



Opening Remarks
Ms. Jamie Lee
On Behalf of Ms. Anne Lemaistre
Journalist Workshop on Ethics and Security

5 December 2014
Sunway Hotel, Phnom Penh

Ms. Wan-Hea Lee, OHCHR Representative in Cambodia,
Distinguished guests, journalists, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honor and pleasure for me to be among distinguished participants of this workshop and I wish to thank OHCHR for their cooperation in making this event possible today.

In recent years, around the world and in Cambodia, there have been increasing attacks on media professionals. Journalists and media workers in many countries face obstacles to reporting the truth through arrest, imprisonment, intimidation, and violence.

In Cambodia, journalists covering protests and strikes by unionists, have been working in dangerous situations and have been subject to beatings and violence. Several cases of journalists raise the concern for safety of journalists in Cambodia. In September 2012, the Director-General of UNESCO, Irina Bokova, denounced the murder of Cambodian environmental journalist Hang Serei Oudom and requested for an investigation into his killing. Earlier this year, Suon Chan, journalist reporting on illegal fishing activities, was killed outside of his home. Last month, Taing Try, journalist reporting on illegal logging was shot dead. Taing Try is the thirteenth journalist having been murdered in Cambodia since 1994.

Decisive action is needed to ensure that the media can carry out their work and the public can remain informed. There is a need to review and examine restrictive legislation with vague provisions on defamation, disinformation, and incitement that is applied to media professionals which leave them defenseless against their arbitrary application.

Journalists too have a responsibility to uphold the basic tenets of their professions—the social role of their work demands that the profession maintain high standards of integrity and independence. In order to tackle the issues of safety of journalists and danger of impunity, we equally need to

work towards ending corruption, building responsible business practices, and promoting the rule of law. Such understanding of the complex and intricate issues that interact to compound the root causes of harassment against journalists is needed to achieve safety for journalists and fight impunity.

Access to accurate information, neutrality, professionalism and high ethical standards can act as defense against the challenges that journalists face in Cambodia. Without an Access to Information Law, many journalists find it frustrating to obtain official information, and they are left vulnerable to legal attacks for inaccurate reporting. In this regard, UNESCO is collaborating with the Ministry of Information, with the support of the Embassy of Sweden, and civil society organizations such as Advocacy Policy Institute to work towards assisting relevant to draft an international standard Access to Information Law.

In this regard, UNESCO has led the initiative to finalize the *UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issues of Impunity*, which was endorsed by the UN Chief Executives Board on 12 April 2012. The Plan was prepared during the 1st UN Inter-Agency Meeting on this issue, convened by the Director General of UNESCO at the request of the Intergovernmental Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC), and it works towards mobilizing the UN Member States, human rights bodies, NGOs and media to collaborate in creating a safer environment for journalists.

Today, we hope to give journalists and media professionals, the civil society and representatives of the government the floor to discuss, challenge and to address the issues in promoting safety of journalists in Cambodia. Media workers are the eyes and ears of the people, whose work is essential in any attempt to develop a society. We need to end the culture of impunity that surrounds violence against journalists, as much as we need to provide a safe environment and good conditions for journalists to enable them to maintain ethical practices.

I very much look forward to hearing the discussions unfold today

I wish you a fruitful workshop.

Thank you for your kind attention.