Speech
Presented by

His Excellency Ieng Mouly, Senior Minister in charge of Special Mission and Chair of the National Aids Authority at the celebration of the 104th Anniversary of the March 8, 2015 International Women's Day at National Aids Authority Head Office March 5, 2015

- Louk Chumteav Im Sithe, State Secretary for Women's Affairs,
- Excellencies and Louk Chumteav,
- Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished National and International Guests,

Today, it is my great pleasure to attend the celebration of the 104th anniversary of the 8 March 2015 International Women's Day this morning, under the theme: Advance: Kampuchean Women After the 1995 World Conference.

On this excellent occasion, I would like to bring to memory the background of the 8 March International Women's Day. By the end of the 19th century, owing to technological advances in the world, especially in the United States and industrial developed countries, nurturing the ambition of achieving the intent for colossal profits, enterprise owners forcefully exploited workers' labor force. Women workers and children were forced to undertake hard labor, from 12 up to 16 hours a day. There was no attention paid to their health, and they were offered minimum wages, leaving them to live in poverty and misery.

Because they were no longer able to endure the oppression and exploitation, on 8 March 1899, textile and garment women workers in Chicago and New York of the United States rose up and struggled to demand work hour reductions and pay rises. Despite severe pain and serious danger they were facing, those women workers still joined hands struggling protractedly, rising up to voice opposition publicly and repeatedly until factory/enterprise owners were forced to accept their proposals.

In 1910, an international women's conference, held in Copenhagen, Denmark and attended by 17 countries, decided to set 8 March as the annual celebration of the International Women's Day to commemorate the struggle carried out by women workers worldwide for rights, freedom, democracy, and the implementation of equality between women and men with the slogan: "Eight Hour Working Day," "Equal Work, Equal Pay," and "Protection of Mother's and Child's Health."

In 1995, from 4 to 15 September, the United Nations organized the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in the People's Republic of China. The principal themes were equality, progress, and peace. Moreover, 12 more women's concerns were also raised at the debate. They included: women and poverty, women and education, women and health, violence against women, women and armed conflicts, women and economic participation, women and decision making, mechanisms for women's advancement, human rights and women, women and the media, women and the environment, and problems faced by girls.

Thanks to efforts exerted with forbearance and the overcoming of all manner of difficulties 103 years ago, now, the activities in enhancing women's conditions in the world and society have vigorously snowballed, promoting women to grasp equal opportunities and their rights at work, even though they may still not yet completely fullfilled. This valuable effect has reduced violence and discrimination against women, regarded frequently as the weak sex.

Excellencies and Louk Chumteav,

Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished National and International Guests,

The third objective of "promoting gender equality and providing rights and power to women of the Millennium Development Goals of Cambodia" that the Royal Government of Cambodia has defined in the political platform of the Royal Government in the Fifth Legislature of the National Assembly. This lays stress on further strengthening women's conditions and their key roles in society, promoting Cambodian women's moral and value, and eliminating all the views that take women's roles lightly, with the aim of promoting women's broader and stronger participation in building and defending the motherland. This also upholds gender equality; promotes women's audacity in the economy by boosting training, providing technical skills, and offering opportunities for women to expand professions, boost incomes, and build entrepreneurship as well as enlarging education opportunities for women. The increase in the proportion of women's participation in all levels of national institutions enables them to take part more actively in various decision making processes as well as in building all development and governance plans at the national and subnational levels.

The Rectangular Strategy-Phase III of the Royal Government in the Fifth Legislature of the National Assembly has also promoted gender equality and upheld the conditions of women, the backbone of national economy and society. In boosting women's conditions, the Royal Government has implemented "Neary Ratanak-III Strategic Plan," zooming in on the economic opportunities for women by means of developing their knowledge, capabilities and professional skills, and raising opportunities for women entrepreneurs to secure small and medium credit services. In the education sector, the Royal Government has bridged the gender gap at all levels by increasing the number of scholarships for girl students and augmenting the number of dormitories for them. In the health sector, the Royal Government has increased health services and nutrition for women and children, remarkably cutting down the mother and infant mortality rates.

In the public sector, the number of female public servants has increased to 35% in 2012, with 218 women acting as deputy governors of the Royal capital city, provinces, towns, districts, and khan. In addition, within the Royal Government, there is a woman deputy prime minister, two women ministers, and 54 women secretaries of state and under secretaries of state. The number of female MPs has increased from 6% in 1993 to 20% in 2013. The proportion of women elected as commune and sangkat council members has doubled, up from 8% in 2002 to 18% in 2012.

In particular, through her tireless and undrained humanitarian works, Samdech Kette Proet Bandit Bun Rany Hun Sen has been honored internationally as a prominent national dignitary at the Asia Pacific leadership forum for her response to HIV/AIDS in Cambodia.

Moreover, to prevent violence against women and uphold social moral, women's value, and Cambodian families, the Royal Government has fostered the implementation of the "law on the prevention of violence in family and protection of victims," the "law on the suppression of human trafficking and sex exploitation," and the "second national action plan on the prevention of violence against women."

Lastly, I would like to express my deepest thanks to all the Excellencies, Louk Chumteav, Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished National and International Guests for their presence at the 104th Anniversary of the International Women's Day celebration this morning. May you enjoy the four gems of Buddhist blessings: longevity, nobility, healthiness, and strength without fail. May this Day grow into a day of gender equality and concerted efforts in the fight to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and to achieve the three zero objectives: zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination, and zero AIDS-related deaths.

Thank you.