

CAMBODIA ENVIRONMENT OUTLOOK



Ministry of Environment,
Kingdom of Cambodia



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This is the first Cambodia Environment Outlook the Department of Natural Resources Assessment and Environmental Data Management (MoE/DoNRAEDAM) developed in conjunction with the UNEP RRC.AP under the capacity building project for integrated environmental assessment. It was evident that the data and information availability was a major challenge during the Report preparation process.

On behalf of the MoE/DoNRAEDAM and the national working team, we would like to express our gratitude to all the team members and experts who contributed to the completion of the report.

Our sincere appreciation is extended to those of concerned institutions who provided data, information, including supporting documents used for the analysis and assessment. We greatly recognized the internal coordination and collaboration within the Ministry of Environment in finalizing the report and inter-agency collaboration in giving the necessary assistance on timely basis. We also thankfully acknowledged reviewers and individual experts who provided constructive comments and assisted us in improving the quality of the report.

Finally, we would like to express our sincere thanks to H.E. Dr. Mok Mareth, Senior Minister and Minister of the Environment for giving us full support during the preparation process and the UNEP RRC.AP team for providing the technical guidance and financial assistance.

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Chuon Chanrithy
Touch Vina
Chrin Sokha
Nang Phirun
Phet Pichhara
Mao Socheat
Mak Sithirith

UNEP Regional Resource Centre for Asia and the Pacific Team:

Choudhury Rudra Charan Mohanty
Tunnie Srisakulchairak
Yuwaree In-na
Subrato Sinha
Purna L Rajbhandari
Jinhua Zhang
Tin Aung Moe

FOREWORD

**Senior Minister, Minister of the Environment
Ministry of Environment
Kingdom of Cambodia**





The Process of developing Cambodia Environment Outlook was a great cooperation between the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Assessment Programme and the Kingdom of Cambodia. The project aims at building capacity for integrated environmental assessment to foster scientific-based policy formulation and to support sustainable development in the country under the guidance of Ministry of Environment (MoE). Activities, including the national inception workshop and training, multi-stakeholders consultation and data collection had been organized and successfully strengthened the intra-agency coordination and built national technical capacity in integrated assessment of environmental issues.

Laid in the Greater Mekong Subregion, Cambodia is abundant in natural resources, a hydrological and healthy ecological system, and predominantly dependent on natural resources for socio-economic development such as forests, fertile soils, fisheries, water and mineral resources as well as biological diversity. Tonle Sap Great Lake connecting to the Mekong River at Chadomuk by the Tonle Sap river is the wetland rich in abundant natural resources like aquatic resource, biodiversity, water fowl, a variety of inundated forests, etc. referred to as the breath and heart of Cambodian people.

The population growth and increasing demands have exerted pressure on these natural resources. In this regard, Cambodia has been facing some developmental and environmental challenges. Over-exploitation of based natural resources could be the major threat and problem for sustainable development, if it is not well managed. This would cause destruction of the primitive forests, wetland habitats, fisheries and wilds leading to changes in ecological system, loss of both terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity, land degradation and top soil erosion. Amongst the national challenges to be dealt with, the significance and value of Tonle Sap Great Lake as a major source of livelihood/protein for millions of Cambodian, as a biosphere reserve and as a model for basin wide management approach for replication elsewhere need to be highlighted. So far, the Royal Government of Cambodia has developed relevant laws, policies, strategies and plans to cope with the protection and management of natural resources for development in a sustainable way to meet the people's demands and alleviate the people's poverty. This follows the economic policy agenda of the Political Platform and the "Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency in Cambodia".

Cambodia Environment Outlook is developed based on reliable data/information collected from key stakeholders of both state and non-state institutions. The ultimate goal is to update an environmental database consisted of available data on environmental conditions, trends and their significance, status of ecosystems, the effect of human activities and the implication. Anyway, the Report highlights five key environment issues in Cambodia: Land Degradation, Depletion of Biodiversity, Degradation of Inland Aquatic Resources, Coastal and Marine Resources Management, and Waste Management. It was evident that the availability of data and information was a limiting factor during the preparation process.

On behalf of the Cambodian Ministry of Environment and on my own behalf, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the UNEP regional team in Asia and the Pacific for both technical and financial assistance in preparing this report, which will serve as a valuable source to planners, policy- and decision-makers to develop sectoral plans and formulate policies for the sustainable development in Cambodia. Also, special acknowledgement and sincere thanks are given to those officials of the Department of Natural Resources Assessment and Environment Data Management, who had committed to the completion of the Project and took all the efforts in preparing this valuable report, or without their kind participation and assistance this report would not have come out. 

Senior Minister, 
Minister of the Environment



Dr. Mok Mareth

FOREWORD

Executive Director United Nations Environment Programme

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is mandated to keep the state of the global environment under review. It does this through the Global Environment Outlook (GEO) process, producing a series of global, regional, sub-regional, national and even city-level assessments. Elaborated through a participatory and consultative process which gives them strong scientific credibility, GEO assessments provide information for environmental management and policy development to a wide target audience.



The capacity building programme of the GEO process was highlighted in the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building, an intergovernmental framework for supporting developing countries and countries with economies in transition. The implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan is an important opportunity for UNEP to work with partners to strengthen national institutions, including developing environmental reporting as a basis for decision making.

The Cambodia Environment Outlook is one of the outputs of UNEP's capacity building programme. Cambodia is an agrarian nation that largely depends upon productive natural resources for food and income. Agriculture remains an important sector for economic development, employing much of the rural population. In the past ten years, more than 40 per cent of the national GDP has been derived from agriculture, fishery and forestry. Unsustainable use of natural resources has put increasing pressure on the environment. The country's forest cover declined from 73 per cent in 1965 to approximately 61 per cent in 2002. The total mangrove area decreased from 94,000 hectares in 1973 to 56,241 in 2002 as a result of intensive farming and charcoal production.

This report identifies key environmental issues including land degradation, depletion of biodiversity, degradation of inland aquatic resources, and the management of coastal and marine resources and waste. These issues have been prioritized and analyzed by various experts, including government officials, scientists, academics and civil society representatives, to determine their policy making implications. This broad-based participatory process brings national environmental issues to the attention of different stakeholders and the general public.

I hope this report will provide a sound basis for decision making for the Kingdom of Cambodia as it addresses environmental issues at the policy level and advances the sustainable development agenda. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the Ministry of Environment, line ministries and associated experts for the fruitful collaboration that made this report possible.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Achim Steiner'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'A'.

Achim Steiner
United Nations Under-Secretary-General and
Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme
November 2008

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