

Speech at JISPA 30th Anniversary Event

By H.E. Mr. Sok Sopheak, Secretary of State, Ministry of Commerce, Cambodia

November 16, 2023

My esteemed respect to:

- **Ms. Antoinette Monsio Sayeh**, Deputy Managing Director of IMF,
- **Mr. Kentaro Ogata**, Deputy Director-General of the International Bureau, Ministry of Finance of Japan, and
- Excellencies, Ladies, and distinguished alumni of the JISPA

It's my esteemed pleasure and honor to be invited to this memorable event of JISPA 30th Anniversary following its inception since 1993. My professional achievements for over 20 years since my graduation from the Saitama University (GRIPS) in 2000 are undoubtedly indebted to Japan-IMF supports through JISPA scheme. I have to also admit that I am just one of several hundred other alumni of JISPA who have substantially engineered and contributed to the regional and global economic development and growths through their noble roles in their respective governments and institutions.

Indeed, my earliest applications of expertise earned from my studies under JISPA- funding rooted back to my active contribution to Cambodia's successful accession into WTO in 2004 and further regional economic and trade integrations between ASEAN and its trading partners. The knowledge of public policy, which integrated macro-economics and policy analysis, international trade and finance, monetary studies, foreign policy, central and local government, transport policy, and other business cycles and growth theories, among others, helped me effectively contribute to subsequent meetings of Working Party on Cambodia's WTO Accession since May 2001 onward, especially through defending Cambodia's foreign trade regime and completing technical assignments required in these lengthy accession procedures.

Besides, the set of knowledges gained from JISPA-funded study has further placed me at many core roles at Ministry of Commerce to translate Cambodia's commitments under its WTO Work Program, especially in drafting key legislations and formulating economic and trade strategies and policies, aimed at bringing Cambodia's trade practices into strict conformity with WTO's rules, while securing policy spaces for its economic growth and development as a least-developed country member.

I further admit that my other noble works – including drafting Cambodia's commercial codes, negotiating bilateral and multilateral FTAs, initiating policy reforms, and joining the RGC in drafting rectangular and lately pentagon strategies – would be least otherwise without the education provided under this JISPA.

I have always highly treasured Japanese modernization concepts and sophisticated development models embedded in this study program, which I believe not only suit Cambodia's then and present contexts, but also become a model for other developing countries who share common socio-economic conditions to advance their development paths. I am convinced that the concepts in the JISPA program become a solid basis of Asian value, which will drive the region to greater height and bridge the south-north development gap in some years to come.

Before I conclude, I convey my sincere congratulation to the Japanese government and the IMF on making this 30-year journey the many huge impacts on livelihood transformation of millions across Asia through educating many leaders of tomorrow in the region. No matter how far geopolitical rivalries have intensified, climate change has deteriorated, or technologies have advanced, the rampant issues will always be addressed by joint policy actions to which the JISPA will always be relevant.

Last but not least, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all professors, dean and all staff of GRIPS, Saitama University for providing me with knowledge and support during my stay in Japan. On behalf of (Cambodian) JISPA alumni and scholars, I also sincerely appreciate the professional and dedicated supports provided by all JISPA partnership universities.

I look forward to continuing being a JISPA alumnus of growth and influence and wish this 30th Anniversary Event a very memorable deliberation.

Thank you !