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United Nations in Cambodia

## Remarks by Douglas Broderick, United Nations Resident Coordinator

On the occasion of the Cambodia Local Development Forum

1 July 2010, InterContinental Hotel, Phnom Penh

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*Excellency Sak Setha, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Interior  
and Head of National Committee for Sub-national Democratic Development (NCDD)  
Secretariat*

*Excellency Hang Chuon Naron, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Economy and Finance  
and Permanent Vice-Chairman, Supreme National Economic Council.  
Congratulations Excellency on your new appointment.*

*Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen*

It is my great pleasure to be here with you today to launch the Local Development Outlook on Cambodia. First I'd like to applaud the publication of this report prepared by UNCDF with support from several UN agencies. This is a comprehensive document to guide our efforts in assisting in the development of Cambodia. I would also like to thank Excellencies Sak Setha, Hang Chuon Naron and all those who provided valuable inputs to the report.

As we all know over the past decade Cambodia has made a lot of progress in maintaining stability, implementing reforms, and realizing economic growth. But as a least developed country (LDC), it continues to face challenges.

We have seen that the overall poverty level has been reduced significantly - to 30 percent in 2008 from 43 percent in 1994. But there still exist stark disparities between the urban and rural areas. In absolute terms, the 30 percent represent 3.9 million Cambodians who still live in poverty. Out of that number, about 76 percent of the poor live in the plains and the provinces around the Tonle Sap lake.

These differences are not just related to income generation and consumption. They concern issues that constitute the core of human development: access to healthcare, education, infrastructure and household utilities. **Overall, Cambodia has achieved remarkable results in delivering services to its population, but there are great disparities in terms of access to services, especially in rural areas.**

As noted in the recent UNDP report *Beyond the Midpoint: Achieving the MDGs*, progress – and lack of progress – toward achieving MDGs is often dependent on local circumstances. Local circumstances have influencing factors – both negative and positive – on the outcomes of development. The Local Development Outlook we are launching today aims at providing a tool to improve our understanding of why development occurs in some places and not in others, and what can be done about it.

This is what we call a 'localised' approach – an approach which builds on local knowledge to provide more effectively the public goods as needed in different places and in a way that help policy makers to tap unexploited potential and opportunities for local economic diversification and development.

The *Local Development Outlook* includes country maps of areas of unexploited potential. This helps to visualize where such potential, such as historical sites, protected areas and mineral deposits, is concentrated, which in turn, will help shape strategies that can transform this into benefits for residents of these areas.

In Cambodia, efforts in this direction are being carried by different Ministries and Agencies within the Royal Government. An example is the National Committee for Sub-national Democratic Development (NCDD): a key inter-ministerial body for promoting democratic development through decentralization and deconcentration reforms.

I am pleased to note that we have Excellency Sak Setha with us today, who is also the Head of NCDD Secretariat, to share government's achievements, experiences and challenges in terms of what role can local governments play to foster local development across Cambodia. We will also hear perspectives on this topic from other key national and international speakers in the next sessions.

It is important to recognise that this goal cannot be achieved by the government alone. Enhancing local development requires balanced participation of multiple parties: the government, private sector, development partners and civil society. We all have a role to play. The country's local development challenges must be addressed in an integrated, strategic manner. This strategic approach should be in the form of a policy that covers key dimensions of rural, urban and cross-border development.

***Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,***

The Local Development Outlook we are launching today provides a comprehensive analysis of local development trends and a rigorous review of policy and governance arrangements. We hope it will provide a valuable tool to assist the Royal Government of Cambodia in meeting the challenges and opportunities of its citizens. We, development partners, will continue to work with Cambodia towards achieving those objectives.

I look forward to fruitful discussions in this forum.

Awkun Chraeun!