

STATEMENT
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EDUCATION, YOUTH, SPORT, RELIGION AFFAIRS, CULTURE AND
TOURISM OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AT THE PARLIAMENTARY
EVENT ON INTERFAITH DIALOG WITH THE THEME “THE
PARLIAMENTARY ROLE IN PROMOTING INTERFAITH AND
CULTURAL COOPERATION”

Sub-theme: “State and Religion-Learning from Best Practices of Each Country in
Building the Trust and Cooperation among Religions”

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Bali, Republic of Indonesia

- His Excellency Dr. Marzuki Alie, Speaker of Indonesian house of representatives
- Distinguished Parliamentarians
- Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great honor and pleasure for the Cambodian parliamentarians to participate in the Parliamentary Event on Interfaith Dialogue with the theme: “The Parliamentary Role in Promoting Interfaith and Cultural Cooperation”.

On behalf of the Cambodian delegation and on my own behalf, I would like to congratulate the Indonesian House of Representatives for the very warm welcome and hospitality extended to us, and for the excellent arrangement put in place for the event.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

We have seen that religious conflict has been spreading in the world and it has also flowed into ASEAN region. Violence and mutually killings among difference religious believers in some countries in recent past are a new event that is attracting interest from international community. It was very important to give attention to religious issues in order to ensure stability, sustainability and harmony on religious beliefs in worldwide.

In this regards, I would like to share a little bit of experiences in promoting the building trust and interfaith cooperation in Cambodia:

I would like to stress all of you that all the religions have been survived upon January 7, 1979, when the nation was liberated from the massacre in Pol Pot’s Democratic Kampuchea Regime. In such a sense, Government of Cambodia always encouraged all the religions to exist in harmony and to cooperate in the worldly issues in order to restore and redevelop Cambodia. The Royal Government of Cambodia has been performing all these tasks, and it shall be continued to the future as well.

Under the “Win-Win” policy of Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Daco Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the kingdom of Cambodia, people has enjoyed peace. The Royal Government of Cambodia through its relevant authorities has been striving to consolidate peace, political stability, security, social order and democracy and respect human rights.

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia clearly states that Khmer citizens of either sex shall have the right to freedom of belief and the Freedom of religious belief and worship shall be guaranteed by the state on the condition that such freedom does not affect other religious beliefs or violate public order and security.

From this standpoint, Royal Government of Cambodia has set high priority to the religious sector by inserting this sector to the national motto that reads “Nation, Religion, King” with a view to simultaneously promoting their advancement, development, and to be complementary to each other. As we have all been aware, the religious sector can be seen as a major contributor to development and maintaining of peace for the whole society. So Cambodia strongly and continuously promoted and supported all religious activities within the Kingdom of Cambodia adhering to the teaching tenet and discipline of each religion that favor mutual understanding and forgiveness.

Actually, 95% of Cambodian people are Buddhists, and even though Buddhism is promoted as the State’s religion, Cambodia never prohibits and controls the practices of the other religious followers. This indicates that all religions in Cambodia are smoothly operating in all parts of the country and so far these operations have not endangered the public security and order. This result is achieved under the utmost attention of the Royal Government of Cambodia paid to the religious development and advancement with the rejection of any forms of persecutions.

In a nutshell, the religious advancement is based on the faith of the followers. So the government of each country has to lead all the religious leaders and followers into unity as to develop the country into prosperity, and harmony, regardless of the different religions and free of violence. From this aspect, Leaders of Royal Government of Cambodia always call upon the leaders and followers to continuously maintain such as tradition of living together as a community with peace and harmony so that it is opportune for our society improvement. Leaders and followers of religions always respect to state laws and relevant rules of Ministry of Cults and Religions and they active enjoyed in social affairs.

Except, Pol Pot Regime, Kings and Leaders of Cambodia always practices the harmonization of people and religion. Currently, Royal Government of Cambodia turned our attention to national harmonization. First of all, let us talk about the factor do not believe in any religion at all; not even Buddhism, Islam, or Christianity. Instead, they have a different belief. However they are one of the races living in this country. So, it is a prerequisite we start racial harmonization to ensure peace and nondiscrimination. Our next problem lies in the harmonization of religion and culture. As you can see this is important; they are interrelated in such manner. What we must not forget is the journey begins with dealing with the minority groups, followed by religion and culture; it’s mainly culture and religion. The reason is we all know that not all Khmer people follow Buddhism. When Khmer people marry Khmer Islamic people, their relation is Islam because Islam requires that you follow Islam if you marry an Islamic woman. Others have faith in Christianity while still, others believe in this and that. So, after the race, we proceed to deal with culture and religion. It is therefore very important that the public administration solves this problem neutrally. This covers all those in charge of this duty; it may be the village chief, commune chief, or district chief. It does not necessarily mean it is the sole responsibility of the

premier or government officer. It should involve the leaders of Cambodia's villages and communities that are made up of Buddhist followers, Islam devotees and supporters of other religions.

If the village chief is not neutral-as he is a Buddhist follower, he is biased toward Buddhism by neglecting or even banning other religions there that would be a danger. In other villages or communes, commune leadership is religiously biased; for example, he is Muslim. If he thinks of only Islam by failing to heed Buddhism and Christianity, this is also a problem. This has something to do with the neutrality of government leadership and institutions for all religions-such neutrality is crucial. For example, if top Cambodian leaders-the King is Buddhist and the senate president, the national Assembly president, the Prime Minister, and most parliamentarians, senators and government members are Buddhist-are a bit religiously biased, it will be dangerous. In Buddhism alone, there are two sects-Mahanikaya and Dhammayuttanikaya. The main point is that the leaders of state should be neutral. In this connection, Leaders of state from top to bottom, writers, newspapers, broadcasters, authors, actors, actress and all media system in Cambodia should pay attention to use the words in speaking, writing and other activities that affect to religions and absolutely taking far away.

In additionally, in promoting the mutual trust and understanding among the religions, Royal Government of Cambodia strongly supported the establishment of the Cambodian Inter-Religious Council in promoting understand interfaith and co-existence peacefully. We encouraged holding the regional and local seminars on interfaith dialogue that participated from target persons of all religious groups and relevant organization.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

As parliamentarians of Cambodia, we congratulate the draft Bali Declaration of the Parliamentary Event on interfaith Dialogue. This type of instrument will call upon countries in the world to make concerted efforts to promote culture of peace and interfaith dialogue and greater interaction among various religious groups for harmonizing the intercultural and inter-religions.

We recommend to mostly continuing the interfaith dialogue at global, regional and local level and tie the parliamentary network to share and exchange the experiences of religious tasks to build the confidence.

Before ending of my statement, I would like to share with all of you that "Win-Win policy is key of the culture of peace" because everyone win, none loss that is an important way to build that trust among religions towards a peaceful and stable world.

Best wishes to all of you and great success to our meeting.

Thank you for your kind attention!