



Signing Ceremony
UNESCO-Sweden-MOI Joint Project on Access to Information
May 30 2014

Excellency, Mr. Khieu Kanharith, Minister, Ministry of Information,
Excellency, Ambassador Ms. Anna Maj Hultgård, Embassy of Sweden,
Journalists, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good afternoon.

It gives me great pleasure to be here at the signing ceremony of the joint project on “Working towards an Access to Information Law in Cambodia: Bridging the Government and Citizens for Participatory Law-Making 2014-2017.” I must say that it has been quite a journey to get to this point. Exactly one year from today, on 30 May 2013, we implemented our joint national conference on Access to Information in cooperation with Sweden and the Ministry of Information.

First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to the Minister of Information, H.E. Mr. Khieu Kanharith, for his constant support and encouragement throughout the development of this project; And the Embassy of Sweden for their partnership and financial support in making this project possible.

This three-year project promises to be a significant initiative in Cambodia, aiming to promote an inclusive Access to Information law-making process, through the mobilization of key government actors and opening up channels for dialogue between the state and civil society. The project ultimately aims to establish sound technical mechanisms within the government to draft and debate the law, open up public platforms to receive input from civil society, and increase advocacy efforts through the training of journalists and media professionals.

For over 20 years now, UNESCO has assisted governments all over the world in drafting, passing and implementing Access to Information legislations and policies—more recently in Tunisia and Egypt. In Cambodia, we believe that the legislation will be indispensable for the country’s democratization process, and will support its citizens’ efforts towards building a more accountable and transparent government.

Access to information is a crucial element in the effort to reduce corruption, increase accountability and deepen trust in the government. Importantly, with an Access to Information law, media professionals and journalists can deliver high-quality and accurate news that is based on official information.

UNESCO firmly believes that, legislation is meaningless if it is not created and implemented in cooperation with the participation of public and civil society organizations. We hope that this open and transparent process of drafting and passing this legislation will prepare the citizens and CSOs of Cambodia to understand their right to information and to better utilize it once the legislation is passed.

With these words, I wish to thank again the Ministry of Information and the Embassy of Sweden. Today, I believe, is the starting point of a long and fruitful journey in promoting and sustaining democracy in Cambodia.

Thank you for your attention.