

Address
by

Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo HUN SEN
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia

At the
International Conference on the Responsibility to Protect at 10:
Progress, Challenges and Opportunities in Asia Pacific

Under the Theme on
“Cambodia Takes the Leading Role in the Prevention of Genocide in ASEAN”

Sofitel Hotel, February 26, 2015

**Your Royal Highness,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentleman, Distinguished National and International Guests!**

Today it is my great pleasure to attend the International Conference on “the Responsibility to Protect: Progress, Challenges and Opportunities in Asia Pacific” with participation from foreign experts representatives from the United Nations, ASEAN and International Organizations and other sectors across in the world. Taking this opportunity, on behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia and myself, I would like to appreciate the conference organizers, especially the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace under the chairmanship of HRH Samdech Norodom Sirivudh, and the Asia Pacific Center for the Responsibility to Protect and its Director, Dr. Alex Bellamy for hosting this important conference.

Indeed, you have an enormous task in the next two days as all of you will attempt to review and examine the achievements and challenges over the last ten years as well as the direction and role of the Asia Pacific region of the Responsibility to Protect (or RtoP) principle since its adoption in the United Nations Commemorative Summit in 2005.

At the same time, I would like to welcome all our distinguished international and national guests, who participate in this conference. I am particularly pleased to know that this conference is being held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia which fits well with the recognition of my country significant achievements in dealing with past atrocities committed under the Democratic Kampuchea’s regime of the Khmer Rouge.

Overall, Cambodia had made great efforts to bring back peace and moved towards to realization to establish the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia for prosecution of Khmer Rouge leaders and other perpetrators who are most responsible for committing genocide and crime against humanity. At the same time, we are also taking seriously important lessons from this dark

episode of our contemporary history in order to ensure peace, national reconciliation, rule of law and socio-economic development.

This conference gives the opportunity to Cambodia to learn experiences from other countries in dealing with past atrocities and managing the risks of related atrocity crimes. In addition, we are eager to know more about the combined efforts of the UN and other critical stake holders in the international community in helping countries build their capability to implement “the Responsibility to Protect”.

**Your Royal Highness,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm Cambodia’s commitment to “the Responsibility to protect Principle”, which was adopted by member states of the United Nations in 2005. While the UN Charter basically affirms the sovereignty of Member States as a key principle in the promotion of international peace and security, it is also important to acknowledge that the exercise of sovereign rights of states carries with it certain obligations or responsibilities.

In this regard, the adoption of “the Responsibility to Protect Principle” should be viewed as deepening the meaning of sovereignty in that it underscores the importance of states taking seriously their primary responsibility to protect their people against genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.

Taking this opportunity, I also would like to highlight the major achievement and commitment that Cambodia has made to prevent and fight against violence in Cambodia, especially to implement “the Responsibility to Protect Principle” as follows:

1st , Cambodia signed and ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in October 2000 and in January 2002, respectively. Truly, Cambodia is the first country in ASEAN to do so followed by the Philippines in 2011. Signing and acceding to the Rome Treaty is consistent with our Cambodian Values as enshrined in the 1993 Constitution. Specifically, the article 31 of our Constitution clearly declares that “the Kingdom of Cambodia shall recognize and respect human rights as stipulated in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human rights, the covenant and conventions related to human rights, women’s and children’s rights”.

2nd, the Royal Government of Cambodia has set up the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC) based on the agreement between the United Nations and the Kingdom of Cambodia in 2003 to trial atrocity crimes committed under the Democratic Kampuchea regime from 17 April, 1975 to 6 January 1979. This hybrid court covers genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during this period. The creation of the ECCC was a necessary step to address the past atrocities under the Khmer Rouge.

3rd, we have here in Phnom Penh the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, the only one of its kind in Southeast Asia. It serves as a constant reminder of the horrors and suffering inflicted on our people by the mass atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge. Therefore, it is also a valuable education tool, especially for the younger generation of Cambodia today as well as for those who will be born in the future. Having said that, to avoid future atrocities we need to learn from the mistakes of the past.

4th, directly related to remembering past atrocities, Cambodia adopted a domestic law in 2013 against the denial of genocide and war crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge.

5th, Cambodia has also taken concrete steps in the area of preventing and fighting the violence against women, which is the key component of implementing “the Responsibility to Protect”. Recently, Royal Government of Cambodia has just launched the Second National Action Plan to prevent and respond to violence against women 2014-2018, which is focused on preventing and eliminating violence against women and providing protection to victims. Last year, the Ministry of Women Affairs of Cambodia released the Guideline for Legal Protection of Women’s and Children’s Rights in Cambodia to assist women to get legal protection and justice.

6th, Cambodia is also making a major contribution to the protection of populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity in other countries. We are proud that we are able to contribute to UN peacekeeping operations. Today, almost 1,000 Cambodians serve in UN missions around the world.

