

Speech by
H.E. Mr. Yukio Imagawa, Former Ambassador of Japan to Cambodia
on the occasion of the celebration to mark the 25th anniversary
of the Paris Agreements on Cambodia
"Paris Agreements and Japan's Contribution"
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Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

(1. Introduction)

I am so honored to participate on behalf of the Government of Japan in the celebration to mark the 25th anniversary of the Paris Agreements. As a person who has devoted my whole life for the friendship between Japan and Cambodia, I still remember very vividly the signing of the Paris Agreements, which was the pinnacle of my diplomatic life for 40 years. This was an unforgettable day for both Cambodia and Japan's diplomacy which made both countries to enter the new era.

In my speech, I would like to look back on the Japan's contribution to the Cambodian peace process, which had great significance for Japanese diplomacy thereafter. Then, I would like to touch upon Japan's consistent assistance for Cambodia.

(2. Japan's Contribution to the Cambodian Peace Process)

On 2 December, 1987 in a small French village called Fère-en-Tardenois, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, then head of the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea (CGDK) and Samdech Hun Sen, then Prime Minister of the Phnom Penh Government met for the first time. Neither the countries which backed the CGDK nor the countries which backed the Phnom Penh Government supported the idea of direct dialogue between the concerned Cambodian parties, who had been engaged in fierce battles for many years. Nevertheless, the two leaders decided to initiate the peace talk on their own will. This talk was followed by eight subsequent direct meetings by the two leaders and bore fruit as the conclusion of the Paris Agreements. The most notable feature of the Cambodian peace process was the strong commitment of Cambodian leaders to settle their problem by themselves.

At that time, the officials of Japanese government discussed very seriously how

Japan could be involved in the Cambodian peace process. I suggested to my colleagues that we should respect the will of the Cambodian people. What I wanted to emphasize was that Japan needed to respect Cambodian culture, history, religion and national feelings and try to find what Japan could do for Cambodia. We needed to help Cambodia's own initiative for the peace talk without imposition from outside such as an intervention by countries with a big power. This has been the policy which Japan has followed consistently in its diplomacy towards Cambodia.

Japan was invited to participate in the Paris International Conference on Cambodia in 1989, which was the first occasion after the end of the Second World War for Japan to take part in a peace conference of a third country. On behalf of Japan, I co-chaired the Third Committee with Australia, which dealt with the refugee issue and reconstruction. The Third Committee was the single committee which succeeded in the adoption of official documents by consensus. The conference was adjourned as the other two committees, which covered military and political matters, were unable to achieve any conclusion. To break the stalemate, Japan hosted the Tokyo Conference on Cambodia in June 1990 with the participation of all the concerned parties in Cambodia and the principle of equal representation between the CGDK and the Phnom Penh Government in the Supreme National Council (SNC) was agreed upon between Prince Sihanouk and Samdech Hun Sen. Furthermore, Japan actively continued its diplomatic efforts and sounded out the Cambodian concerned parties about its unofficial proposal for the comprehensive political solution in 1991. Japan played an important role in the efforts by the international community which brought about the conclusion of the Paris Agreements in October.

After the Paris Agreements, the United Nation Transitional Authority in Cambodia started its operation under the leadership of Mr. Yasushi Akashi, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General. From Japan, around 1,300 personnel were dispatched to join the activities as engineer battalion members, ceasefire observers, civilian police or election observers. This was the first time for in its history that Japan had participated in the UN Peace Keeping Operations in a full-fledged manner. The question whether to send Japanese Self Defense Forces for overseas operations provoked an intensified political turmoil but Japan decided to deploy it after enactment of the UN PKO law in response to the strong request by the Cambodian side, especially Prime Minister Hun Sen and Prince Sihanouk. We had to endure the tragic sacrifice of two Japanese who lost their lives during their missions. Nevertheless, Japan's participation significantly contributed to the successful conduct of the general election.

The participation in the Cambodian peace process was a turning point for the Japanese diplomacy. After the defeat of the Second World War, Japan remained in a negative and passive posture vis-à-vis the political and military issues in Asia and tried to evade the involvement in the regional conflicts as much as possible. However, the Cambodian peace process led Japan to change its diplomacy into an active and creative one to contribute to the peace and stability of the international community. Now, “Japan as a Proactive Contributor to Peace” is the pillar of Japanese diplomacy under Prime Minister Abe. Cambodia is the country where Japan has learnt what it really means to build peace. In this sense, Cambodia was the starting point for Japan’s “Proactive Contribution to Peace”.

