

**Closing Remarks at the National Workshop on the Formulation of the 2020 Annual Work-plan and Budget of the National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development (NCDD)**

**5 December 2020**

**Opening Remarks by Franck VIAULT, Minister Counsellor, Head of Cooperation of the EU Delegation to Cambodia**

**Co-chair of Technical Working Group on Sub-National Democratic Development**

*Samdech Kralahom Sar Kheng, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, and NCDD Chairman*

*H.E. Ngan Chamroeun, MoI State Secretary and Head of NCDD-S*

*Representatives of the Royal Government,*

*Development Partners and CSO*

*Ladies and Gentlemen, Colleagues,*

**Introduction**

On behalf of the Development Partner members of the Technical Working Group on Sub-National Democratic Development, let me first thank the NCDD-S for inviting the DPs to share remarks today.

We are very pleased to be part of this consultation and commend the government for coming together to discuss the way forward in the implementation of SNDD reforms. SNDD reforms are of a cross-cutting nature and cannot be delivered effectively without the commitment and collaboration of the relevant institutions at both the national and sub national level.

We are pleased to see that several Ministries and other actors will be involved in the implementation of the 2020 AWPB. If delivered in a spirit of partnership, with other Ministries and core governance reforms, the 2020 AWPB will be a good step towards the realisation of the "**Rectangular Strategy IV**", particularly its

important objective of strengthening governance institutions. It will also provide strong basis for the development of the next stage of the SNDD reform.

In this light, we commend the RGC for the decision to increase the C/S fund allocation for development expenditures and we advocate that resources be increasingly allocated to **social service provision at both DMK and C/S level**.

The 2020 AWPB makes a significant investment in pushing forward the **transfer of functions** to SNAs, though the focus remains primarily on the development of legal and institutional frameworks. As we have had occasion to emphasise, the Development Partners support the process of empowerment of sub national authorities, which is part of the reform, and we continue to advise a **phased approach to functional transfers**, supported by technical assistance and capacity building.

Understanding what functions the SNA will be able to perform, particularly in the context of the **unified administration**, and how reporting and accountability lines will work, will be essential for an effective, transparent and accountable service delivery. We have heard that the implementation of the unified administration **will start in Battambang involving the education** sector: as many DPs and CSOs very actively support Education reforms, we would appreciate being kept involved in the process of implementation, monitoring and evaluation, prior to possible replication.

We commend MoI and NCDD-S, as well as participating ministries, for the successful implementation of **ISAF** which we consider a **very good practice of a phased approach to reforms**. As ISAF enters its second phase, we encourage the inclusion of policy and instructions regarding the new systems developed for D/M/Ks, to ensure that they are integrated into D/M/K operations. We would encourage the same for C/S where all the instructions provided so far need to be consolidated into policy/regulation. We trust this would provide an easier reference for NCDDS and D/M/Ks to monitor and support them. **Budget-wise**, we still encourage the RGC to allocate state budget to ISAF supply side implementation so that institutional sustainability can be consolidated before donor support phases out.

At this stage of decentralization and de-concentration reform, a more prominent role of SNAs in policy implementation across Cambodia would be welcome. Many SNAs are confident they can deliver if their **capacity** is enhanced. We are well aware of the efforts made by NCDD-S, the MoI and national authorities to hold regular trainings for SNAs. We believe that **on-demand, needs-tailored, capacity development support**, combined with **on the job coaching**, and **tolerance for error**, may concur in that capacity strengthening that many government institutions want to see in place prior to transferring responsibilities. Simplification of rules and procedures will also ensure efficiency, transparency and accountability of **financial management** of D/M/K and C/S.

Linked to this: we note and encourage the strong focus on performance of D/M/Ks in particular, but would also emphasise the need to focus also on C/S as there are a range of performance issues which could be addressed with improved monitoring systems, linked to incentives and capacity building at their level.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

When we speak of *governance*, we speak of processes of decision making that rely on the engagement and contribution of a plurality of stakeholders, including government authorities, civil society organizations and the private sector.

An enabling environment for multi-stakeholders' participation is therefore critical to good governance and decentralization reforms:

**Constructive and solution-oriented engagement** of government, civil society and private sector provides government with the information required to respond to citizens needs with relevant and appropriate actions. Engagement can take many forms, as long as it is intentionally **designed to be inclusive, open to and accessible** by all citizens, including youth, women, disabled people, and ethnic minorities and all the people who are often excluded from decision-making processes. We also encourage the government to proactively **reach out** to citizens where they are most comfortable and confident to speak out.

In the same spirit, we appreciate MoI's continuous efforts to clarify rules and regulations related to the implementation of CSOs' initiatives at the sub national level, notably under the **LANGO**.

**Secondly, we believe that investments on local development through contracting or partnership with CSOs and private sector** could be given more emphasis in the 2020 AWPB. There are a lot of stand-alone projects which offer a **range of options for SNAs to diversify their service delivery**, beyond infrastructure projects. These could be piloted through the SNA financing system, through service contracts or partnerships, and scaled up once the contracting/partnership arrangements are ready.

Thirdly, as the responsibility of SNA grows, transparency and accountability of local decision making will be of the essence.

Significant progress has been made around **data and information access** in Cambodia but there is still work to do to ensure that diverse groups of citizens are able to access **data and information on a wide variety of services**, in a format that is clear and easy to understand. DPs also believe that sectoral data made available by **ISAF**, on citizens' perception of local public services can be a useful source of information for line Ministries.

Accessibility and quality of data and information is at the core of **OWSO** as well. In light of the important services OWSOs provide to the people, we support their expansion nationwide. We however strongly recommend placing more emphasis on expanding the **Ombudsmen** institution in the 2020 AWPB. An assessment of the options for using this office for broader service delivery feedback at the district level would be useful, including using it as an important part of the **Grievance Redress Systems (another priority of the 2020 AWPB)**. We are eager to see strong and accountable Ombudsmen and Grievance Redress Systems which engage all ministries and authorities concerned.

We would also recommend joining hands locally to **ensure that citizens are more aware of these institutions** and that access **is possible for citizens from remote communes**.

**To conclude:**

We would like to express a wish for an **enhance policy dialogue** mechanisms on SNDD reform within the SNDD TWG and other relevant sectoral TWGs, including at the provincial level. Given the complexities of the issues at stake, we would welcome more meetings of the SNDD TWG in its expanded format during 2020 as this would place us in a better position to support you in the reform.

Thank you

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