

CAMBODIA



Wedding, Library, Hope

*"The natural flights of the human mind are not from pleasure to pleasure
but from hope to hope"—Samuel Johnson*



DECEMBER 9, 2006

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LIBRARY OF VIETNAM ★ LAOS ★ CAMBODIA
"A Celebration of the American Spirit"

January 14, 2007

Dear Friends,

The Worley/Engelken/Hoffart Angseong Library in the Killing Fields bears special comment in that it was dedicated amid an historic wedding of 10 Khmer couples who had never experienced the happiness of such a day. Some things are worth doing, and there is no better example of a profoundly rewarding "extracurricular activity" of the library project than the Khmer Wedding of 10 couples on December 9, 2006.

THE STORY

Pol Pot took over Cambodia in 1976 leading the Khmer Rouge in a bloody regime that lasted until 1979 when the Vietnamese assisted Cambodians in the overthrow of one of the most vicious inhuman leaders ever rivaling any of the worst recorded in the long sordid history of man's inhumanity to man. Some 2 million Cambodians were murdered by their own countrymen in those years.

The Khmer are the indigenous people of Cambodia, the Khmer Rouge (KR) being the Communist Khmer under the leadership of Pol Pot. They directed every detail of Cambodian life including who would marry who. Often, after murdering the parents and older villagers, the KR would select young men and women and match them up, marrying them in a few minutes, all at gunpoint under threat of execution.

Earlier in 2006, Dr. Jim Langworthy, Tran Dinh Song, and I visited the Library Project we have at Seiha Village, Chambak Commune, Bati District, Takeo Province, Vietnam. At our planning meeting lunch with local officials for the library, I asked the Village Chief, Mr. Ou Sochea's wife how long they had been married. She then told the story of their marriage by force. Asked if she had a picture she pointed to her head saying tearfully in Khmer "Only in here." I asked if we could have a wedding now, 30 years later, at the Library—the one these couples never had. Mr. Ou Sochea said he would like to do it. Lor Chandara, the founder of the Angseong Library where our library Project has spent \$10,000 for a major second floor addition, expansion and remodeling, went to work on the planning.

We did not have the money for such an event—two foundations declined support on the grounds that it was not relevant to the library project. So we called our friends who came on board with \$100 each for the \$2,500 needed for this special occasion. Here's the honor roll of those who made it possible by their sponsorship and participation; as important are those who attended the event as part of the American Delegation, all at **THERE OWN EXPENSE.**

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POL POT'S KHMER ROUGE WORLD

KHMER ROUGE COURTSHIP

The Khmer Rouge, (generally kids 12 to 17 years old), randomly selected young men and women from the village, some of whom had never before seen each other, and forced the couples to strip in front of them. The future bride & groom were physically inspected and then asked questions. Among them was "How long does it take to make a baby?" In one case the groom, standing there in the buff answered, "Well, nine months" The KR answered "WRONG!" From the back of the room another villager, to please the murderous KR, yelled "3 months." The KR announced this was the correct answer, calling for couples to produce children immediately to increase the population as an order from their leader, Pol Pot, Brother Number One, as he was known.

MARRIAGE COUNSELING KHMER ROUGE STYLE

After the couple was joined in a ritual lasting less than 5 minutes they set up housekeeping. But their marital matching would not be the last they would hear from the KR as they began their life together. The KR had guerillas patrolling the Village. If they overheard arguing from a house or received reports of marital discord from neighbors they would enter the household, and warn the couple get along under threat of execution as it was their "Duty to brother No. 1 and the people of Cambodia."

Weddings and Libraries have this in common—they are both sources of hope and dreams for brighter futures. Cambodia needs these fountains of inspiration to quiet the ghosts of Pol Pot, the Khmer Rouge and blind radical left wing ideology. The American Sponsors and Delegates in Attendance can take pride in their investment in hope and the future of Cambodia.

