



Opening Remarks

by

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Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia

At the 2nd ASEAN Women Leaders' Summit

**Under the Theme "Building a More Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Future:
Unlocking Women's Entrepreneurship in ASEAN"**

Phnom Penh, 12 October 2022, 14:30 – 15:00

(5 minutes)



- *Excellencies, Leaders of ASEAN and Partner Countries;*
- *Excellency Secretary-General of ASEAN;*
- *Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen !*

Today, I am truly pleased to welcome **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen and all Distinguished Guests** to the **2nd ASEAN Women Leaders' Summit** in person as well as via video conference.

I would like to remind that the **1st ASEAN Women Leaders' Summit** held in 2020 was a great success, as leaders of ASEAN countries recognized and valued the inclusion of women's role into the core of the efforts towards sustainable and comprehensive socio-economic recovery after the COVID-19 crisis. At the same time, there were recognition and discussion of priorities concerning strengthening the role of women in the economy, improvement in the financial and digital inclusion, response to social protection, family care and low wages, as well as investing in public and social infrastructure to promote gender equality and women's well-being.

Based on these great achievements, Cambodia is truly honored to host the **2nd ASEAN Women Leaders' Summit** now, as the Chair of ASEAN in 2022. Cambodia has set the theme "**Building a More Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Future: Unlocking Women's Entrepreneurship in ASEAN**" to encourage cooperation and joint commitment in promoting women's entrepreneurship as a key driving force for sustainable and resilient socio-economic recovery and development towards building a common future and prosperity.

- *Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!*

ASEAN is a region with high economic potentials and rapid development, mainly thanks to active participations of women. The economies of ASEAN countries depend

heavily on micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), led by women. As a matter of fact, in Cambodia, MSMEs, accounting for 98% of the total number of enterprises, contribute around 58% to the national economy, and create around 73% of total jobs. Of which, women establish and manage, approximately 61% of the total number of MSMEs. With this fact, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has identified and promoted **women as the backbone of national socio-economic development**, by increasing investment in gender equality and promoting the role of women in the development across sectors, and at all levels.

Within the ASEAN framework at the present and in the future, women will continue to play a significant role, especially in recovering and boosting sustainable, inclusive and resilient ASEAN economic growth. This requires solidarity and cooperation on creating an ecosystem that is conducive for the growth of women entrepreneurs, as well as collaboration to address challenges. In fact, women entrepreneurs in ASEAN have been facing many obstacles in enterprise development and management, especially in rural areas. In addition, most women start businesses at micro or small levels and in the informal sector, as the vast majority has yet to be formally registered, making it hard for governments to identify and provide necessary supports.

In order to address the aforementioned challenges as well as to unlock the potentials of women entrepreneurs and make it easier to seize new opportunities and potentials, we should examine and take into consideration the following tasks:

- 1st. Create an ecosystem that responds to the needs of MSMEs and women entrepreneurs, as well as the improvement of the legal framework and social mindset that hinders women's potentials in the economy;
- 2nd. Focus on human resource development, through upskilling and re-skilling programs for women and girls, as well as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programs;
- 3rd. Improve the financial and digital inclusion for women and girls, by promoting financial and digital literacy and facilitating accesses to credits, market and information in starting and developing businesses; and
- 4th. Expand the coverage of the social protection system, family welfare protection policies and responses to family care and domestic works of women, as well as public investment in healthcare and social welfare.

– *Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen!*

The 2nd ASEAN Women Leaders' Summit, with participations from the top leaders of ASEAN and partner countries, is a testament reflecting our strong commitment in promoting women's entrepreneurship solidarily and cooperatively. In fact, in today's summit, we will discuss and provide inputs for the draft of **the Declaration on "Building a More Sustainable, Inclusive and Resilient Future: Unlocking Women's Entrepreneurship in ASEAN"**. I hope that all leaders of ASEAN and partner countries will support this Declaration.

In conclusion, I wish this summit to smoothly run, and wish **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen and all Distinguished Guests** good health and successes in all your endeavours.

I would like to announce the Opening of **the 2nd ASEAN Women Leaders' Summit** from now on.

Thank you!