



KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
Nation Religion King

**Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Cambodia
to the United Nations Office and other
International Organizations at Geneva**

PRESS RELEASE

“Steps against Disinformation Not Restrict Freedom,” insists Cambodia Mission

Geneva, 10 July 2020 – The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Cambodia in Geneva is utterly dismayed at the misleading and faulty conclusion of Mr. David Kaye, Special Rapporteur (SR) on freedom of opinion and expression as to the nature of Cambodia’s human rights integrated responses to the Covid-19.

It appears that the SR fails to condemn disinformation and fake news, yet continues encouraging the “free flow of information”, possibly including the harmful or unhealthy one. This approach is deviating from that of the UN Secretary General António Guterres, who cautions the danger of fake news and hate speech, which constitute an attack on the essence of human rights norms and principles. As a result, the UN team is stepping up its fight against proliferation of the false information. The 73rd World Health Assembly in May 2020 adopted a consensus resolution on Covid-19 responses, calling on member states to take measures to counter misinformation and disinformation.

Cambodia’s responses to this unprecedented crisis are to ensure that precious lives, particularly the most vulnerable, are not lost to the Covid-19. All steps taken adhere to due process and principles of legality, necessity, proportionality and non-discrimination.

Cambodia always treasures freedom of expression and press in line with the law, and is deeply conscious that the plurality of voices including the critical ones matters as far as the continued functioning of its democracy is concerned. At the height of the coronavirus pandemic, the government has further authorized a foreign government funded radio, the Voice of America in Khmer, to broadcast via three local stations, whose coverage reaches at least 17 of the

25 provinces, accounting for at least 60% of the total population. Cambodia is also home to more than 10 million registered accounts of Facebook, equal to 65% of the total population. It is a powerful and popular platform of sharing news instantly and public opinions freely. The internet penetration, standing at about 60% nationwide, has never met any shutdown or limitation as mistakenly stated by the SR.

As for the international standard, the SR has never ever stressed enough that the exercise of the freedom of expression carries with it special duties, responsibilities and limitations provided by laws, as stipulated in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The purposeful failure emboldens the law-breakers, who readily exploit the precarious situation for their hidden agenda.

To tag law enforcement as repression of free expression is to denigrate the rule of law and its equal application to all citizens as warranted by the Constitution. The ultimate goal of the government is to shield law-abiding citizens and to guarantee social order, public trust and public health for everyone.

While reaffirming Cambodia's continued commitment to international human rights obligations, the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Cambodia strongly urges the SR to play a responsible role in a manner that adds to rather than detracts from the ongoing effective responses to the global pandemic. It is imperative that the line of his mandate not be crossed, bearing in mind the Code of Conduct and the Operation Manual of the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. 