Sincerely,



Francis J. (Chuck) Theusch

Founder/Chairman, Library of Vietnam*Laos*Cambodia Project



KHMER NEW HOPE WEDDING

Seiha Village, Chambak Commune, Bati District, TaKeo Province

"The Killing Fields," Kingdom of Cambodia

December 9, 2006

The Brides & Grooms

- 1.) Vong Yim & Tim Lun
- 2.) Tann Hang & Yuk Savy
- 3.) Sem Sath & Rath Chheng
- 4.) Yin Thea & Ing Neang
- 5.) Mak Chantha & Pann Than
- 6.) Pak Sun & Chheong Huy
- 7.) Chheav Ngann & Chhin Chhoen
- 8.) Heng Sary & Nget Net
- 9.) Ouk Touch & Uor Sem
- 10.) Him & Ham Nem

*The Sponsors and Americans in Attendance**

- 1.) Charles & Pam Engelken, Kansas City, Missouri (S)
- 2.) Ross & Joniel Worley, Kansas City, Missouri (S)
- 3.) Dennis Pelkowski & Debbie Bayee, Pewaukee, Wisconsin (S)
- 4.) Daniel H. Hoffart, Cedarburg, Wisconsin (S)
- 5.) Joseph Campbell, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (S)
- 6.) Jeffrey & Susan Schunk, Overland Park, Kansas (S, AD)
- 7.) Pat McKenna & Kathleen Schmitz, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (S)
- 8.) Kent & Linda Converse, Garfield, Kansas (S)
- 9.) Diane Bluhm, Muskego, Wisconsin (S)
- 10.) Steven & Patricia House, Waupaca, Wisconsin (S,AD)
- 11.) Lu Cardwell, Powell, Wyoming (S)
- 12.) Gerry D. Cullen, Kansas City, Missouri (S)
- 13.) Larry Goldsmith, Kansas City, Missouri (S)
- 14.) Patrick & Cheryl Moore, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (S,AD)
- 15.) Vietnam Veterans of America, Chapter #324, Milwaukee, Wisconsin (S)
- 16.) Dr. James Langworthy, Honolulu, Hawaii (S)
- 17.) Tran Dinh Song, Da Nang, Vietnam (Vietnamese) (S)
- 18.) Douglas & Janey Fuller, Kansas City, Kansas (S)
- 19.) Mary Eisenhower, Kansas City, Kansas (S)
- 20.) Michael & Barbara Meyer, Overland Park, Kansas (S)
- 21.) Le Ngoc Duc & Le Ngoc Diem My, Village of Hope Orphanage, Da Nang (Vietnamese) (S)
- 22.) John & Sally Kincaid, Yakima, Washington (S, AD)
- 23.) Bob & Cynthia Laux, Bethel, Maine (S, AD)
- 24.) Margaret J. Mahoney, Leavenworth, Kansas (S)
- 25.) Overland Park Rotary, Overland Park, Kansas (S)
- 26.) People to People International, Kansas City, Missouri (S)
- 27.) Francis J. (Chuck) Theusch (S, AD)

*(S) Sponsor, (S, AD) Sponsor & American Delegation

LIBRARY OF CAMBODIA PROJECT

A Special Wedding Invitation

We request the honor of your presence at the solemn celebration of the renewal of marital vows in Khmer Traditional Ritual on

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2006 at 9 AM

at

**Seiha Village, Chambak Commune, Bati District, Takeo Province
Kingdom of Cambodia**

Being married under duress on February 10, 1977 without celebration of the promise the future holds and amid the sorrow and ill winds of the history of the times we now come together to celebrate our 30th Anniversaries with a new promise of hope, happiness and peace for our children and our posterity We the 10 Brides & Grooms of Seiha Village having overcome the pain and sorrow of the past now celebrate our lives together Your attendance in joining us in this joyous moment in our lives will be an eternal memory of happiness as we mark the triumph of love over hate, hope over despair, joy over sorrow, the bright promise of the future over the broken dreams of the past

