

Forward by the Minister of Tourism

In just over two years since the formation of the new Royal Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia, significant strides have been made in the development of a comprehensive plan of action for the Kingdom's tourism industry — ones which, we believe, lay a solid foundation for the long-term preservation of Cambodia's cultural and environmental assets while at the same time encouraging the sustainable growth of the tourism industry that will benefit the entire Khmer nation and its people.

Of greatest importance is the completion of a master development plan for the Phnom Penh-Siem Reap/Angkor-Kompong Som growth triangle. Designed to facilitate the in-flow of foreign investment, the blueprint will both enable the development of much-needed infrastructure while placing special emphasis on the need to maintain and preserve our cultural heritage. The Ministry recognizes fully that if the Kingdom's unique architectural and archeological wonders are damaged in the development process, not only will tourism suffer but the Khmer people will lose what are their most precious assets.

In Siem Reap, the home of the world-famous Angkor monuments and Cambodia's pre-eminent cultural symbols, the Royal Government is determined to encourage growth in a manner sensitive to the rich cultural and religious heritage in the area. A recently-innaugurated development plan will impose strict zoning laws, which mandate that no structure over 12 meters in height will be allowed. A new development zone encompassing 1,000 hectares will ensure that hotel construction is managed in a systematic, sensitive and environmentally-friendly way. Special attention will be given to the establishment of lush gardens and expansive parks so that Siem Reap retains its pastoral character. A contract has also been signed to develop a Sound and Light Show for the historic Angkor Wat temple so that tourists will experience the rich, historic significance of the Kingdom's precious and ancient traditions.

In Kompong Som, development will focus on the unique nature of Cambodia's beach resorts with particular attention on the retention of traditional Khmer architecture, environmental safeguards and the overall beauty of the region. The government is committed to preserving the region's luxurious landscape, its pristine beaches, and its sparkling, azure waters for the benefit of one and all.

More broadly, the Royal Government has taken steps to expand the tourism potential in other parts of the country. Planning is underway for the growth of ecotourism in some of Cambodia's more remote provinces, especially Rattanakiri. With majestic waterfalls and some of Southeast Asia's last remaining virgin tropical forests, the region has the potential for substantial tourism growth. Once infrastructure is in place, Cambodia's northeast will serve as an environmental wonderland for nature lovers.

As well, Cambodia's Tonle Sap (or Great Lake) is and will remain "the Heart of the Kingdom". With dozens of rare bird species unique to the area, the government is determined to see one of the world's unparalleled natural wonders stand the test of time.

Overall, we can say that the Kingdom of Cambodia has witnessed substantial positive steps forward in the development of its tourism industry. The support to date from international investors has been both favorable and sustained. With numerous contracts signed, with hotel and related infrastructure construction underway, with environmentally sustainable plans in place, the Kingdom is well-placed to move ahead in a manner that will benefit our people, our heritage and our civilization well into the 21st century and beyond.

— Veng Sereyvuth, Minister

draft by M. Hayes, 11/26/95