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KHMER NATION PARTY  
PARTI DE LA NATION KHMÈRE

March 16, 1996

## FIRST PLENARY MEETING OF THE KNP NATIONAL COUNCIL

On March 15, 1996 the KNP National Council held its first plenary meeting in Phnom Penh under the chairmanship of President Sam Rainsy. More than 700 people attended the meeting, including 415 fully-fledged members of the National Council who came from all provinces of Cambodia, about 300 other Party's members who attended as observers, foreign and Khmer journalists and other guests. The 600 chairs placed under the shed being all occupied, more than one hundred people had to stand in the shade of surrounding trees.

The National Council is the body that represents the Party Congress which assembles the grass-roots members of the Party. It elects the Steering Committee which is the executive organ of the Party. It supervises the implementation by the Steering Committee of the aims and policies of the Party as determined by the Congress.

As of today, the National Council comprises 800 members. Nearly all the members not present at the meeting (those living in remote provinces and overseas) were duly represented (power of attorney given to their peers who could come).

The meeting began with an exposé by Sam Rainsy on the current political situation in Cambodia and the implications of the international community's commitment to ensure the respect for human rights and democratic principles in this country, in conformity with the 1991 Paris Agreements. Sam Rainsy stressed the point that presently democracy existed only in appearance but had no substance. Democracy implies a system of checks and balances which does not exist here since the National Assembly is only a rubber stamp-parliament and the Judiciary is under the control of the Government. Furthermore the Government uses every trick to delay the formation of the Constitutional Council whose role is to ensure that Government-sponsored laws and governmental decisions do not violate the Constitution. Because this supreme body is not formed yet nearly three years after the promulgation of the Constitution (!), the Government can continuously violate the Constitution and other laws of the country, especially regarding the respect for human rights and democratic principles.

Sam Rainsy emphasized the role of the international community (United Nations, donor countries,...) in pushing for free and fair elections in 1998 because it is its legal and moral obligation to ensure the continuation of the democratization process in Cambodia following the UNTAC elections held in 1993. Concerning the legal status of KNP, Sam Rainsy pointed to the fact that KNP is absolutely lawful according to the Constitution and the Paris Agreements and that, on the contrary, the Government's decision not to recognize it has no legal basis whatsoever. He agreed with the King that FUNCINPEC would disappear as a real political force in the near future and he concluded that there would be only two determining political parties in the final battle in 1998: CPP which rests on intimidation, and KNP which rests on the will of the people.

Vice-President Kong Korm made the following speech which elaborated on the 10 point-platform and the strategy of the Party which will use only legal and peaceful means in order to come to power through democratic process, i. e. elections. KNP needs to improve and to strengthen its organization and to make every effort to ensure that the next elections be free and fair (relationship with human rights groups, training of observers, appeal to all Cambodia's friends,...).

Then Secretary-General Khieu Rada presented a report on the growth of the Party since its founding. As of March 14, 1996, KNP had 84,340 members compared to 35,750 in November 1995. The Party has conducted various political and social activities in Cambodia and has set up branches in countries where there are large Cambodian communities: the USA, France, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Belgium, the United Kingdom and Switzerland. Khieu Rada also confirmed and explained the Party's decision to change its founding date from November 9 to November 2, 1995 and its logo from "Preah Bat (King) Jayavarman the Seventh" to "Angkorian Khmer", in compliance with the King's very high and very insightful suggestions.

The following speech was made by Sam Soun Doeun, member of the Steering Committee who elaborated on the role and the tasks of the National Council. Various Commissions have been created within the National Council: Education, Public Health, Women's Affairs, Human Rights, Forest and Environment, Administrative Reforms, Social Work, Economics and Finance, Public Works, Agriculture, Industry, External Trade and Tourism, Foreign Affairs, Culture and Minorities, Defence, Interior.

To conclude the first part of the session, Sam Rainsy made a presentation of the leadership of the Party. Including the President, Vice-President and Secretary-General, the Steering Committee counts 32 members whose names were read.

In the second part of the session, the following members of the National Council took the floor:

- 1- a representative of the civil servants
- 2- a representative of the army
- 3- a representative of the students
- 4- a representative of the Khmer women
- 5- a representative of the Khmers Krom ( Khmers born in South Vietnam)
- 6- a representative of the Khmers-Islam (Muslim Khmers)
- 7- a representative of the Khmers Loeu (Khmers from the North-East of Cambodia)
- 8- a representative of the traders
- 9- a representative of the factory workers and cyclo-drivers
- 10- a representative of the war handicapped
- 11- a representative of Siemreap province
- 12- a representative of Kompong Cham province
- 13- a representative of Prey Veng province
- 14- a representative of Kratie province
- 15- a representative of the overseas Khmers.

All the representatives expressed their specific frustrations, concerns and hopes and vowed support for KNP and President Sam Rainsy. Peace and social justice were the hopes they all have in common.

Finally the participants adopted the following resolution whereby all the members of the National Council agreed to:

- 1- fully support the Steering Committee led by President Sam Rainsy
- 2- fully support the Party's policy implemented by the Steering Committee
- 3- fully support all the decisions made by the Steering Committee
- 4- deny any legitimacy to renegades who violate the Party's Statutes and Internal Regulations
- 5- firmly resolve to take part in the coming elections due in 1998 so as to ensure victory for the Party and the whole Khmer Nation.

The meeting which started at 9.00 a.m., ended at nearly 1.00 p.m., in a cheerful ambiance with all the participants remaining until the very end.