(3. Japan’s contribution to the reconstruction and development of Cambodia)

“The successful and peaceful end of war is hardly earned. However, maintaining and consolidating peace is even more difficult.”; the words of Prime Minister Hun Sen. Reconstruction of a country starts when parties to a dispute overcome their differences. Peace can only take root when the living standards of the people improve through economic development. Peace will remain fragile if people consider so-called “peace dividends” failed. To promote economic development, it is necessary to build the infrastructure, governmental administration and human resources who sustain the society. This nation building is a task that takes a truly enormous amount of time.

After the establishment of the Royal Government, Japan tried to be an escort runner for Cambodia in its path of nation building. Our policy was the same one which we applied during the peace process: to respect Cambodian people’s will and support their self-efforts. In other words, it was to attach importance to the ownership and the partnership. Many Japanese went out to the field where peace-building and state-building were underway. They walked hand-in-hand with local people and thought things over together so that Japan’s technological expertise and know-how were embraced by the local populace and took root on the ground.

I also devoted myself to support the state-building of Cambodia as Ambassador of Japan to Cambodia until 1996 and subsequently from private positions, such as an academic or an NGO board member. Sometimes I was appointed as Special Envoy of Japan to convey a message from the Japanese government to Cambodian leaders and discuss the current Cambodian situation and its relations with Japan.

During the 25 years since the Paris Agreements, Cambodia and Japan have achieved a lot together. Japan is the largest bilateral donor to Cambodia. Japanese

assistance from 1992 to 2013 amounted to 2.5 billion US dollars, about 16% of 16.2 billion US dollars which is the total international assistance provided for Cambodia. We can see the results of our cooperation everywhere in Phnom Penh and Cambodia. Let me mention a few examples.

- The infrastructure improvement projects which started with the construction of the Japan Cambodia Friendship Bridge and National Road 6A. They were followed by the construction of the Kizuna Bridge, then the Tubasa Bridge, National Road 1 and 5 which make up the Southern Economic Corridor. The Sihanoukville port and national electric power supply system were also upgraded. All these projects promoted Cambodian economic development and its integration into the regional economy.
- The water supply system in Phnom Penh, which suffered the destruction of the facility during the civil war, was once able to deliver water to only 30% of the households as a result of water leakage and theft. Now, more than 90% of households can enjoy the delivery of water. The only places in Asia where safe drinking water can be obtained just by turning on a tap are Japan, Singapore, and Cambodia's capital Phnom Penh. The reform of Phnom Penh Water Supply Authority, which has achieved a high standard of water management such as in developed nations, has been referred to as the "miracle of Phnom Penh".
- The National Maternal and Child Health Center, which the local people call the "Japan Hospital," has succeeded in reducing infant and maternal mortality rates by half through almost 20 years of hard work.
- Many school buildings were built through Japanese grant aid and the support by Japanese NGOs while the quality of the elementary and lower secondary school teacher training has been improved especially in the area of science and mathematics education.
- In order to improve the productivity of the agricultural sector and increase the farmer's income, Japan supported the development of irrigation facilities, the improvement of rice production skills and the diversification of farming among other initiatives. About 145 km of irrigation canals were developed by Japanese ODA between 2002 and 2014 and more than a 60% increase of rice productivity was achieved by the targeted farmers from 2010 to 2014.
- As a result of having continued the provision of equipment and capacity building support to the demining agencies, especially the Cambodia Mine Action Center (CMAC), the casualty toll from landmines and other explosive ordnance has dropped to 111 people last year which is equal to one fortieth of the peak time.
- For the realization of the rule of law in Cambodia, Japan supported the drafting

and disseminating of the Civil Code and the Civil Procedure Code and the strengthening of the capacity of personnel engaging in judicial activities. Furthermore, Japan contributed consistently to the establishment and conduct of the Khmer Rouge Trials. Japan also promotes the dialogue with the Cambodian government and their partners to improve the human rights situation as the pen holder of human rights resolution at the UN Human Rights Council.

- To date, more than 10,000 Cambodians have been trained in Japan through the JICA program. More than 1,000 Cambodian students have studied in Japan under the Japanese scholarship program. Many alumni play an active part in various fields in Cambodia. The rectors of three major Cambodian universities are former Japanese students.
- Japan hosted the Tokyo Conference for the Preservation of Angkor monuments in October 1993 and thereafter has been co-chairing with France the International Coordinating Committee for the Safeguarding and Development of the Historic Site of Angkor (ICC) every year. Japan also established the Japanese Government Team for Safeguarding Angkor (JASA) and has been engaging in the specific preservation activities jointly with APSARA Authority.