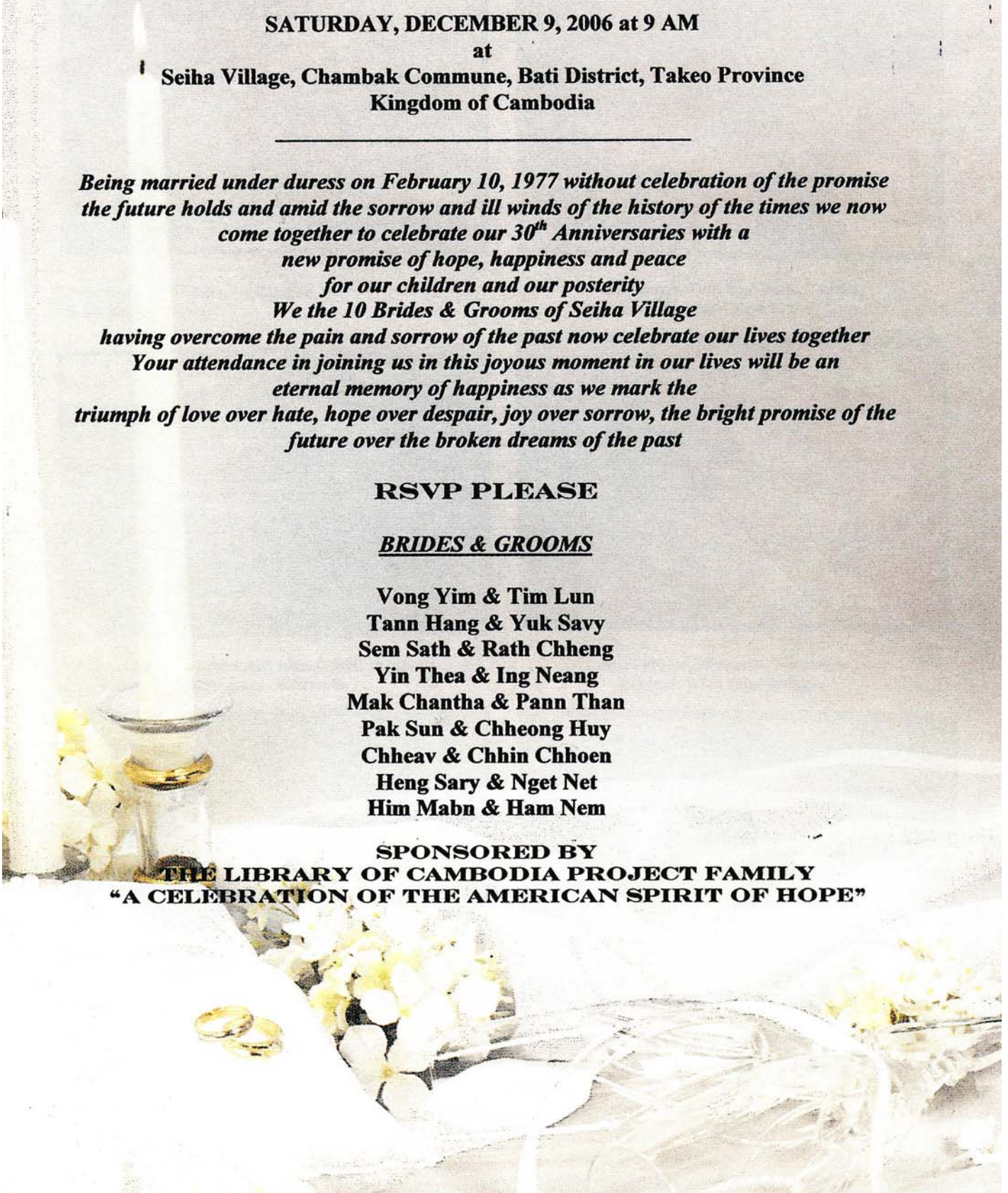
RSVP PLEASE

BRIDES & GROOMS

**Vong Yim & Tim Lun
Tann Hang & Yuk Savy
Sem Sath & Rath Chheng
Yin Thea & Ing Neang
Mak Chantha & Pann Than
Pak Sun & Chheong Huy
Chheav & Chhin Chhoen
Heng Sary & Nget Net
Him Mavn & Ham Nem**

SPONSORED BY

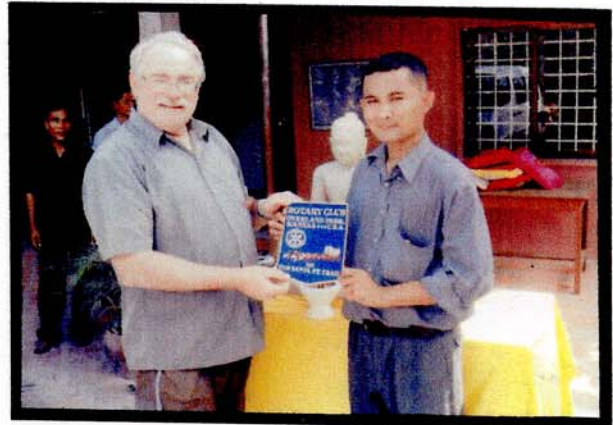
**THE LIBRARY OF CAMBODIA PROJECT FAMILY
"A CELEBRATION OF THE AMERICAN SPIRIT OF HOPE"**



