

Speech

H.E. Mr. HUN Many

President of the Asian Youth Council

Asian Youth Forum 2016

“Peace, Democracy and Regional Partnership towards SDGs”

February 26th, 2016, Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia

- *My highest respect to Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo **HUN SEN**, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia*
- *All distinguished national and international guests, delegates of youth participants to Asian Youth Forum (AYF)*
- *Excellencies, Ladies, and Gentlemen!*

On behalf of Asian Youth Council and myself, I would like to express our warmest welcome and sincere appreciation to Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo **HUN SEN**, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Excellencies distinguished members of the Royal Government of Cambodia, Ambassadors and representatives of Embassies and Foreign missions in Cambodia; Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for making time in your busy schedule to be part of Asian Youth Forum today in Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia. Your presence demonstrates the great importance and support accorded to this youth forum as well as endeavor to contribute to youth development.

My appreciation is also extended to the Union of Youth Federations of Cambodia, the co-organizer of the Asian Youth Forum 2016. Thank you for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to the participating youth delegates.

The Asian Youth Council is a non-governmental regional youth organization, formed on the 14th of August 1972, to provide a common platform for Asian Youth and Youth Leaders pursuing similar objectives for economic

and social development. As an NGO in consultative status with the United Nations' Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), we, as “One Asia” voice, are committed to joining hands, both at intra-regional and cross regional level, and the world at large, in taking action to address issues pertaining to youth development in all respects in Asia as well as having the Asian Youth’s voices heard at international forums especially at the United Nations.

Asian Youth Forum (AYF) is a platform for information, knowledge sharing and networking among member countries regarding most challenging issues.

- In 2006, AYC successfully organized the Asian Youth Forum in Batam, Indonesia under the theme “*Millennium Development Goals: Is the Future within Reach?*” to mobilize all national youth councils to work towards achievement of MDGs.
- Building on this success, AYC continues to promote knowledge sharing by organizing Asian Youth Forum 2007 in China to encourage youths to venture into entrepreneurship with theme “*Dynamic Asia: Entrepreneurial Youth*”.
- In 2013, the Asian Youth Forum was held here in Phnom Penh Cambodia under the theme “*YOUTH AND PEACE: Strengthening Peace, Stability and Development through Education*” back-to-back with AYC’s Annual General Meeting (AGM).

The theme chosen for this year forum “***Peace, Democracy and Regional Partnership toward Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)***” is very important and shows our contribution in implementing the 2030 Agenda which was adopted on the 25th of September 2015 by 193 countries of the United Nations.

To realize the 17 SDGs, we believe that Peace, Democracy and Regional Partnership are means and multiplying factor to contribute to its achievement. We believe that youths including our Asian youths who are leaders of tomorrow play a very crucial and determinant role in contributing to the success toward not only achieving the above mentioned 2030 Agenda, contributing to the Asian Century, but more importantly to an even better tomorrow for all.

Given the large number of youth population in our region, platforms at local, national and supra-national are important for them to raise their voice and concern, and would allow them to positively participate and contribute national as well as regional development. In this regard Asian Youth Council will continue to provide such platform.

- Samdech Techo Prime Minister!

- Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!

The theme of the Forum this year in Phnom Penh is very crucial and timely. Peace and Democracy have long been discussed separately at various levels, and most of the times, it is slipping to the circumstance of argument whether it is peace or democracy that is more important for the people, or even which one shall come first. All these debates are important, however, we tend to forget what is really fundamental to the people themselves. It is not which one is more important for the people but what is vital, is the ability to address and deliver the necessity of our people's daily life. So the question here is not about "either or", or the debate itself but what matters is producing result for the people.

Conflict means the absence of peace and stability. In many parts of the world we have seen conflicts turning livable cities into unstable environment for livelihood. We have seen violence, chaos, loss of lives and loved ones, destruction of nations and mass migration in which people are forced to leave

their home behind in seeking safety and security for their family sake. (I believe, we all still remember the shocking picture of the young boy's body floating onshore).

People-centered state of mind is what constitutes democracy. From this standpoint, democratization process, its objective and principles need to base on the inclusiveness that takes into account the different voices of stakeholders, so to allow people to participate and contribute positively to the development of a country. However, the process should also consider the domestic and regional environment and should be allowed to develop at its own pace; especially while advancement of democracy is important, it should not be at all cost, even at the expense of peace and stability.

Both peace and democracy are vital foundation for addressing and realizing young people's concerns and aspirations, as well as achieving SDGs. Regional partnership is about mean of improving mutual understanding so to combine our efforts and also multiplier factors to realize our common goals.

With this firm belief, we are committed to significant and pro-active role in contributing to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and development throughout the world. So today, we, youths from around Asia, gather to discuss and take ***“Peace, Democracy and Regional Partnership toward SDGs”*** as the theme for Asian Youth Forum for this year 2016 with the goal to foster the relationship of the youth participants from different backgrounds and countries so to get inputs and ideas from the youths through discussions on three interconnected topics:

- (1) Why are Peace, Democracy and Development important to be discussed altogether?
- (2) Regional Partnership as vehicle to enhance Peace, Democracy and Development and

(3) How do Peace, Democracy and Regional Partnership contribute to the SDGs?

Before ending, I would like to profoundly thank Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo **HUN SEN**, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, all youth delegates for attending Asian Youth Forum 2016 and sharing knowledge and views on the importance of Peace, Democracy and Regional Partnership and their contribution to the success of SDGs. From the bottom of my heart, I wish you good health, happiness and success with your noble commitment and mission towards peace and democracy and regional partnership building and development. I wish youth delegates a pleasant stay in this beautiful and fast-growing city, Phnom Penh.

Last but not least, I would like to commend all members of the organizing committee of AYF 2016 both from UYFC and AYC for their efforts in organizing the Forum and making it successful again this year. May I wish them all the best and success in their future endeavor.

I now have the great honor to invite Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo **HUN SEN**, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia to deliver Opening Remarks and Keynote Address to the Forum.

Thank you!