

LET'S PROVIDE SAFE AND REWARDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

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Excellencies and Distinguished Participants,

On behalf of the International Labour Office and the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, I am pleased to be here today and join with you in announcing our collaborative efforts to ensure that the future development of Cambodia's growing tourism industry is both sustainable and rewarding for everyone.

Cambodia's tourism industry has gone from strength to strength in recent years and is emerging as one of the country's fastest growing economic sectors. –The number of international visitors has increased dramatically in 2004, contributing significantly to national incomes and creating over 180,000 jobs.

And the momentum is building. A modern airport welcomes guests flying into Phnom Penh. The beauty of Angkor Wat attracts visitors from all over the world and indeed growing numbers of Cambodian tourists

are once again exploring their own country and enjoying such destinations as Sihanoukville. It means more hotels, more restaurants, more opportunities for smaller entrepreneurs to find and fill a niche for their share of the tourist “Riel.”

What is even more remarkable is that domestic tourists outnumber foreign visitors by 4 to 1. This shows that internal economic growth and prosperity is providing more opportunities for internal travel and movement. While this growth is good news for the Cambodian economy and creates new jobs for those in need, there are also indications of areas where tourism has gone wrong and where we need to quickly act to preserve the gains and contributions of this growing sector.

I am speaking here of naïve young people drawn to the developing tourist destinations in search of work. Young people can indeed find new jobs in the tourism sector but there is evidence that some of them find themselves forced into abusive situations such as prostitution and labour exploitation through trickery, deceit and other forms of coercion.

But a growing tourism industry needn't be a cause for alarm. Properly managed, it can be a positive force for development and contributing to everyone's benefit. But we need to act now.

That's why the ILO Mekong Project to Combat Trafficking in Children and Women has entered into this partnership with the Ministry of Tourism. We want to do our part to help young Cambodians and other young persons from the Greater Mekong Sub-Region find good jobs and avoid falling into the hands of those who would abuse them.

We can do that by supporting the Ministry's efforts to raise awareness of both employers and potential young employees in Cambodia of ways to avoid risky and abusive situations.

As part of the Royal Cambodian Government's efforts to coordinate its sub-regional anti-trafficking pledges in the COMMIT process, the ILO is supporting the Government's strategic plan of action through support of the development of an operational set of guidelines and of training manuals to implement the Government's "Child safe tourism" campaign.

But our support goes beyond the development of manuals . We will be helping to offer on-the-ground training to vulnerable groups in Siem Reap, in Sihanoukville and in Phnom Penh.

We are supporting the Royal Cambodian Government's work at provincial and municipal level through the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veteran and Youth Rehabilitation to ensure young people are made aware of workplaces that may pose a greater risk of abuse.

In order to better ensure that tourism workplaces function properly, and to the benefit of all, we will be supporting the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training in its workplace monitoring activities.

We are also working with other international organizations and NGOs to build strong working alliances in this campaign.

From hotels and guest houses to restaurants and entertainment venues we shall work together to show the world that children can be kept safe and that young people do have the opportunities for decent work in a safe and monitored tourism environment.

This opportunity comes not a moment too soon. We know across the Greater Mekong Sub-region that each year hundreds-of-thousand of

additional young people are joining the labour force. We also know that fewer and fewer are satisfied with village life or a career in agriculture. This increased trend to migrate, coupled with the continued growth of the tourism sector, makes this kind of training and workplace monitoring crucial. I wish you every success in your efforts and, on behalf of the ILO and IPEC, I offer you our continued support and technical assistance.