The American Guests



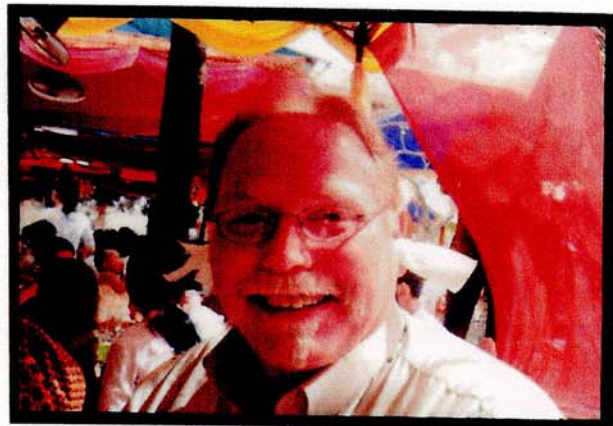
**John Kincaid, Yakima Washington
& his Khmer "family"**



**Mike Meyer, Overland Park, Kansas
presents Overland Park Rotary Grant**



**Village Chief's daughter and wife, Chuck Theusch
Pat Moore, both Milwaukee, Wisconsin**



**Steve House, Waupaca, Wisconsin
(a break in his videotaping)**

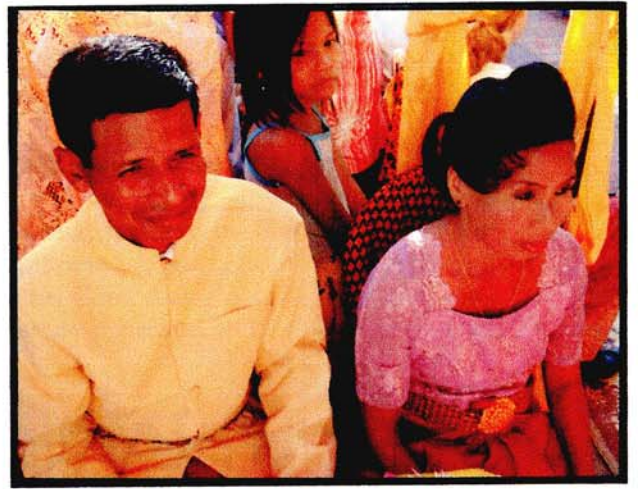
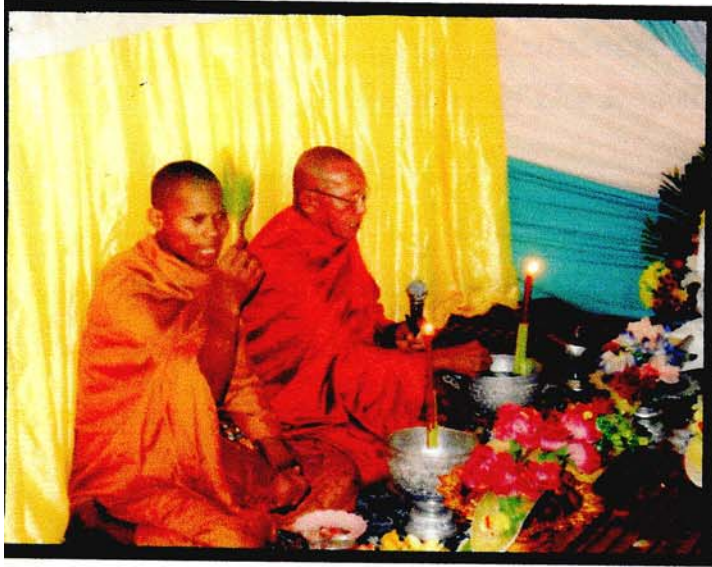


**Jeff Schunk, Overland Park, Kansas
with children of "The Killing Fields"**



**Bob & Cynthia Laux, Bethel Maine Rotary
with their gifts carried 10,000 miles**

A Dream Come True





LIBRARY OF VIETNAM ★ LAOS ★ CAMBODIA
“ A Celebration of the American Spirit ”

Prime Minister,
Phnom Penh
Kingdom of Cambodia

January 1, 2007

Dear Your Excellency Samdech Prime Minister Hun Sen,

Congratulations on the joyous day of your marriage to your lovely wife, Bun Rany on January 5, 2007. Your leadership in sharing with your people the joys of today just as you have endured the sorrows of yesterday is surely an inspiration to your people as it is to we Americans.

