



## **AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY PHNOM PENH**

4 September 2017

### **AUSTRALIAN STATEMENT ON THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN CAMBODIA**

Australia is concerned about recent developments in Cambodia that threaten to narrow the political space, particularly the freedom for opposition parties, civil society and media organisations to play their part in Cambodia's wider democracy. Australia is specifically concerned by the arrest of Kem Sokha, the leader of opposition Cambodian National Rescue Party, on 3 September 2017. This represents a further deterioration in the political situation in the lead up to national elections in July 2018.

We urge Cambodian authorities to take all necessary steps to maintain an open democratic space in which all voices can be heard. Freedom of expression and association, a vibrant media and an active opposition are essential elements of a successful democracy.

As a longstanding friend of Cambodia, Australia urges Cambodia to fully implement the principles of democracy as affirmed in the ASEAN Charter, and to respect freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association.

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