



អង្គការសហប្រជាជាតិកម្ពុជា
United Nations in Cambodia

**Remarks by Ms. Anne Lemaistre, United Nations Resident Coordinator a.i
And, UNESCO Representative in Cambodia**
On the occasion of the International Youth Day 2015

12 August 2015
Institute of Technology of Cambodia

**HE Dr. Pit Chamnan, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport,
Excellencies on the dais, Distinguished guests, development partners, youth participants,
Excellencies, colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am honoured to be here today to celebrate the International Youth Day 2015 with you all and to bring awareness to this year's global theme for this day, which is "Youth civic engagement".

We are all well aware of the important and crucial role that youth play in our societies. Young people shape our world of tomorrow and the future of our planet lies in their hands. In the year 2000 a special day to honor youth and to raise public awareness of the issues affecting young people around the globe was realized for the first time, when August 12 was first celebrated. Today we mark its 16th anniversary.

There is a wide range of issues that concern youth ranging from education and employment to health related and inter-generational issues. One of the priority areas is to ensure full and effective participation of youth in society and decision-making. This year's theme "Youth civic engagement" is therefore timely and well chosen.

Civic engagement encompasses a wide range of activities cutting across the social, political, economic, cultural and religious spheres. There are different forms and modalities civic engagement activities may take. From political action, active membership in a group or association to volunteering within and for the community and participation in fund-raising for charity, advocacy, or simply voting - civic engagement has many facets. Participation and engagement in public life are essential elements of democracy and a successful democratic society requires citizens to actively engage in community development. It is therefore crucial to create and foster a strong sense of civic responsibility among people and especially youth. Young people need to be encouraged to become involved in the political process and the issues that affect them.

Finally, civic engagement means to work together both politically and non-politically, to promote the quality of life for all people in the communities and the whole society. It is about making a difference, about values and motivation as well as the development of skills and knowledge and the assurance for equal opportunities for all.

As stated in this year's United Nations Report on the State of the World's Volunteerism, "better governance at every level is a pre-requisite for the success of the new set of targets for future international development, the Sustainable Development Goals, which are due to be agreed at the United Nations in September 2015."

In Cambodia, in line with the strategies of the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport, the concept of volunteerism is promoted throughout the country by the network of VolCam who believes that

volunteering is a crucial component of development in any country, an important tool for strengthening and mobilizing communities and capacity building that provides valuable opportunities for volunteers as well as services for the society.

Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is now time to honor all the young people in Cambodia and the world who are devoted to the development of their nations and who volunteer their time, their energy and their skills to improve the way they are governed and to engage and foster engagement at local, national and global level.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate and appreciate the many young people who join us today here as well as around Cambodia for their continued active engagements in different forms and levels of the country development. I have had the opportunity learn many remarkable and encouraging stories of engagement. Some have worked so hard in the form of peer education to raise awareness about traffic, safe migration, HIV/AIDS and Human Rights. Some have dedicated their efforts to establish youth networks to advocate for social accountability in the communities. Some of the community youth has worked to promote a culture of peace through organizing sport activities.

Also, I have met many bright Cambodia young women who spent time after graduating universities to be volunteers with NGOs and communities teaching about sanitation, environment, literacy and reading for children and adults. Through the power of ICT including social networks, many young people have transformed their groups to actively debate about various social, political and cultural development issues. They have even run campaigns to raise awareness and influence for positive changes in the communities.

I sincerely hope that many more great stories, examples as well challenges on youth civic engagements are widely exchanged. Today's topic and discussions are well in line with the current effort of National Youth Policy Implementation which has been coordinated under the leadership of Cambodia National Council for Youth Development.

Vulnerable groups of youth, including young LGBT and young people infected and affected by HIV should not be left behind. Their engagement should be assured in all aspects to ensure their concerns and specific needs are addressed and their contribution to the development of the community and the society.

The UN wishes to reiterate our continued support and cooperation to the process of its implementation and, as we talk about civic engagement, encourages youth organizations' active engagement and partnership.

Dear Youth,

In his message for the international day of youth this year, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon acknowledges the contribution of youth stating – let me quote - *"...As the world changes with unprecedented speed, young people are proving to be invaluable partners who can advance meaningful solutions. Youth movements and student groups are challenging traditional power structures and advocating a new social contract between States and societies. Young leaders have contributed fresh ideas, taken proactive measures, and mobilized through social media as never before"*.

Thank you very much for you attention.
Som Or Kun Chrean.