

**Speech of H.E. Sar Kheng, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior  
Chairman of National Census Committee  
at the Inauguration Ceremony of the New Building of  
The National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning  
Ministry of Planning, 14 January 2008**

- Excellencies, Lok Chumteav, Ladies and Gentlemen, Representatives of Countries, Institutions, and Development Partners
- Excellencies, Lok Chumteav, Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished National and International Guests

It is my great pleasure to honor the inauguration of the new building of the National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning marking a historical event to the mile stones of the development of statistical system in Cambodia and to the up-coming population census 2008. I would like to take this opportunity to express my profound thanks to the government and people of Japan that have always been assisting the development of Cambodia in all fields. Since 2005, Japan has been event more actively and directly assisting statistical activities in Cambodia. Through JICA and by Statistics of Japan, the project on Improving Official Statistics in Cambodia has trained statistical staff from ministries, establishment, and provinces/cities in total close to 700 persons. Thanks to Japan counterpart fund and with the joined approval of the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Government of Japan, this new building is proudly achieved adding to the strength of statistical system, which will be used for the purpose of population census, establishment census, agriculture census, and others surveys as well. Moreover, through the Japan counterpart fund, we have also got financial resources for the population census 2008 and other statistical activities amounted close to 2 millions USD, which help fill the budget gap of historical operation of population census 2008.

Taking opportunity of this important occasion, I would like to share my recommendation on the role and usefulness of statistical data and information to the socio-economic development of the country and in response to the emerging issues we are facing along our development path way. I also would like to bring into our attention the key points of rules and regulations of statistics and statistical plan that Royal Government of Cambodia sees as important and at high priority in receiving financial resources from development partners and the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC).

RGC has been reforming in all sectors aiming at poverty reduction of the people, which is the core principle in all policy and development strategy of RGC. As a matter of fact, statistics has been using as an important tool to formulate strategic policy of RGC and to monitor and evaluate the progress of implementation. In implementing vision stated in the Rectangular Strategy, RGC and development partners have agreed on the development of a plan called National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) 2006-2010. Statistical data collected from censuses, surveys, and other administrative sources has been serving as important basis to develop and monitor Strategic Development Plan and evaluate the

achievement of poverty reduction strategy and CMDG, as well as to national and international researchers. Statistical data is also important for the ASEAN Secretariat to monitor development in all sectors in ASEAN's countries.

New Statistics Law, which has been in force since May 2005, has clearly stated roles and responsibility, and coordination work for smooth operation and efficiency of works in the decentralized statistical system. Statistics Law and its sub-decree outline essential framework and drive various statistical activities into national statistical system.

The Statistics Law provides a strong legal basis to the National Institute of Statistics (NIS), which is one of the General Directorate of the Ministry of Planning, to widely and clearly undertake its activities and responsibilities. Especially, it grants the coordination role to the NIS. Moreover, the Statistical Advisory Council has been formed to coordinate statistical activities in the national statistical system.

The shortage of the necessary recourses, however, remains a weak point of the official statistics in Cambodia. Although significant financial resource is committed to statistical activities such as to this population census, data collection activities such as large scale surveys and censuses are still based mainly on external financial supports. The Statistical Master Plan (SMP) is expected to provide a long term strategic statistical plan which requires adequate financial support to manage the proposed statistical activities and clearly define on work plan to implement in the national statistical system.

As H.E. Senior Minister, Ministry of Planning, has reported in this and previous occasions, the preparation of the census 2008 has been going well and smooth according to the census plan. In general, it is the population census that can reflect the actual demographic status of the countries and help governments in formulating precise policies, and other action programs to achieve a balanced development for the people. Population census is the only source that can provide complete picture on number of population and its characteristics in the country. Population census is undertaken with complete and dependable scope that can provide local demographic information down to the lowest administrative location, which is a requirement that cannot be fulfilled by other data sources. Census also provides basis for sampling frame, and population projection, which is an important factor for planning. Besides, the census follows United Nations/International definitions and classification, and therefore, the census data and its indicators can be used for comparison across countries.

