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- Edited Version
- With comments from H.E. Yang Sem

Address
H.E. Mr. Yang Sem, Senator
Vice-Chairman of Commission on Human Rights, Complaints Reception
and Investigation of the Senate of the Kingdom of Cambodia
Leader of the Cambodian Parliamentary Delegation

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**General Debate on “Human rights abuses as precursors of conflict:
Parliaments as early responders”**

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed a great honor and pleasure for me to be here among many honored guests and distinguished delegates.

First of all, on behalf of the Cambodian delegation, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation to the Parliament of Switzerland for organizing the 135th Assembly in Geneva in cooperation with the IPU.

The theme for our general debate is very relevant. It is about the role and responsibilities of parliaments in promoting human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

Human rights violations happen in many countries. Around the world, religious intolerance, political exclusion, marginalization, poverty, and undue restrictions to fundamental freedoms happen frequently.

States cannot fully implement the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights to which they have subscribed through their constitutions.

There are many displaced persons as a result of armed conflict in the world and they include women and children.

Some countries have made tangible efforts to attain equality between men and women and achieved noticeable results. But others have failed to make adequate

efforts, with the result that inequality between men and women is still common and much remains to be done.

There are many forms of discrimination and violence against women and children in many parts of the world because of poor social and economic conditions, natural disasters, armed conflict, sexual exploitation, terrorism, drug trafficking, illiteracy, and hunger.

In the spirit of the United Nations Charter, all nations have the responsibility to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people.

Efforts to promote and protect human rights should be consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter and international law.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Human rights violations also happened in Cambodia during the Khmer Rouge genocidal regime in the period 1975-1979. That regime claimed the lives of millions of innocent people. The country and economy were destroyed.

After the collapse of the Khmer Rouge regime in 1979, the country was rebuilt; democracy was restored.

The 1993 General Elections have prompted the adherence to the principles of pluralist democracy, market economy, and the respect for human rights, freedom and dignity.

But after the Elections, Cambodia did not yet enjoy genuine peace. It was not until 1998 that Cambodia enjoyed genuine peace. The 1998 General Elections and the successful implementation of our "Win-Win Policy" dismantled the political and military organizations of the Khmer Rouge. It also led to peace for the whole nation and the integration of former Khmer Rouge soldiers and people living in occupied zones into the mainstream of society.

In Cambodia, to improve the human rights situation, the country has established the necessary legal and institutional frameworks.

Under the legal framework, Cambodia has passed much legislation including the Constitution, Anti-Corruption Law, Criminal Code, Code of Criminal Procedures, Civil Code, Code of Civil Procedures, Law on the Organization of Courts, Law on the Status of Judges and Prosecutors, Law on the Reform of the Supreme Council of Magistracy.

Added to this, at the international level, Cambodia has ratified many conventions such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Under the institutional framework, Cambodia has established mechanisms to deal with human rights issues. The government, National Assembly and Senate have each created a Human Rights Committee in order to strengthen the respect, promotion and protection of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

In addition to the various human rights bodies, there are other mechanisms in place such as Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia. There are more than 100 civil society organizations working in the field of human rights in Cambodia. These mechanisms have been created to supplement the work of the government.

The IPU is a strong organization. Its mission is to defend human rights and promote respect for universal values, norms and principles.

I am pleased to note that the IPU has done a wonderful job in terms of protecting and promoting human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

I wish to appreciate the IPU's efforts for adopting many resolutions in the past years to promote the human rights of people around the world such as policies to put an end to violence against children and women adopted in 1991.

The IPU should continue this practice for many more years for the benefit of people of the world.

Mr. President, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Parliaments are the guardians of human rights. They work for the well-being of the people they represent. Parliamentarians are familiar with people's concerns. They are well-placed to articulate those concerns in parliament and to place them in the context of the greater good for the country as a whole. Parliaments should therefore be at the forefront in raising the alarm and taking action when serious human rights challenges arise.

To better improve the human rights of people in the world, parliaments and parliamentarians should consider the following measures:

- Review laws, policies and strategies to ensure that equality between men and women becomes a reality
- Consult, finalize, and publish strategic plans and policies for achieving measurable success in attaining the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Ensure that governments in our respective countries respect and implement all international human rights instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The right to development is a universal and inalienable right and an integral part of human rights. Therefore, we need to promote the right to development.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.