



**H.E. Dr. Kao Kim Hourn, Secretary-General of ASEAN**  
**Opening Remarks for the Policy Speech by Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei**  
**Techo Hun Sen, President of the Senate, Kingdom of Cambodia**

*ASEAN Headquarters/ASEAN Secretariat, 5 May 2025*

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***Respected Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, President of the Senate, Kingdom of Cambodia***

***Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,***

Good Afternoon.

1. It is both a great honour and a profound privilege for me to welcome all of you to the ASEAN Headquarters/ASEAN Secretariat this afternoon.
2. Today, we are graced by the presence of a leader whose leadership, influence, vision, and dedication have left an indelible mark on Cambodia and beyond. It is with deep respect and admiration that I warmly welcome **Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen**, the former Prime Minister of Cambodia and now the President of the Senate of Cambodia, to the ASEAN Headquarters/ASEAN Secretariat.
3. As many of you know, Samdech Techo Hun Sen's leadership has been indispensable in transforming Cambodia from the ruins and tragedies of its turbulent history into a peaceful, stable, dynamic, growing country, with a bright future. The profound trials and triumphs of his life have been inextricably intertwined with the renewal and resurgence of Cambodia itself. His incredible leadership spanning multiple decades has laid the foundation of peace, stability and security upon which the nation builds its path forward.

***Samdech, Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,***

4. Samdech Techo Hun Sen devoted his youth to the resistance movement, fighting for the country's peace, freedom, and liberation. Later, he became the central figure in rebuilding Cambodia from ground zero the scars of its past, and the ashes of war, conflict and genocide. On January 14, 1985, at the age of 32, he made history by becoming the world's youngest Prime Minister at the time. After serving for nearly four decades, he stepped down in August 2023, in a peaceful transition, leaving behind an enduring legacy of peace, progress and transformation.

5. Under Samdech Techo Hun Sen's leadership, Cambodia has witnessed extraordinary achievements and advancements across key areas of development, peace, nation-building, and regional integration. His tenure was marked by the country's remarkable rise to middle-income status, and a long-term peace, a testament to the resilience and vision of his leadership.
6. Between 1990 and 2022, Cambodia's Human Development Index (HDI) value increased by 58%, reflecting significant improvements in the quality of life for its people. Life expectancy at birth rose by 14.5 years, expected years of schooling increased by nearly five years, and gross national income per capita soared by an astonishing 323.4%, thanks to decades of sustained socio-economic development.<sup>1</sup> These important milestones have been reinforced by a rapidly expanding infrastructure network, with large-scale projects in transport, irrigation system, energy, and urban development that transform Cambodia's landscape and enhance its long-term prospects.

***Samdech, Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,***

7. Beyond Cambodia's borders, Samdech Techo Hun Sen has been a steadfast champion of regional unity, integration, and cooperation, recognizing that our shared prosperity is rooted in the strength of our collective endeavours. His worldview—shaped by decades of pragmatism, practical experience and deep knowledge in foreign affairs and diplomacy—has formed the cornerstone of Cambodia's foreign policy and strategic approach.
8. Samdech Techo Hun Sen's leadership paved the way for Cambodia's accession to ASEAN in 1999, marking the end of the country's isolation and its full integration into the regional and global community. In 2024, Cambodia celebrated the 25th anniversary of its ASEAN membership – a historic milestone that turned the page for a nation deeply scarred by war, genocide, and destruction. As Samdech Techo Hun Sen remarked in 1999, joining ASEAN was a strategic necessity for Cambodia's geopolitical and economic future. For ASEAN, Cambodia's accession fulfilled its Founding Fathers' vision of an encompassing regional bloc, completing the realization of ASEAN-10.
9. Since joining ASEAN, Cambodia has leveraged its membership for the benefit of its people while making significant contributions to the collective efforts of building a peaceful, prosperous, and resilient ASEAN Community. Cambodia has had the privilege of chairing ASEAN three times—in 2002, 2012, and most recently in 2022—during which Samdech Techo Hun Sen's leadership guided ASEAN towards important achievements amidst various challenges. Through his tireless efforts, Cambodia has not only become a responsible member of the ASEAN Community but has also played a constructive and active role in enhancing regional peace, stability, economic growth, and social cohesion.
10. In 2002, amid escalating developments in the South China Sea, Cambodia played a pivotal role in the adoption of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-08/final\\_2023-2024\\_hdr\\_infographic.pdf](https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2024-08/final_2023-2024_hdr_infographic.pdf)