Once again, I thanks to UNFPA, JICA, Government of Japan, and Government of Germany that have been supporting technical and financial resources to census 2008, which is an important historical task for the development of Cambodia.

Countries and development partner is striving to achieve MDG that has been globally adopted according to the Millennium Declaration year 2000. The measurement of the progress toward MDG, however, bases on the information collected through census. Primary data on number, characteristics of population, and housing is very important to make sure that we are achieving the MDG and also for other development plans. Census information is also the solid basis for monitoring and evaluation on targets of MDG.

Census can directly provide indicators to track and monitor targets on education, gender, mortality, and environment. Together with socio-economic survey, and other household survey we can also get indicators for monitoring poverty and others.

Development brings about better living condition of the people, especially it helps poverty eradication, improves gender equity, health, human capacity, and environment. Since demographic factor has close link to those targets, strategies that engage human factor will succeed. National population policy is one of the results of population census 1998, demographic and health survey 2000, and other studies to improve social status and diversify individual options.

I am pleased to note that there is a continuous capacity development support to NIS through censuses and surveys by development partners that have always been taken into consideration as part of the national capacity development. I am also please that the NIS has now equipped with qualified and experienced officials in managing statistical activities, such as census and survey.

The training program of census and survey to various levels of officials forms core group to train local official in turn. In any circumstance, it is crucially important to train national officials in all fields such as data processing, census analysis, and GIS. Since the NIS has been building capacity in implementing census and data processing, the technical assistant to census can now be minimized.

I am strongly believed that the new building, which is a modern statistical infrastructure, will help censuses with appropriate data processing structure such as modern room for proper statistical data base storage, and also modern training room for all statistical officials in the country, as well as larger Data User Service Center for statistical data users and the public.

Planning and management of census, which is one of the major statistical activities, has been strengthening professional career of NIS's officials in data collection, evaluation, data processing, tabulation, analysis, and dissemination. This experience will go hand-in-hand with other capacity development activities, in other statistical activity management, and also to make sure that the census result is widely disseminated and used. We thank JICA that currently supporting a project on improving official statistics in Cambodia to strengthen capacity of NIS's officials, line ministries officials, and statistical officials in provinces/cities.

Observation shows that national capacity in data collection, data processing, and dissemination improved significantly. Nevertheless, the capacity of officials in statistical analysis and interpretation is still limited. Therefore, it is necessary that there shall be more on-the-job training on data analysis.

As I have emphasized that the census 2008 is very important. It is an enormous task that no government in developing countries can manage alone. This huge work need to be

undertaken with technical and financial support from all concern parties. This crucially important duty need to be resulted with quality and reliability.

I am pleased to see that the census 2008 preparation phase is going well. I call upon all officials working in connection to census 2008 to carefully and timely work for the successful census operation, analysis, and dissemination.

I would like to take this opportunity to stress also that our statistics show significant progress and the Cambodian statistics has also been integrated into statistics in the world and the region, especially ASEAN region, at a certain level. The NIS has been organizing numerous international workshops, and recently the NIS successfully hosted the 8th meeting of ASEAN's heads of statistics (AHSOM 8). Statistics play a key role in ASEAN integration and in reducing gap in economic development of new and old ASEAN member countries.

In conclusion, I thank international development partners that have been supporting statistical activities in Cambodia, particularly to the population census of Cambodia 2008. Once again, I thank the government and people of Japan, and JICA, who help us establish this new and modern building for statistical activities, i.e. population census and other censuses, and surveys and also the assistant to improve official statistics in Cambodia. Finally, my five best wishes of Buddha (Aryuh, Vannak, Sokhak, Pulak, and Padepheanak) are to Excellencies, Lok Chumteav, Ladies, and Gentlemen.

Thank you!