



สถานเอกอัครราชทูต

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**Opening Remarks by Dr. Tej Bunnag,
Co-chairman,
at the First Meeting of Thai-Cambodia Joint Commission
for Promotion of Cultural Cooperation,
18 May 2004, Phnom Penh**

Professor Dr. Sorn Samnang, Director of the Royal Academy of
Cambodia and Co-chairman of the Commission,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to co-chair together with Dr. Sorn Samnang this First Meeting of Thai-Cambodia Joint Commission for Promotion of Cultural Cooperation. On behalf of the Thai delegation, I wish to express our deep appreciation for the warm welcome and gracious hospitality accorded to us and for the excellent preparation that had been made for this meeting.

At the outset, I wish to emphasize that the Thai Government values highly our relations with Cambodia. As neighbouring countries, our future are interlinked and intertwined. We wish to see our relations develop in all areas and at all levels, be they government, private sector, and particularly at the people to people level. It is for this purpose that we are meeting here in Phnom Penh.

Distinguished Delegates,

This first joint meeting of ours is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, it underscores the resolve of our two Governments to work together towards laying a sound foundation for our relations in the long term. Secondly, it reflects the recognition that such a foundation must be built on ties of mutual understanding, trust and goodwill between our peoples. And thirdly, we are mindful that our two countries and peoples are bound together both by geographical contiguity as well as by the fact that we have the same cultural and historical heritage and, most importantly, we share a common future together.

It is unfortunate that the shocking event of January last year led to the establishment of this Joint Commission. Therefore, we have constantly to remind ourselves of the valuable lesson learnt from that regrettable incident. We must never be complacent when it comes to matters of our relations. Our ties must be constantly nurtured and every effort must be made to strengthen them.

The fact that our Joint Commission was established by the Joint Cabinet Meeting on 31 May 2003 reflects the importance our two Governments attach to our mission. There is high expectation of the Commission and the specific tasks that have been assigned to us.

Today as we proceed in our deliberation and discussion on the topics on our agenda, it is important for us to be guided by clear-cut objectives. As far as the Thai side is concerned, we believe that these objectives are the following.

First, to promote mutual understanding and respect for the history, culture, and values of our respective countries.

Second, to promote mutual recognition and appreciation of the shared history and cultural heritage that bind our two peoples together.

Third, to promote a new and forward-looking chapter in our relations based on both a sense of shared identity, history and cultural heritage as well as the awareness of the future that we share together as neighbours and partners in the framework of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) and the Ayeyawady-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS).

Our task is not to rewrite history, but to draw valuable lessons from and build upon the past in order to work towards laying a sound foundation for our relations in the future.

The success of the work of our Joint Commission depends on having clear-cut objectives and an action-oriented approach. We must focus on concrete cooperative activities that would work to enhance our ties in all areas with the aim of promoting mutual understanding through the exchange of peoples, ideas and knowledge between our two countries in order to accomplish our goals, our effort should be supported by all concerned parties, be they government officials, scholars and particularly the media whose role in term of our relations is so important, for much of how our peoples perceive each other stems from what they read, see or hear from or in the media. We must also ensure that our activities truly reach the public and every segment of our respective societies.

Distinguished Delegates,

Let me conclude by emphasizing that those of us on the Thai side have been looking forward to this meeting and to working closely with our Cambodian counterparts on this Commission to ensure that the discussion of our meeting will yield fruitful result as expected of us by the Governments and peoples of our two countries.

Thank you.