**Your Royal Highness
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen**

In the context of ASEAN, the responsibility to protect principle has contributed to enhancing the legitimacy of each country as it is linked to other principles such as the rule of law, good governance, democracy and constitutional government. In ASEAN, we have been working towards the creation of an ASEAN Community of mutual caring societies where member countries are committed to promote not only the economic development of its members, but also the well being of their citizens including ethnic groups and minorities, women and children. This becomes even more important in as much as Southeast Asia is such a diverse region in many respect: political, economic and social-cultural. I affirm that ASEAN countries have the common believe in the notion of comprehensive security, which not only deals with the security of state, but also and more importantly the security of people.

Taking this opportunity, may I share my views relating to positive role that Cambodia has play in implementing the responsibility to protect principle in the context of ASEAN as follows:

First, by mainstreaming the norm in various ASEAN mechanisms that are already in place, such as the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR), the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Women and Children (ACWC), and the ASEAN Institute for Peace

and Reconciliation (AIPR). In this spirit, I would like to affirm that although the Responsibility to protect has not yet been adopted formally in the language of ASEAN, there are certain elements in ASEAN's declarations and statements that are related to the principle of the Responsibility to Protect.

Second, ASEAN should continue to engage in dialogues with other critical stakeholders in the region, such as experts from education sector, research organization and non-governmental organization in order to explore approaches and opportunities for anchoring the responsibility to protect in accordance with complementary local values and norms. The regional and international meeting that we are organizing today here help contribute to a better understanding and appreciation of the significance of the responsibility to protect and mass atrocities prevention at national and regional level.

Third, ASEAN has an important role to play in its ongoing great effort to build a community of caring societies, where people will live in peace with one another and with the world at large in a democratic and harmonious environment, protect human rights and the special rights of women and children and work hard to resolve conflicts and maintain peace, making important contributions to the goals of preventing the very worst of crimes and protecting populations from them.

Fourth, through its leadership in the wider region, through the ASEAN regional Forum, ASEAN can help foster cooperation with its partners, building on the work the forum already undertakes in areas such as preventive diplomacy and peacekeeping in region

**Your Royal Highness,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I also would like to lay out a number of key points for distinguish local and international guests and organizers to consider as follows:

First, I believe that Cambodia has an important role to play in promoting Responsibility to protect and mass atrocities prevention in Southeast Asia, given our own unique experience and what we have accomplished so far in addressing the past atrocities under the Khmer Rouge regime.

Second, Cambodia will continue to encourage other members of ASEAN to consider signing and ratifying the Rome Treaty and let this be an important milestone for ASEAN as a community in the medium and longer term.

Third, the Royal government of Cambodia could initiate holding a regional dialogue on mass atrocities prevention in an effort to mainstream the Responsibility to Protect Principle in ASEAN, based on the High Level Advisory Panel Report on Mainstreaming the Responsibility to Protect in Southeast Asia that was launched in the UN in September 2014. On top of that, as the main

coordinator for this conference, Cambodia can further facilitate to organize continuous dialogue meeting to find our common understandings in consistent to principle and values of region.

Fourth, Cambodia can serve as an important hub in the region for education and training in ASEAN on mass atrocities prevention as part of our collective efforts in building national and regional capacity in dealing with the root cause of internal conflicts and in managing risk factors that could lead to atrocity crimes. In this regard, I believe that our ASEAN dialogue partners such as Australia, the United States, the European Union, among others, could provide assistance in the region in mass atrocities prevention under in parallel with **“the responsibility to protect principle”**. The Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace, the Documentation Center-Cambodia and the Genocide Museum so on are able to select and have enough capacity in fulfilling these tasks.

Fifth, Cambodia can also be the main coordinator of ASEAN-UN partnership in promoting the Responsibility to protect in Southeast Asia. One important project that can be pursued under this framework is developing training courses or programs for government that will contribute to building national and regional mechanism such as early warning system in order to manage risk factors that could lead to mass atrocities. Cambodia can also be the venue for regular dialogue between ASEAN and the UN on arrange of issues that are covered by the Responsibility to protect such as peace and conflict prevention, prevention of sexual violence against women and children as well as inter-faith dialogue among communities.

Sixth, Cambodia can also take the lead in proposing a network of the Responsibility to protect Focal Point in ASEAN. The Royal Government of Cambodia could seriously consider take steps within the next few months to appoint a national focal point on the Responsibility to protect in order to demonstrate our commitment to the region and the rest of the international community and the determination of the Royal Government of Cambodia in mass atrocities prevention.

Before ending, on behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia and myself, I would like to convey my sincere congratulation to the organizing committee of this international Conference for taking the initiative to host this meaningful event. I also would like to thank all of the distinguished participants for taking their valuable time to attend this meeting. At the same time, I would like to wish the conference an open productive and fruitful debate. In addition, I wish you all the most pleasant stay. I strongly hope that you all are enjoying the most pleasant stay and that all of you will take time besides attending this conference to explore and familiarize the rich culture and tradition of the “Kingdom of Wonder”.

I wish Excellencies, Distinguished National and International Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen the four Gems of Buddhist blessing: **Longevity, Nobility, Healthiness and Strength**.

At the end, May I now declare the opening of **the International Conference on the Responsibility to Protect: Progress, Challenges, and Opportunities in Asia Pacific** under the theme on **“Cambodia Takes the Leading Role in Mass Atrocities Prevention”**.