

18 December 2020

**HE Ann Linde
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Stockholm, Sweden**

Dear Madame Minister,

Please do not abandon Cambodian democratic and human rights development journey.

Swedish diplomatic ties with Cambodia began in 1961. Since the opening of the embassy in Phnom Penh in 2010, the Swedish government has with their multi-dimensional development approach, contributed significantly to advancing Cambodia's democratic governance and rule of law. This was a necessary pre-condition to assist the Cambodian people to progress to where we are today – we are grateful for your support.

The unfortunate setbacks in Cambodia since 2017 which prompted your review, have undermined the collective progress that we have all worked towards. This is especially true for Cambodian citizens themselves who believe in liberal democracy and have expressed their democratic opinions. Significantly the Cambodian liberal minded population, are those born between the 1980s and 2000s, and who escaped the genocide, they command a majority of public opinion, owing to their access to education and open information, the improved socioeconomic situation, and human security in recent decades. Children's right to public primary education where democracy, human rights and rule-of law are taught, are essential factors to secure sustained advancement of Cambodia's liberal democracy. Climate vulnerable communities' ability to exercise their rights to protect their own ecosystems also is precondition. This not only directly sustains their natural resources dependent livelihoods and way of life, but also contributes to the fight against the effects of global climate change strongly championed by the Swedish government.

We observe that these civil rights improvements have led to a natural and committed response from communities. Therefore, the democratic setback we have been experiencing more recently means we must not be distracted but continue our resolve to carry on working effectively with these communities.

Swedish government's values-driven diplomacy stands out among the few bilateral donors who carry tremendous soft power. This is welcomed by all Cambodian stakeholders making this value-added diplomatic role more important than ever. Past experience taught us that to isolate Cambodia now could mean a repetition of past mistakes.

We urge the Swedish government to stick to their **'commitment to the global fight-against climate change and Covid-19 with human rights and democracy as key to leaving no one behind'**. We sincerely hope that **'Sweden will stand up for democratic principles and support democracy in all contexts'** as presented to the Riksdag Committee on Foreign Affairs in 2019 by you, Madame Minister, together with HE Minister for International Development Cooperation Peter Eriksson, and published in the Nordic Minister Op-ed on 11 September 2020.

We urge you to invest in the present embassy and Swedish Development Cooperation since Cambodia could be at another crossroad. We stress the importance of children's rights to primary education and of vulnerable groups' efforts for sustainable livelihoods that address

climate change outcomes. We believe these are fundamentally in line with Swedish government commitments and thought leadership globally.

We represent the undersigned Cambodian and Swedish civil society groups, trade unions, media, NGOs, research and policy thinktanks listed below. Many have been operating in Cambodia since the 1970s and we need to continue to work alongside local communities and civic movements.

Please don't turn your back on Cambodia's democratic and human rights development journey.

Yours sincerely,

Undersigned civil society groups:

1. ActionAid Cambodia
2. Action for Health Development
3. Advocacy and Policy Institute
4. Alliance for Conflict Transformation
5. Action For Development
6. ADD International Cambodia
7. Affiliated Network for Social Accountability
8. AMARA
9. Akphiwat Strey
10. Association For Development Our Village Right
11. Action for Health Development
12. ARV Users Association
13. Bophana Audiovisual Resource Center
14. Building Community Voices
15. Building and Wood Workers Trade Union Federation of Cambodia
16. Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association
17. CARE
18. Cooperation Committee for Cambodia
19. Cambodian Center for Independent Media
20. Camboja
21. Coalition for Integrity and Social Accountability
22. Committee for Free and Fair Election in Cambodia
23. Coalition for Partnership in Democratic Development
24. Community Development Center
25. Conserve Indigenous Peoples Languages Organization
26. Cambodian Institute for Democracy
27. Cambodia Indigenous Peoples Organization
28. Community Legal Education Center
29. Cambodian Labour Confederation
30. Cambodian Food Service Workers' Federation
31. Cambodian Tourism Service Workers Federation

32. Cambodian Industrial Workers Federation
33. Cambodian Transportation Workers Federation
34. Cambodian Informal Economic Workers Association
35. Cambodian Alliance of Trade Unions
36. Cambodian Tourism Workers Union Federation
37. Cambodia Informal Economy Reinforce Association
38. Cambodian Civil Society Partnership
39. Cambodian Volunteers for Society
40. Cambodian Woman Crisis Center
41. Cambodian Development Mission for Disability
42. Cambodian Organization for Children
43. Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
44. Conserve Indigenous Peoples Language
45. Culture and Environment Preservation Association
46. Coalition of Cambodia Apparel Workers Democratic Unions
47. Coalition of Cambodia Farmers Community
48. Community Training Organization For Development
49. Community Empowerment Development Team
50. Child Fund Cambodia
51. Child Rights Coalition Cambodia
52. DanChurchAid
53. Development and Partnership in Action
54. Development For Cambodia Children
55. Don Bosco School
56. Environment and Society Organization
57. Environment, Health and Education Association
58. Forest and Livelihood Organization
59. Farmer and Nature Net Association
60. Family Health Development
61. Future Forum
62. Fisheries Action Coalition Team
63. Finn Church Aid
64. Health and Development Alliance
65. HEKS Cambodia
66. HelpAge Cambodia
67. Highlander Association
68. Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association
69. Indigenous Community Support Organization
70. Indigenous Rights Active Members
71. Khmer Association For Development of Countryside
72. Khmer Youth Association
73. Kampuchea Women Welfare Action
74. Khmer NGO for Education
75. Khmer Youth and Social Development Organisation

76. Krom Akphiwat Phum
77. Kakrona Battambang Organization
78. Komar Rikreay Organization
79. Khmer New Generation Organization
80. Light For The World
81. My Village International
82. Mlup Promviheathor Centre
83. Mlup Baitong
84. Nak Akphivath Sahakum
85. NGO Forum on Cambodia
86. NGO Education Partnership
87. Northeastern Rural Development
88. OXFAM in Cambodia
89. Operation Enfants du Cambodge
90. Parliamentary Institute of Cambodia
91. Partnerships For Rural Development
92. People Center for Development and Peace
93. People In Need
94. Ponlok Khmer
95. Rachana Satrey
96. Raoul Wallenberg Institute
97. Rural Cambodia Technological Support Organization
98. Rural Development Association
99. 3S Rivers Protection Network
100. Rural Aid Organization
101. Star Kampuchea
102. Srer Khmer
103. Save Vulnerable Cambodians
104. Save Cambodia's Wildlife
105. Transparency International Cambodia
106. Tekdeysovanphum
107. This Life Cambodia
108. Urban Poor Women Development
109. Village Support Group Organization
110. Voluntary Service Overseas
111. WaterAid
112. Women Peace Makers
113. Youth Council of Cambodia
114. Youth for Peace
115. Youth Resource Development Program
116. Young for Social Alliance

CC: HE Peter Eriksson, Minister for International Development Cooperation
Mr Johannes Oljelund, Under Secretary of State
Ms Cecilia Ruthström-Ruin, Head of Department, SIDA
Ms Carin Jämtin, Director General, SIDA
Mr Göran Holmqvist, Head of Department for Asia, ME and HA, SIDA
HE Bjorn Haggmark, Ambassador of Sweden to Cambodia
Mr Samuel Hurtig, Head of Development Cooperation to Cambodia