

**UNRC speech , Letter LoI signing Ceremony  
Phnom Penh (Kingdom of Cambodia), 29 October 2010**

Your Excellency, Ke Kim Yan, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the National Authority for Combating Drugs;  
Your Excellencies, Ministers of the Royal Government;  
Your Excellencies from the Diplomatic Corps and from Development Partners;  
Partners from the UN family;  
Your Excellencies;  
Honoured Guests;  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

On behalf of the United Nations family in Cambodia, it is my honour to be here today to sign the Letter of Intent to implement the national programme for drug treatment and care together with His Excellency, Ke Kim Yan, Deputy Prime Minister and Chairman of the National Authority for Combating Drugs.

I am sure that many of you are already aware of the remarks made this morning by the UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, during his visit to the methadone maintenance therapy clinic here in Phnom Penh. The UN Secretary General made special mention of the Community-Based Drug Treatment Programme and the support given to it by the entire UN Country Team in Cambodia. With regards to community-based drug treatment, His Excellency, Ban Ki-moon, also noted

"Evidence shows that such initiatives are more effective than incarceration in addressing the social problems caused by addiction."

The need to develop evidence-informed approaches led by the health sector is a guiding principle of the programme that the Royal Government and the UN in Cambodia are agreeing to implement together through today's signing. The UN Secretary-General expressed the very same point of view this morning and I am very pleased that this signing is taking place immediately following such a high level visit by the UN Secretary-General to the methadone clinic which is one of several components included in the drug treatment and care programme we are dedicating ourselves to here today.

It is clear that we are now at the watershed in the process of learning how to approach drug dependence treatment and care. The evidence shows us that detaining people does not produce the desired result as relapse back to drug use is very high following release from such centres. This is why the UN does not support the use of centres to treat drug dependence.

As with all other aspects of the health sector, the UN promotes the use of evidence-based interventions and, consequently, this is why the new programme presented here today promotes the development of human resource capacity at the community level to deliver drug treatment services at low cost and, through a system of referral, to provide those in need of acute care with the services they need at provincial referral hospitals. The integration of HIV/AIDS, TB, mental health and other services into the drug treatment programme is crucial so that the programme contributes to the achievement of various Millennium Development Goals in Cambodia.

The UN recognizes the pressures under which the Royal Government is placed by communities who complain about the insecurity as a result of crime that is perceived as being undertaken by people who use drugs. It is clear that action is needed to begin implementation of this drug treatment and care programme very quickly. UNODC, with the support of WHO and UNAIDS, has already begun to assist

the Royal Government in a demonstration of evidence-informed approaches to this problem in Banteay Meanchey Province, with the belief that the lessons learned can be used for the scale-up of such interventions to other provinces with known high prevalence of drug dependent use.

Considering the size of the challenge facing us all, it is only if the Royal Government, the UN system, and development partners prioritise this issue that we will jointly be capable of containing the harmful consequences of drug use. Such support from development partners will form part of your efforts to address issues such as the right to health for all, gender equity, decentralization and deconcentration of services, and – very importantly also - to the socio-economic development of young people in Cambodia, the dynamism for the future of this great country.

Once again, on behalf of the entire UN family in Cambodia, I reiterate the UN's commitment to working with the Royal Government in the comprehensive implementation of this drug treatment programme in communities as a matter of urgency.

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