



Greater democracy focus in development cooperation with Cambodia

Phnom Penh (12 June 2020) – The Swedish Government decided yesterday to focus development cooperation with Cambodia on initiatives for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. These activities will from now be steered by a new objective in Sweden’s strategy for regional development cooperation in Asia and the Pacific region. This means that Sweden’s bilateral strategy for Cambodia will be phased out to end by 1 July 2021.

The democratic space, respect for human rights, including freedom of speech, and the possibility for civil society and the media to operate freely have been severely restricted in Cambodia in recent years. The Government therefore considers that it is necessary to focus the cooperation on creating better conditions for a different, more democratic development in Cambodia.

“The democratic space in Cambodia has been severely restricted in recent years. This has made it difficult to pursue broad and close cooperation. The Government has therefore chosen to redirect our development efforts to offer better support for change with regard to human rights, democracy and the rule of law in the country. We will continue to support civil society, human rights defenders and democracy advocates in Cambodia. Sweden stands up for the principles of democracy and speaks out when they are undermined,” says Minister for International Development Cooperation Peter Eriksson.

In 2019, Sweden’s development assistance to Cambodia based on the bilateral development cooperation strategy amounted to nearly 230 million Swedish kronor (SEK) or 24 million USD in grants. In addition to this, support to Cambodia is provided through the regional strategy for Asia and the Pacific Region as well as the global strategy for Research. Sweden’s aid to Cambodia started in 1979 with humanitarian efforts. In the 1990s, long-term development cooperation began.

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