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Draft Statement

I. Overview

In 1969 forest had covered 13.2 million hectares or 73 % of the country's total land areas. The result from the Forest Cover Assessment and Monitoring Project in 1997 showed that forest cover in Cambodia remains 60.16 % of the total country areas. This shows the forest cover declines about 13% in comparison with the 1969.

An overall land-use plan is important to ensure sustainable forest management, especially of the permanent forest estate, in relation to the other sectors of the economy. The following information (DFW, 2003) shows the extent of:

- a) Natural forest: 10,555,783 ha. (59.69% of total land area)
- b) Plantation forest: 82,425 ha. (0.47% of total land area)
- c) Permanent forest estate: 10,638,208 ha. (60.16% of total land area)
- d) Agriculture land concession: 679,318 ha. (3.84% of total land area)
- e) Total land area of the country, excluding inland water bodies: 17,683,847 ha.

II. Government Efforts

The RGC commits itself to the conservation and management of the country's unique forest resources in a sustainable manner now and for future generations. The results and the follow up processes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 were taken into account to consider the concept of sustainable development of Cambodia. The Royal Government of Cambodia acknowledges the multiple perceptions, interests and objectives of the numerous forest interest groups of the country's society, in the region of the Mekong Basin and at the global level regarding the conservation and sustainable management of forest resources.

The RGC has promulgated policies, laws and regulations to manage permanent forest estate, protected forests and protected areas. In July 2002 the RGC issued the statement on national forest sector policy committed for the conservation, good governance, socio-economic development, poverty reduction and management of the country's unique forest resources in a sustainable manner.

In 2002, technical regulations and guidelines have been implemented by concessionaires in their concession management plan preparation processes. During preparation, concessionaires are advised to follow the manual for forest planning including inventory process and ESIA guidelines. However, this is just applicable for the existing valid forest concessions.

In November 2003, the RGC signed the sub-decree on Community Forestry which had been developed through a nationwide participatory process to enhance local community participation

in forest management decision making processes under the supervision of the community forestry Task Force.

Two separate FCMR units have been established within MoE and FA/MAFF to increase transparency and improve public credibility and implement the project. The project has been managed or executed by the FAO and finance was supported by UNDP. The government established focal point at the Cabinet of the CoM in order to facilitate mechanisms for the project. In October 2002 FAO/UNDP stop their supports in terms of technical and financial. However, FA continued the project activities which include monitoring and reporting of the forest crimes (FA, 2003).

Deforestation and forest degradation are the main issues in Cambodia as well as global concerned. From 1999 to 2003 FA try its best with national and international supports to raise awareness through Arbour-day (Tree planting day), community forest management, extension activities such as producing video film, magazine, media through national TV and cooperation with NGO to reach the local people.

Apart from above activities FA has establish forest plantation on the unfertile soil or bare land through its reforestation program. The tree seedling dissemination program takes place every year to provide seedling (free of charge or very little cost) to the local people who are interested in planting tree around their home garden, in the village, along the road and in the temple. Reforestation program is also partly carried out by the Royal Cambodian Armed Force with technical support from FA.

III. International Integration

The Royal Government of Cambodia has accomplished most of the IPF/IFF proposal for actions and the national forest program process management in Cambodia. During period of the last decade, Cambodia has successfully changed its forest policy and forest management strategy in accordance with the International Forest Policy for sustainable forest management.

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) is a signatory to a number of international laws, treaties and conventions. Those that relate to natural resources management and environmental protection include:

1. Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin (MRC) (1995)
2. Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)(1995)
3. International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA) (1995)
4. Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) (1997)
5. Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC) (1996)
6. The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention) (1999)
7. International Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) (1994)
8. Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1992)
9. International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and other Matter (MARPOL) (1994 and later additions)

In 1994 the RGC has joint the Mekong River Commission (MRC) to cooperate in the management of natural resources in the region. Forestry is amongst those resources. A number of projects were implemented in Cambodia with the support from the RGC and the MRC for the purpose of sustainability of the resource in the Mekong Basin.

The RGC has admitted to the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) as a member of producer country since 1997. This admission is to cope with the international organizations as well as producer and consumer countries on policies, guidelines, which can be recognized and applied to the member countries to reach the ITTO objective 2000.

In addition the Forestry Administration has cooperated with quite a number of the UN Organizations and NGOs who have the mandates in the management of natural resources. These organizations include UNDP, FAO, World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Wild Aid, CI, FFI, WCS, etc.

IV. Regional Integration

Though Cambodia has integrated its forest policy and implementation strategy into the international forest regimes, the country is maintaining and binding tightly with all the ASEAN member countries for the implementation of ASEAN Forest Policy. Just like at the global level regarding the conservation and sustainable management of forest resources, the Royal Government of Cambodia acknowledges the multiple perceptions, interests and objectives of the numerous forest interest groups of the country's society and in the ASEAN-Countries region.

Within the ASEAN framework, Cambodia has been actively participating in all regional forestry dialogues and policy processes. Cambodia has membership or representatives in almost all ASEAN specific Working Group on forests. In late 2003 Cambodia was selected as Lead Country in the establishment of the ASEAN Export Working Group on International Forest Policy Processes and has recently successfully hosted the first meeting of the Group in Phnom Penh. In August 2005, Cambodia will also host the 8th Meeting of the ASEAN Senior Official on Forests back-to-back with a number of meetings of specific ASEAN working groups on forests.

V. Cambodia Position on the future International Arrangement on Forests

The RGC recognizes the key role of the future International Arrangement on Forests (IAF) in supporting a more comprehensive and integrated approaches to promote forest management and conservation in all countries. Cambodia firmly supports the future IAF and its roles to enhance the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action which are core parts of forest sector in each member countries. Among the options for the future IAF which were proposed at the meeting on Future on the IAF in Mexico on 25-28 January 2005, Cambodia prefers to see the future IAF in the form of a Legally-binding Instrument.

Cambodia is keen to have a closer cooperation with countries, regional and international bodies to support our efforts in pursuing successfully implementing the country's national forest programs, the IFF/IPF Proposals for Action and other internationally agreed forest regimes.

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