Mister Chairman, Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

At the onset I may express, on behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia, my deep gratitude for the Organisation of this important Regional Conference.

I am very happy to participate at this meeting concerning a problem which is a priority for the National Development Policy of Cambodia, and of course for the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

The forestry problem needs a special and ambitious policy not only to protect a natural resource but also to guarantee a sustainable development.

I am convinced that the Conference works will permit to elaborate and promote common activities, realize tight coordination and a constant cooperation, implement common initiatives to resolve this problem which is vital for Cambodia, and I think for your countries too.

Allow me to thank, on behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia, and of my delegation the organisators of the Conference.

I would like to say my gratitude to the Government and People of Vietnam for offering us such a cordial welcome.

My intervention will include three points:

1. a rapid description of the forestry sector in Cambodia
2. the trends of the Royal Government of Cambodia forest policy
3. some proposals for common actions in forestry sector.

1. Actual situation of the forestry sector in Cambodia
Cambodia is a country of old forestry tradition. Forest products have been used for centuries to benefit the population. For twenty years this resource was degraded due to war, political instability and insecurity.

The protection of the forest against illegal logging and illegal trade of wood on the local and international market is the priority of the Royal Government of Cambodia.

The last inventory in 1969 indicated that the forest covered 13 millions hectares, 73% of the territory, and that cultivated area as below 3 millions hectares.

In 1992 the International Mekong Committee estimated, by interpretation of satellite images, the total area at 11.2 millions hectares. Over the last twenty years the deforestation of 2 millions hectares or 15% of the potentiality has occurred.

The major forest types are:

- **Evergreen**: 4,763,300 hectares
- **Deciduous**: 4,301,200 hectares
- **Mixed secondary**: 1,494,300 hectares
- **Coniferous**: 9,800 hectares
- **Flooded**: 630,500 hectares
- **Mangrove**: 8,510 hectares

In Cambodia the management and use of forest resources is through concession licences with private enterprises, this system is usual in a lot of forest countries. This arrangement states the rights and obligations of the holders in terms of management and forest regeneration, and express that cutting should be done on sustainable rate.

Till 1993, 11 concessions have been granted for 2 250 000 hectares.

Since 1993, 19 licences have been granted for 4.2 millions hectares. These new agreements have more strict conditions. According with the guidelines of ITTO, the holders have to establish a master plan which have to be approved by the Department of Forestry before cutting.

The Ministry decided to review all concession agreements particularly to ensure that the harvesting is carried out on sustainable yield basis. Existing information is poor and subject to considerable controversy but it seems that the annual growth of the forest is in order of 0.3 cubic meters per hectare per year, substantially lower than expected in moist evergreen forest of others countries in South-East Asia.

This review is necessary because, despite improvements till 1994, some holders continue over-cutting. Illegal cutting and export continue to go on unfortunately.

The lack of human resources, the lack of logistic possibilities, the lack of a permanent forest inventory, seriously limit the Department of Forestry's capacities to control the concession holders.

As for timber, illegal cutting of fuel-wood have to be noticed. The consumption is assumed to be 3.5 million cubic meters but the legal licences are only 71 000 cubic meters for wood and 51 000 cubic meters for charcoal. However the forest annual natural growth is estimated to be 11 millions cubic meters. Nevertheless some parts of forest are totally destroyed by over-cutting generally in high density inhabitants sectors.

For fighting against illegal cutting and export already in January 1993 UNTAC decided a one year ban on log export. In April 1994 the Royal Government of Cambodia, should have to make a new one year ban for timber and saw-wood. This ban was renewed in April 1995 and the controls enforce by:

- the creation of an Control and Bidding Inter-ministerial Committee which has in particular mission to sold seized wood
• the creation of Mixed Committees, in each Province, especially on border Provinces, with representatives of Ministries of Interior, Defense, Finances and Agriculture, to control log transportation and seizing all illegal wood. 200 agents of the Department of Forestry work for these Committees. Mobile intervention teams are set up progressively.

All these different measures improve the forest situation but illegal cutting and exports continue so that it is impossible to implement a forest policy in Cambodia and to have a sustainable management of this natural resource.

2. Orientation of our national forest policy

The economic value of Cambodian forest, measured as stumpage value would be, according to recent FAO studies, about 6.9 billions US$. So, forest represent the richest natural resource and the major economic stake for Cambodia.

