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**OPINION: After a Long Political Stalemate, a Political Character Was Revealed**

A new chapter in Cambodian politics has been written for posterity. After almost one year of political stalemate since the July 28, 2013 parliamentary election, the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) and the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP) had struck an agreement to end the political crisis. “The 22 July 2014 Agreement between the CPP and CNRP” is a history in itself for a number of reasons.

First and foremost the “Agreement” lays out the foundation for fostering democracy in Cambodia through institutional and legal reforms of the legislative power in response to the need of a vibrant electorate that is growing discontent with the “old ways of doing business” by the established authorities entirely controlled by the CPP. Voters gave 68 seats to the CPP and 55 seats to the CNRP at the July 2013 national election, a result that strengthened the bargaining power of the CNRP and denied the CPP of the usual domination. The boycott of the National Assembly by the CNRP elected MPs since its inaugural opening session under various allegations and accusations will end under this “Agreement”.

Second and it is as important as the first reason is the political will of Samdech Hun Sen, Vice President of the CPP and Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), to finally hand down democracy to the parliament and through the parliament to the people of Cambodia at an opportune time when he sees fit, being that he is the guardian of the security, the unity and the well-

being of the Cambodian people. Undoubtedly, “it takes two to tango,” meaning that it takes Samdech Techo Hun Sen and His Excellency Sam Rainsy or more extensively the CPP and the CNRP to strike a deal or to produce the “Agreement”, but the fact remains that without the wisdom and the political will of Samdech Techo Hun Sen, a true democracy will go through periods of ups and downs, navigate between hopes and despairs, breathe through confrontations and tranquility without certainties and assurance of success for lag of leadership and insight. On the other hand, a destructive and populist democracy can be easily given to the crowd in the street by irresponsible people.

Third is the unannounced fundamental reform of the legislative power born out of the political “Agreement”. This is totally different from a large basket of in-depth reforms announced by the RGC in September 2013. Here, credits must go to the Cambodian politicians, CPP and CNRP alike. They “grasp the bull by the horns”. They will work together in the Parliament to solve national issues under the principles of democracy and rule of law. Together they will reform the National Election Committee (NEC) and the election procedures. Together they will reform the National Assembly so that this important national institution becomes independent and separate from the executive power. Voters will have the opportunity to watch the legislative power at work. They will demand transparency and openness of debates. They will see how the elected officials of their party conduct themselves at work through live TV or radio.

July 22 is a day to remember. Will the stewardship of Samdech Hun Sen Vice President of CPP leaves a legacy to the posterity that he has played an important role in fostering democracy in Cambodia, contrary to the vicious stigma of an authoritarian? The answer is YES, it will. Moreover CPP and CNRP leaders deserve our full admiration and deep respect, because they promised to dedicate their works for the strengthening of democracy at the National Assembly under the articles of this “Agreement” and then they will pass it through to the Cambodian people under the process of structural and institutional democratization. Finally a political character based on discussion, debate and compromise begins to take shape between the holders of the legislative power from opposing political parties who should have enjoyed the same equal rights, same stature of being lawmakers, same exposure to the public eyes.

**NA Announces Validity of Opposition Leader’s Mandate As Lawmaker of the 5th Legislature**

The mandate of President of the main opposition Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) H.E. Sam Rainsy as a lawmaker of the 5th legislature was validated in a session of the National Assembly (NA) held here this morning.

The NA session was chaired by Samdech Akka Moha Ponhea Chakrei Heng Samrin, President of NA, and attended by Prime Minister Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, and H.E. Sam Rainsy himself. Speaking to reporters after the NA session, Samdech Techo Hun Sen laid stress on the current good political situation in Cambodia, adding that the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) and CNRP are preparing the candidacy for the 9 members of the National Election Committee (NEC). For his part, H.E. Sam Rainsy said the political conflict in Cambodia ended. This is a new stage for the national unity, and the protection of the nation’s and people’s interests, he underlined.

On July 22, CPP and CNRP reached a political agreement to end the year-long political crisis following the national election in July 2013.

Under the agreement, CPP and CNRP agreed to re-organize the NA’s leadership by dividing the leadership role in the Standing Committee by the 7 to 6 formula, and by establishing another NA’s commission – the Commission on Investigation, Clearance, and Anti-corruption. This new commission will be chaired by a CNRP lawmaker.

In addition, CPP and CNRP agreed to reform the NEC whose members have to be approved by 50-percent plus one. This independent institution is composed of 9 members (4 selected by the ruling political party, 4 by the political parties that have NA seats, but do not join a coalition with the government, and 1 by the agreement between the political parties having NA seats).

**Cambodia, Germany Sign Cooperation Agreements Worth US\$64 Million**

Cambodia and Germany signed here yesterday a financial cooperation agreement and a technical cooperation agreement for 2013 worth in total 47.05 million euro (some US\$64 million) to support three development projects in Cambodia.

The two cooperation agreements were inked by H.E. Keat Chhon, Permanent Deputy Prime Minister and First Vice President of the Council for the Development of Cambodia, and H.E. Joachim Baron Von Marshall, German Ambassador to Cambodia.

The financial and technical assistance is used to support the implementation of three development projects related to the fields of health, rural development, and good governance (gender, administrative reform, and democratic development at sub-national level).

The German government has provided some US\$432 million in grant to Cambodia through the EU, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and other development partners.

