



Keynote Address

**Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei HUN MANET,
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia
at the Siem Reap-Angkor Summit on a Mine-Free World**

Siem Reap, Kingdom of Cambodia

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- *Your Excellency Dr. Ly Thuch, President of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention;*
- *Your Royal Highness Prince Mired Raad Al-Hussein of Jordan (មីរ៉ដ រ៉ាដ អាល់ហ្សេសិន), Special Envoy of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention;*
- *Your Excellency Dr. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana (អាមីដា សាលស៊ីអា អាលីសចាបាណា), Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP;*
- *Excellencies, Distinguished, Ladies and Gentlemen!*

It is my great pleasure and honor to welcome you to Siem Reap, Cambodia for the **Siem Reap-Angkor Summit on a Mine-Free World**, the first of its kind in Asia. You have arrived in a nation that epitomizes resilience and hope – a nation that has journeyed from being one of the most heavily mine-affected countries to become a leading advocate for a mine-free world.

Our gathering here in this historic city is a powerful testament to our collective commitment to building a safer world. In an era marked by escalating armed conflicts and geopolitical confrontations, it is essential to recognize the enduring devastation caused by destructive weapons, particularly anti-personnel mines. These deadly devices continue to maim and kill innocent civilians long after wars have ceased. Cambodia's experience is stark evidence of this.

The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction, or commonly known as **the Ottawa Convention**, has never been more vital. It stands as a global norm against the use of these weapons and as a beacon of hope for affected nations. Today's summit offers us a crucial opportunity to reflect on our progress, address emerging challenges, and chart a future that ensures the continued relevance and success of the **Ottawa Convention** in this increasingly uncertain world.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

Once a land of peace, 54 years ago Cambodia was drawn into the geopolitical conflicts of the Cold War. A land that hosts magnificent heritages such as Angkor Wat, then saw some of the most heartbreaking tragedies, including a series of carpet bombings, a genocide, and decades of civil wars. Millions of Cambodian lives were lost and thousands of square kilometers of Cambodia's land became littered with landmines and other explosive remnants of war.

The dark enigma about landmines is that although full peace was achieved in 1998, the shadow of landmines continued to loom large and pose dire threats to human lives and post-war recovery. With our land still heavily infested by landmines, it was simply not possible for our people to live and continue with their normal life. Our country's reconstruction was also challenged when landmines continue to impede our development and national integration. Indeed, neither investors nor tourists would ever come to a country dotted with red signs of "Danger Mine".

The psychological toll has been equally profound. For many Cambodians, living in the midst of landmines made it difficult to embrace the reality of peace and envision a brighter future. The scars they left behind – both physical and mental – were a daily reminder of past horrors.

Cambodia's remarkable progress in mine action would not have been possible without the unwavering support of the international community. Through partnerships with donor countries and organizations, providing financial, technical, and moral support, we have made significant strides.

To date, we have destroyed over 1 million anti-personnel mines and 3 million explosive remnants of war (ERW). We have also cleared

over 3,000 square kilometers of landmines, rendering 15 of our 25-capital city and provinces as **mine-free**. Casualties have plummeted from an average of over 4,300 per year in 1996 to fewer than 100 annually in the past ten years. Beyond demining efforts, extensive victim assistance initiatives, coordinated by the **Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA)**, have provided rehabilitation and supported reintegration and advocacy for survivors through risk education.

The results are transformative. Cambodia's economy, which grew at an average rate of around 7% annually before the COVID-19 pandemic, has thrived on the de-contaminated land. Land that was once minefields, have now become fertile grounds for farming, urbanization, and development, lifting millions out of poverty. About 80% of the cleared land are used for agriculture, while the remainder is used for housing, and development, including construction of critical infrastructure to enhance connectivity across our nation, allowing our economy to thrive to this day. Moreover, it has enabled millions of international tourists, including investors, to visit Cambodia .

Cambodia has turned its tragic history into a powerful lesson for the world, advocating against the use of anti-personnel mines and highlighting their long-term consequences. Cambodian mine action community has continued to share our best practices, transferring our hard-earned expertise to others facing similar challenges including, among others, Ukraine, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and ASEAN member states.

Nevertheless, our journey is far from over. We still have over 1,600 square kilometers of contaminated land that is affecting the lives of approximately 1 million people. This is the why **ending the negative impact of mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) and promoting victim assistance** is indeed a cornerstone of our sustainable development agenda, and we even made it our 18th National Sustainable Development Goal (SDG).

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

As we face today's complex global challenges, let us reaffirm our unity under the **Ottawa Convention** as a profound statement of our collective humanity. Cambodia calls upon all nations to join us in this mission to create a safer, more peaceful world—not just for today but for generations to come.

We must intensify efforts to survey and clear landmines, expand education and awareness programs, and strengthen assistance to victims worldwide. Let this convention not only be a legal framework but also a moral commitment that binds us as one family.

In this sense, I urge each of us to carry forward this commitment—not only as a goal for our time but also as a promise for future generations. May this conference be a defining moment, where our shared purpose and compassion fuel a world free from the perils of landmines.

In conclusion, I wish the Siem Reap-Angkor Summit on a Mine-Free World a great success, and wish everyone a pleasant stay in Siem Reap province, home to the magnificent Angkor Wat.

Thank you!