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Opening Remarks By

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UNESCO World Day for Audiovisual Heritage Day
Archives at Risk: Protecting the World's Identities – Memories of Indochina

Bophana, Phnom Penh, 27 October 2015

Director General, Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts,
Deputy Director of the Bophana Center,
Director of Institut français du Cambodge,
Distinguished historians, filmmakers, artists, students,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to be here today at the Bophana Center to celebrate the UNESCO World Day for Audiovisual Heritage 2015. We thank the Bophana team and the Institut français du Cambodge for your wonderful cooperation as always.

Every year, on October 27th, we celebrate and aim to remind people of the importance of audiovisual heritage. Audiovisual documents, such as films, radio and television programmes, audio and video recordings, contain the primary records of the 20th and 21st centuries. They have become the primary registers of our values, visions, creative energies and information. It is hard to imagine, then, that in 10 to 15 years, a majority of these audiovisual materials will be lost for good if we do not transfer them onto digital records.

Much of the world's audiovisual heritage has already been irretrievably lost through neglect, destruction, decay and the lack of resources and skills, thus impoverishing the

memory of humankind. Much more will be lost if stronger and concerted international and national action is not taken. It was in this context, that the General Conference in 2005 approved the commemoration of the World Day for Audiovisual Heritage as a mechanism to raise general awareness of the need for urgent measures to be taken and to acknowledge the importance of audiovisual documents as an integral part of national identity.

We are here today united in our love for film, music and visual images, and understand their power to move our emotions, open up new perspectives and raise us to action. Films, music and images encapsulate the thoughts of the time we live in. And what's more, they transcend the limitations of language and culture, and appeal to a wide and diverse range of people in all different walks of life.

During this one week, Bophana Center and the Institut français du Cambodge are collaborating to offer, for the first time in Cambodia, public screenings of rare movies on Indochina which were restored by the French CNC (Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée). This movie selection aims to share the history and memories of the people of Indochina and also raise the questions regarding people's identity under colonialism. During this week-long event, we will have an open dialogue with Dr. Henri Locard about Indochina, and we have in store for you a fascinating lecture by Ms. Khuon Vichheka on Battambang province during the World War II.

Audiovisual heritage has an important role in promoting mutual understanding and tolerance, opening up communication channels and building peace—it is also a profound source of inspiration and creativity, and an important reference point for the younger generation. We must, with due urgency, safeguard the world's audiovisual heritage in order to preserve our collective memory and to ensure its transmission to the future generations.

I thank you for your kind attention, and I wish you a very wonderful celebration today.