The 74th session of the World Health Assembly 2021 (WHA74) Committee A on Agenda Item 17.1 – Cambodia's intervention (25 May 2021)

Group 1

- ***Chair of Committee A***
- ***Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,***

First, I would like to express my deep appreciation for the invitation extended by H.E. Dr. Tedros, Director General of the World Health Organization and thanks to the Chair giving me the floor to speak.

COVID-19 pandemic throughout 2020 in Cambodia was less than 500 cases and no deaths. Key factors that contributed to the success were: (1) whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach; (2) solidarity and cooperation between Cambodia and partners; and (3) past investments in health security that ensured effective surveillance and rapid response to COVID-19. Additionally, MOH and senior government officials ensured consistent, effective, and persistent risk communication to the public to guide them in taking precautionary measures against COVID-19.

Past investments in health security based on the Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases (APSED) framework for building core capacities aligned with IHR 2005 have enabled a functional public health response system in Cambodia. These included deploying operational Rapid Response Teams (RRTs) for investigation, specimen collection and contact tracing; effective 24/7 event-based surveillance (115 hotline); and availability of rapid, high quality RT-PCR laboratory testing.

Cambodia developed a National Master Plan for the COVID-19 Response and provincial-level plans in all 25 provinces which are being rolled out with a focus on community engagement in preparation for a potential scenario of largescale, widespread transmission. The aim is to use the opportunity presented by the pandemic to build a responsive, functional health security system down to community and village level that is relevant to the needs and readiness priorities for individual provinces.

Cambodia has used pandemic preparedness to strengthen the health security system during the pandemic to make it fit for the future, including:

- expansion of sample collection and public health laboratories;
- healthcare system surge, including home care, in terms of both personnel as well as equipment and supplies;
- enhancement of systematic surveillance and response functions, especially case investigation and contact tracing;
- better risk communication and greater community engagement for ensuring the “new normal”;
- supporting specific setting such as garment factories, schools, markets and entertainment venues to put in place best practices; and
- ensuring cross-pillar and cross-sectoral coordination.

Finally, I wish Your Excellency, ladies and gentlemen good health and success in your deliberation.

Thank you very much!