Nevertheless, financial resources to the state budget are still very limited.

Aware of this situation, the Royal Government of Cambodia decided to consider the forestry sector as a priority in its Program to Rehabilitate and Develop Cambodia. The objective is to harmonize the conservation and use of the resource sustainably as well as the rehabilitation of the forest for current and future generations.

Within this context, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries cooperated with WB/UNDP/FAO experts group to review forest policy assessment.

The report of this mission confirms the focus and strategies defined by the Government.

The major recommendations are to:

• limit logging to the annual potential of growth of the forest, estimated at present between 300 000 to 350 000 cubic meters, with a view to succeed to maintain the resources and so to ensure a sustainable development.

• improve the state incomes by collection of royalties depending on the quality and the international market price.

• revise concession licence and oblige each holder to present a master plan and environmental impact studies.

• develop reforestation programs

• intensify struggle actions against illegal cutting and exports.

• strengthen forest laws to meet the needs of the situation

• develop new measures for environmental protection and biodiversity preservation.

This policy needs an enforcement of the Department of Forest capacities to regulate and control forest resources: forest inventory, training of human resources, equipment and facilities.

Finally, this report recommends to lift the ban on log exports. This proposal has received the agreement of the Royal Government but it will be only applied when the struggle against illegal cutting and exports will permit a normal situation and control over cutting. Meanwhile the ban on log exports is necessary and only sawwood from regular and controlled concessions will be authorized export.

An exception has been made, and only till the 31/12/96, for 16 Thai companies that have been given an authorization, subject to related checking from the Royal Government of Thailand and the Royal Government of Cambodia, to export logs which were cut before the 30 April 1995.

By the 3 July 1996, a Royal Government decree create a National Committee for Forest Policy presided by His Royal Highness, Samdech Krom Preah Norodom Ranariddh, First Prime Minister, and by His Excellency Samdech Hun Sen, Second Prime Minister. It is in charge of conception, supervision and assessment of the forest policy. The executive secretary is under Ministry of Agriculture supervision. The appointment of this committee indicates the commitment of the Government in managing our forest resource.

3. Common action proposals
Cambodia is still threatened with over-logging and its consequences in terms of environmental damage.

Our country has fixed a Target of harmonious and sustainable development and the preservation of forest resources, this for multiple and complementary reasons: - economic ones, preservation or development of productive activities, - social, preservation or development of employment, - budgetary reasons, improvement of incomes for the state, struggle against natural calamities, flood and erosion, and others purely environmental, protection of the nature and preservation of the biodiversity.

So, we face the same issues and constraint and give us the opportunity to imagine common and complementary actions and to closely cooperate to implement them.

This Conference provides an essential stage in this process. It offers an opportunity to begin to precise the actions already engaged which could be developed and strengthened and to define new ones which could be launched in the short or medium term.

These common initiatives could be progressively formalized by Bi- or Multi- lateral agreement.

In this way, you would allow me to propose, on behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Ministry of Agriculture, the following:

1) the implementation of a common border checking policy to struggle against illegal commerce of wood cut in Cambodia. This policy is still seriously engaged with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Lao PDR with which agreements was already signed, and with the Kingdom of Thailand with which common checking actions have been set up.

I think it is necessary to enforce and develop our cooperation on this field to try to control this issue as soon as possible and curb the illegal transportation across the border.

This illicit trade is highly prejudicial to the economy of Cambodia and constitutes a fundamental constraint, which prevent implementing any forest policy. It appears also that this trade is prejudicial to you, ours neighbors, because it encourage illicit business of others goods in detriment to budgetary incomes of each of our countries.

Our cooperation will permit us to reach more quickly a rational and controlled management of the Cambodian forest and so get durability to the production. This will improve permanent official trade between our countries.

Finally, these common controls and actions will permit to accelerate the lifting of the ban.

2) Cambodia has classified as protected area for fauna and flora, about 3.5 millions hectares mostly on the borders. Common supervision and management could be set up to improve this action

3) Cambodia remains interested in developing technology and support exchanges to improve human resources.

Armed conflict in recent years have left my country absolutely destroyed as well as infrastructures and human resources.

A lot of things are already done but Cambodian technical development is in the early stages compared to our neighbors. We need exchanges of technology and experience in monitoring and administering the forest sector.

The support of International Cooperation and your support is very important and an absolute necessity.

I thank you for your attention.

H.E Dr. TAO SENG HUOR