SPEECH OF HE SO KHUN, MINISTER OF POSTS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Mr Houlin Zhao, the ITU-T Director
Mr Paul Wilson, Executive director of APNIC
Mr Emamgholi BEHDAD, ITU Area Representative
ITU Experts
Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

It is indeed my great pleasure to welcome you all to the workshop on telecommunication and internet standards. This is the first of such workshop hosted in Cambodia thanks to Mr Zhao, the Director of ITU-T who after his visit last November to this country saw the need for such workshop to help our people in the field of telecommunications and internet standards.

I hope those of you who travelled a very long way from Europe and Australia had a smooth journey and also comfortable accommodation in Phnom Penh.

Cambodia is a full member of the ITU and has participated and benefited from the various ITU activities where this workshop is another example. I would therefore like to thank the ITU for their care and for putting great effort in helping countries like Cambodia.

It has been 10 years since the UN has helped Cambodia to attain peace. As everyone knows, after a long war period with so much destruction, the country has many high priorities in its agenda. The problems include the lack of fund, lack of know-how, many mines in the field, many handicapped people, lack of commercial institutions, high unemployment and lack of basic infrastructures, let alone the advanced infrastructures.

We had the third general election last July which has been endorsed by the international community as acceptably free and fair. However, a new government is yet to be formed.

At present, Cambodia has a population of 12 million but has a very small fixed network and relatively large mobile networks. There are about 35,000 fixed subscribers catered for by three operators, the government operator being the major one, and about 600,000 mobiles catered for by 4 private operators. In IT there are 4 operating internet service providers and two more are licensed to operate but have not yet started. In total there are about 10,000 internet subscribers of which about 100 are of broadband type. The number of users are probably twice or 3 times that number as they use internet cafés. The technologies used are the normal dial-up, DSL, wireless broadband and satellite terminals. The slow growth of IT is due in part to the lack of telecom infrastructure, in part to the inability of people to afford computers and also in part to the low literacy especially English.

For the PSTN network we are grateful to a number of friendly countries, namely Japan, France and Germany, for providing us grant aids from which we have a number of

modern telecom switches, copper networks in Phnom Penh and a long distance fibre optic network from East to West across the country. For IT we are grateful to IDRC of Canada for providing assistance for the set up of a government commercial internet service provider (Camnet) and to Korea for providing an E-Government network. In the E-Government programme all ministries are equipped with a server each and a number of computer terminals so that information can be stored in two secure sites and shared between the ministries.

In addition to the grant aid for the physical networks Cambodia has also obtained technical assistance from the ITU (for the initial draft telecom law, technical regulations) KfW (of Germany for fibre optic link), the World Bank (for economic regulations) and the Asian Development Bank (for sector policy formulation and capacity building). As a result we have now produced a final draft of telecom law. We have translated it to Cambodian language for the promotion to the National Assembly for enactment.

Despite the lack of good knowledge on standards and consequently the lack of comprehensive regulations the telecom operators have been cooperative with MPTC. However, this situation cannot be left to carry on like that forever, i.e. the MPTC needs to strengthen its knowledge in order to ensure that its regulations, which in general are quite light–handed, are appropriate and effective. The ITU workshop we are holding in the next 3 days is very timely indeed.

Once again, on behalf of the ministry of Posts and Telecommunications of Cambodia, I would like to thank the ITU and APNIC for taking time and other resources to conduct this workshop. I wish you all to have a pleasant stay in Cambodia including later seeing Angkor Wat if you can spare some time, and to have a successful workshop. I now declare this workshop open.

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