More, I wish to offer a well-wish on the observance of January 7, the Anniversary of the liberation of your people from the Khmer Rouge that you led with Vietnamese support. It is fitting that these two happy memorials should fall so closely together. For certainly, if you had not succeeded on January 7, 1979 in liberating your people from violence and oppression, we Americans would not have the opportunity to work with you and your fellow Cambodians in liberating the Cambodian people from poverty and ignorance in 2006—and *celebrate belated Wedding Days*.

As an American combat veteran of the war in Vietnam (US ARMY, 1969-70, 11th Brigade, 4/3 Infantry, Americal Division, Central Highlands, Vietnam), I returned there in 1999. Since then I have been to Southeast Asia 21 times and through fortune and fate have come to Cambodia. While the land of Cambodia is an intriguing and beautiful place with Angkor Wat and other features the likes of which are not to be found anywhere else in the world, it is the People of Cambodia that have touched me and the members of our Library Project Family.

We are deeply aware of the difficult history of your hardy people. The fact that so many young couples were forced to be married without the simple joys and memories of a wedding day led me to ask the local authorities if we could have a wedding now, some 30 years later. They were so very kind to support us in this idea.

On December 9 the wedding was held and the Beautiful Khmer Traditional event was awe inspiring to our delegation of 10 Americans who attended and to the 25 Americans who contributed personal money to make it possible. It will live in our memory always. The Brides and Grooms beamed with beauty and hope of a bright future for the people of Cambodia. In our delegation we spoke of the sorrow of the past, and the great strength of your people in going forward carrying such a heavy burden of sadness. Yet you endure. As Americans, this calls forth our deepest respect for Cambodia as a country and its people.

We will continue to develop support for libraries and education in Cambodia. We are small, just a group of American old soldiers and our friends who believe we can do something to make Cambodia's future a little brighter. Like you, as fellow “Old Soldiers” we are not yet ready to pass into history—we have work to do. Because of visionary leadership such as yours, you have opened the door for us to do something, even if only a small way. For this we thank you.

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I prepared a Special Wedding Invitation. In part it says:

"...this joyous moment in our lives will be an eternal memory of happiness, as we mark the triumph of love over hate, hope over despair, joy over sorrow, the bright promise of the future over the broken dreams of the past"

With sincerest appreciation I believe your efforts with so little resources are part of these triumphs of the future over the past. The work of young professional Cambodians such as Lor Chandara who offered his family home to found the Angseong Library, energizes us all to help. Happy New Year as you ring in 2007 with the Wedding Day of your youthful dreams, now to come true some 30 years late—it is never too late for hope. You touch the people of Cambodia and America with this day.

Most Respectfully,



**Francis J. (Chuck) Theusch
Founder/Chairman, Library of Cambodia Project**

pmcam1107A



Samdech HUN SEN

Prime Minister of the Royal Government of Cambodia

Mr. Francis J.(Chuck) Theusch

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January 8,2007

MR.FRANCIS J.THEUSCH.

My wife and I are very pleased to received your letter dated January 1st 2007 congratulating our wedding anniversary which, in the past, was filled with grief and pain .

Mr. Francis, my wife and I are very grateful with you and your colleagues contribution to the Royal Government on Human Resources Development, particularly by supporting Ang Soeng Library, Bati District, Takeo province, and your further interest in building library in Ratanakiri and other provinces in the Kingdom of Cambodia . Your action in fact endorsed truth and justice for my wife and I and most of all the Cambodian people who had gone through tragedies during the regime that considered its own people and religion as that of cruel animals.

The events and visions raised in your letter reflect the history of a nation and the people of Cambodia and that my success is unseparable from the support of the people and the international community . Now that we have peace, my wife and I, on behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia, would like to congratulate and support your continuous activity in Cambodia.

Our best wishes of happiness and good health to you and your colleagues and May your mission to serve humanity in Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos forever be successful.

Please accept our highest consideration.

HUN SEN