Besides these achievements, it is my pleasure to mention the remarkable increase of Japanese direct investment in Cambodia in recent years. Previously, trade and investment between Japan and Cambodia were very low in volume even though Japan had provided a variety of support to contribute to the economic growth and development of Cambodia. This remained the largest challenge for our bilateral relations. However, since 2010, Japanese companies have started to expand their businesses in Cambodia one after another mainly in the labor-intensive and export oriented industries. Now the number of regular members of the Japanese Business Association in Cambodia (JBAC) has increased three times in 3 years (50 members to 176 members) and the bilateral trade has expanded 8 times in 10 years (20.2 billion yen to 153.8 billion yen). Japanese investment has become a trigger for transforming the landscape and citizens' life style in Phnom Penh.

Our bilateral relations have bloomed in the form of a sharp increase of Japanese investment in the past five to six years. This has been made possible because of our cooperation for 25 years, the Cambodian socio-economic infrastructure having been significantly upgraded both physically and institutionally, together with the relevant human resources. It also can be attributed to the strong bond of friendship between Japanese and Cambodian people, which was fostered over years of collaboration. This September, direct flights between Tokyo and Phnom Penh by All Nippon Airways (ANA)

started its operation. The Sunrise Japan Hospital, the first Japanese private hospital has opened in Phnom Penh as a base for expanding Japanese medical service to the world. Putting all of this together, Japan-Cambodian relations have a huge potential to further expand dramatically.

It was in this context that our two leaders decided to upgrade our bilateral relations to a “strategic partnership” during the summit meeting in December, 2013. “Strategic partnership” means the bi-directional relations of two countries which closely cooperate on regional and international issues for the stability and prosperity of international community. In fact, Cambodia became an important contributor for the UN Peace Keeping Operations. After dispatching its first troops to the UN Mission in Sudan in 2006, Cambodia has deployed 864 personnel to 6 UN PKO missions as of August, 2016. Japan has been providing a defense capacity building program for Cambodian PKO corps in the field of civil engineering. Demining and water supply are other areas of expanded collaboration. With support of JICA, CMAC is utilizing its substantial experience, skills and knowledge to help other countries facing similar landmine problems such as Columbia, Laos, Angola and Iraq. JICA has selected the Phnom Penh and Siem Reap Water Supply Authority as a site for training officials from third countries to learn high standard water management. It is truly impressive for me that Cambodia has transformed itself from a country which was a recipient of international assistance including PKOs to a country which actively contributes to international peace and prosperity.

(4. Future of Japan-Cambodian relations)

Lastly, let me express my hope for the future of Cambodia and indicate the direction which Japan will follow in strengthening our bilateral cooperation.

The purpose of the Paris Agreements was to terminate the civil war and create conditions where Cambodian people could determine their own political future through free and fair elections by the United Nations. Since the establishment of the Royal Government, the Cambodian government and people have steadily advanced the development of the country with the support of the international community and conducted national elections for 4 times based on its Constitution. As a person who admires and respects the country and people of Cambodia, I sincerely hope that Cambodia will continue to follow this path firmly. Japan is assisting Cambodian electoral reform to further strengthen democracy. I hope that Cambodia's next election will be conducted successfully in a free and fair manner

The Cambodian peace process is filled with much wisdom which can contribute to solving present and future problems. Through the cooperation to build a peace in Cambodia, Cambodia, Japan and the international community have learned the following valuable lessons:

- Determination not to allow recurrence of tragic civil war and violence holds the key to success.
- It is important to settle the Cambodian conflict by Cambodians themselves.
- Under the spirit of national reconciliation, a win-win solution shall be sought without creating losers.
- A firm stand should be taken to establish universal values such as liberal democracy and human rights but its realization must be sought gradually, not hastily.
- The role of the international community is to help Cambodia's self-efforts. Cambodia also addresses its problems in an open manner with the support of the international community.

Currently in Cambodia, people born after the Paris Agreements exceed half of the population. Those born after the Khmer Rouge regime account for more than 70%. As a person who has devoted half my lifetime to Cambodia, I wish that the young generation will learn sincerely and earnestly from the path that Cambodia has gone through and succeed the ownership role for the state building of Cambodia

In the 25 years since the Paris Agreements, Japan has walked hand-in-hand with Cambodia in the path of state-building. Japan will continue to advance with Cambodia on the same path to realize a peaceful and stable region and world. I would like to conclude my speech today with my heartfelt wish that Cambodia will emerge as a nation truly peaceful and filled with the joy of living and play a significant role to lead the regional and international community toward a bright future.

Thank you for your indulgence.