND HEALTHY”, which aims to educate and promote wider public awareness across the country about the importance of nutrition sensitive agriculture in which agriculture plays an important role in upholding the national economic growth, ensuring social equity, food security, improved nutrition, job creation, reduction of migration, and generating income that promote living standards and reduces poverty of farmers and scale up rural economic development.
2. Improving nutrition status for all people, in particular women and children, through the increased public awareness of the importance and the value of the nutrition sensitive agriculture is a new theme for this year’s 4<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the National Nutrition Day as the RGC has made great efforts to educate, raise awareness, encourage, and motivate people, communities, schools, pagodas to engage in growing vegetables, fruits, fish and other animal farming, such as chickens, ducks, cows, buffaloes, birds, frogs, and edible insects so as to promote diversified domestic production for improved nutrition and economic growth.
3. According to the World Food Programme’s analysis of the malnutrition situation, the Cambodian people currently consume 390 grams of rice per person per day. The consumption

of so much rice does not allow us to consume other foods that are of higher nutrient value, resulting in increased nutritional problems such as overweight, obesity, non-communicable diseases, and increased high level of glucose. To prevent nutritional problems, all people need to regularly take sufficiently nutritious and diversified diets, for example: vegetables, fresh fruits, fish, meat, and eggs that help our bodies grow well. The RGC would like to encourage the mothers and caregivers to change to positive behaviour by feeding their children aged 6 months and above with vegetables, fruits, fish, and eggs for their good physical and cognitive development. It is critically important to raise awareness of and educate school-age children (aged from 6 to 17 years old) to eat proper and balanced diets by reducing foods of high fats, foods that are too salty and sweet, especially unhygienic processed snacks, but to regularly eat diversified foods, including vegetables, fresh fruits, fish, meat, and eggs for their proper development as the nutritional status will have a strong impact on their physical, mental, and reproductive development. In this regard, nutrition interventions for school-age children not only support child wellbeing, but also significantly contribute to building human capital, increased work productivity, and the country's economic growth.

### **Members of the Event!**

4. Over the past 2 decades, the RGC under the ideal leadership of Samdech Techo **Hun Sen**, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, has succeeded and made progress in all fields both in political, socio-economical, cultural, and diplomatic domains, through the introduction of many multi-sectoral and sectoral policies and strategies, and has invested tremendously in socio-economic infrastructure, for example: human resource development, water, electricity, roads, agriculture, irrigation system, education, health, and other social services. The RGC has modernized the country's agriculture, moving from extensive and traditional to intensive agriculture, using new technology, research and development, mechanization, and improved irrigation capacity to promote productivity and crop diversification, including livestock farming and aquaculture, effective land management, and ensuring sustainable ecology and natural resources. In addition to these efforts, poverty has been reduced for more than 1% every year in Cambodia and the poverty rate declined from 53.2% in 2004 to 13.5% in 2014; and the country has sustained its average and strong economic growth of 7% per annum, ranking 8<sup>th</sup> in the world by the World Bank. The gross domestic product per capita surged remarkably from US\$ 253 in 1998 to US\$ 1300 in 2016, lifting Cambodia from lower-income country to lower-middle income country since 2015

and the country is making efforts to achieve their major development goals in the years to come. The economic and income growth of the population will allow for change in their habit and behavior of food selection, food cooking preparation, feeding family with healthy food. This will lead to the improvement of food and nutrition security in Cambodia.

5. The above achievements of the RGC could not have happened without the generous help and support of the development partners, civil society organizations, and the private sector, in particular those efforts targeted at the building of institutional capacity and human resource capacities on all levels. This unity in action by our presence here today, where we are all here celebrating **the 4th National Nutrition Day** under the theme “GROW AND CONSUME DIVERSE AND NUTRITIOUS FOOD TO BE STRONG AND HEALTHY” with a view to eliminate severe and chronic malnutrition in women and children, especially stunted children, which would lead to crisis that affects social development when they grow up. Improving nutrition is not the sole responsibility of any ministry or institution alone, but it is a cross-sectoral responsibility that requires joint efforts from agriculture, education, health, information, water and sanitation and hygiene, gender social protection, and other relevant sectors including the involvement of the sub-national administration.

**Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen!**

6. Although the food security status of Cambodia has been improved over the last 10 years, as the country has produced 4 million tons of unhusked rice surplus or 3 million tons of milled rice surplus every year, this does not mean the nutrition in mothers and children is not an issue. According to the 2014 Demographic and Health Survey of the Ministry of Planning, 32% of Cambodian children under 5 are stunted, 24% underweight, 10% wasting, and 55.5% anemia. Thus, the investment and intervention in the reduction of malnutrition is an important agenda for the RGC to improve the nutrition status in Cambodia through the promotion of agriculture productivity and diversification, improved capacity in good agriculture practices, inspection of hygiene practice at the farms and slaughterhouses, prevention of the influx of contaminated agroproducts, encouraging secondary crops, horticulture, vegetables, and animal farming by agricultural communities, expansion of animal farming to ensure the supply of hygienic and safe animals and meats, aquaculture development in region where water is available, and increased protection and conservation of fishery resources to ensure their sustainability, the formulation of the dietary guidelines, behavior and habit change in the food consumption all of which are the immediate duties of the RGC, development partners,

CSOs, and the private sector, that need to work in consorted efforts so that our people can have access to good nutrition and be of good health. These interventions are very important in the sense that they can help prevent malnutrition issues that heavily impact on the next generation, as we all know that children are the indispensable resources who succeed the national development and our motherland in the future.

7. In order for us to appreciate the celebration of this **4<sup>th</sup> National Nutrition Day**, the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development in cooperation with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and other agencies has developed a brochure on nutrition-sensitive agriculture which is circulated in the handouts. Nutrition-sensitive agriculture is an approach that tries to ensure the production of safe food that is of suitable price, providing proper and sufficient nutrients, both in quality and quantity, in accordance with the culture and customs of our people, in order to meet the sustainable dietary needs of our people. This approach requires actions to be carried out at all stages of the food supply chains from the production, processing, storage, and market to consumption, taking into account the entire food system.
  
8. Before I end my address, I would like to call on all relevant stakeholders to continue their collaboration with the Council for Agricultural and Rural Development so that we can work together to **End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture** in Cambodia. I wish Excellency, Lok Chumteav, representatives of national and international organizations, national and international distinguished guests the 5 blessings of Buddha: Longevity, Nobility, Strength, Happiness, and Wisdom and Happy and Safe trip on the Water Festival!

Thank you!