South China Sea (DOC). This landmark agreement, which was signed in Cambodia in 2002, has been a cornerstone of ASEAN-China cooperation to ensure that the South China Sea remain peaceful and stable. More than two decades later, the DOC continues to serve as a primary framework to manage the South China Sea situation, with ASEAN Member States and China committed to its full and effective implementation, while working on the full negotiation of a Code of Conduct (COC).

11. Cambodia's second term as Chair of ASEAN in 2012 saw the adoption of the Phnom Penh Agenda for ASEAN Community Building and the Phnom Penh Declaration on ASEAN: One Community, One Destiny. These significant contributions to ASEAN community-building were crafted under the leadership of Samdech Techo Hun Sen. It was also during this year that the negotiations for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)—the world's largest Free Trade Area to date with 30% of the world's population and 30% of global GDP—were launched.
12. Most recently, during its third term as Chair in 2022, Cambodia played a pivotal role in shaping the future direction of ASEAN beyond 2025. This included co-chairing, alongside Malaysia, the High-Level Task Force on ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision (HLTF-ACV). The Core Elements of ASEAN's future were finalised in 2022, laying the foundation for the ASEAN Community Vision 2045. Alongside these Core Elements, the Recommendations on Strengthening ASEAN's Capacity and Institutional Effectiveness were also finalised, ensuring that ASEAN's institutional capacity remains strong as it moves into the next phase of its journey.
13. Notably, just as Cambodia's accession to ASEAN in 1999 fulfilled the ASEAN Founding Fathers' vision of a unified Southeast Asia, it was during Cambodia's chairmanship in 2022 that ASEAN agreed, in principle, to admit Timor-Leste as its eleventh member, thereby bringing all the states in the region into the fold of the ASEAN family, as envisioned in the ASEAN Charter.

***Samdech, Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen,***

14. This year 2025 is a significant milestone for ASEAN, as it will see the adoption of the ASEAN Community Vision 2045. The work that Cambodia has contributed in recent years has set a clear course for ASEAN's future, and today's policy speech by Samdech Techo Hun Sen offers us invaluable insights into Cambodia's vision for the future and its continuing contributions to ASEAN's development and transformations.
15. This address also represents a unique and rare opportunity to learn from Samdech Techo Hun Sen's strategic vision for steering ASEAN through an era of great uncertainty, profound turbulence, volatility and transformation. As we are all grappling with profound and dramatic shifts in world politics and economy, Samdech Techo Hun Sen's experience – honed through multiple decades of navigating crises and shaping history – offers invaluable insights into the path ahead for both ASEAN and Cambodia. In times of change and uncertainty, such seasoned leadership and historical depth and insights are more critical than ever.

16. This deep well of experience is inseparable from Cambodia's own history and evolution. During my courtesy call on His Excellency Prak Sokhonn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, in December 2022, before leaving for Jakarta, to take up the new role at the ASEAN Secretariat, His Excellency Prak Sokhonn shared with me his view on Samdech Techo Hun Sen's decision on my nomination as Secretary-General of ASEAN, with the following remarks, "Samdech Techo Prime Minister is the only Cambodian leader, who could see the entire chessboard at least ten moves ahead, and has always been consistently right." As we listen to Samdech Techo Hun Sen's address, let us reflect on the extraordinary journey that Cambodia has undertaken to be the integral part of ASEAN. Let us reaffirm our commitment to building a more prosperous, peaceful, and inclusive ASEAN for the future.

Thank you.

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