

Cambodia's Statement on Ageing Policy at CSD7

UN Conference Centre, Bangkok, 7 September 2022

Your Excellency Chair and distinguished delegates,

Cambodia has an estimated 1.2 million elderly people. In 2019, 8.9 percent of the population were aged 60 years and above, it is estimated that by 2030, older people will comprise 10 per cent of the total population, the number of elderly people will increase to about 5 million by 2050. These trends imply that, over the next few decades, a potentially shrinking working age population will need to support an expanding elderly population.

Respect and care for the elderly are integral to Cambodian/Khmer culture. In this spirit, ensuring a high quality of life for older persons is always among the government's strategic priorities. The Royal Government of Cambodia has adopted the National Policy on the Elderly 2017-2030 and its National Action Plan 2021-2025 to take care about the health, well-being and the needs of the elderly people. The policy is creating an enabling environment and support system for the elderly, based on the principles of inclusiveness, equity, efficiency and sustainability. Furthermore, the National Social Protection Policy Framework 2016-2025 has also been adopted, highlighting the needs of vulnerable people, including the elderly, as they have little opportunity to earn a living and work.

Despite this effort, there is long way to go in enhancing the elderly care service and protection. Many of Cambodia's citizens are struggling when they reach old age, many of them are not unable to work, due to disability and sickness and home care responsibilities. The situation deteriorates as people age further, with those over 75 years of age experiencing the highest levels of vulnerability, especially elder women.

Covid-19 have made elder people even more vulnerable, with more than 55% of them affected their income generation. The research report on "the income of the elderly and social protection in Cambodia during and after the outbreak of Covid-19", showed that the support for the elderly is still lacking, with only about 45% of the elderly receiving cash support during epidemic and the majority of the elderly need provision of benefits to sustain their livelihoods, and more interventions to improve their well-being so that they do not fall into poverty or vulnerability.

The Royal Government of Cambodia continues to work closely and collaboratively with the development partners and civil society organizations to implement the Elderly Policy and Action Plan, especially to explore more evidence on important of establishment of community-based elderly care service centers and provide skill training for social workers, especially para-professional social service workers. It is important to recognise that old age pensions are not just schemes for older people, they are schemes for all citizens, guaranteeing everyone in society with income security once they reach old age. Indeed, old age pensions are often regarded as an essential public service and an entitlement for all citizens. The way forward, the Royal Government of Cambodia is working with UNDP, UN ESCAP, development partners and civil society organizations to enhancing the elderly health care, and pension system, for example: (1) Conduct a scoping study on the feasibility and costing options of extending free health care to elderly, (2) Develop a multi-tiered pension system under Social Protection Policy Framework and (3) Conduct a feasibility study on multi-tiered pension system, demonstrating the need to bring the contributory and non-contributory scheme together.

I thank you for your kind attention!

