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**Opening Remarks by Her Excellency CHEA SEREY**  
**Governor of the National Bank of Cambodia**  
**At the Regional Conference on “The Use of Anti-Money Laundering and**  
**Countering Terrorist Financing in the Investigation of Art and Antiquities**  
**Criminality”**  
**Siem Reap, 27-29 November 2024**

- **H.E. Mr. Igor DRIESMANS, Ambassador of the European Union to the Kingdom of Cambodia**
- **Ms. Suzie White, Acting Deputy Executive Secretary of Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG)**
- **Mr. David Hotte, Team Leader of the EU Global Facility**
- **Excellencies, Distinguished guests, Resource speakers, Ladies and Gentlemen!**

**A very good morning!**

It is an honor for me to join you at the regional conference on “The Use of Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism in the Investigation of Art and Antiquities Criminality”, and warmly welcome you to Siem Reap – an ancient capital of Cambodia and home to the UNESCO World Heritage site of Angkor.

Art and antiques are invaluable symbols of human history and creativity. These invaluable artifacts, however, have also become prime targets for criminal networks. Therefore, this three-day regional conference will serve as an essential platform for participants, such as law enforcement authorities, financial intelligence units and prosecutors, to exchange information and share best practices in combating illicit activities in the art and antiquities market, as well as strengthen collaborations.

In light of this important event, I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to the EU Global Facility and the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG) for entrusting Cambodia to host this regional conference.

I also would like to take a moment to share a brief insight into our host city. Siem Reap is a vibrant city offering a blend of historical sites, natural landscapes, and modern amenities, situated in the northwestern region of Cambodia. The region is renowned for

its array of Hindu and Buddhist temples, including Bayon, Ta Prohm, and the iconic Angkor Wat, all parts of the 400-square-kilometer Angkor Archaeological Park designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1992. Beyond its ancient wonders, Siem Reap offers much more than dawn visits to the temples, there are: riverside promenades, local artisan markets, stunning gardens, a booming restaurant and café culture, plus art galleries and a warm welcoming atmosphere. Tourism matters in Cambodia not only because it is one of our main engines for economic growth and employment, but also because its exponential growth was instrumental in significantly curbing the lootings that plagued our temples during the war that tore our country apart. Thanks to the peace and stability that has prevailed in Cambodia for the past three decades, national and international visitors have flocked to Siem Reap – Angkor, keeping looters of cultural goods at bay.

Let me take this opportunity to inform you that in response to the growing number of international tourists visiting Cambodia, the National Bank of Cambodia (NBC) has introduced the Bakong Tourists App, a new digital payment tool created to enhance the visitor experience and offer more than just access to cultural and heritage attractions. This innovative app simplifies digital payments, making it easier for visitors to connect with approximately 3.3 million local businesses nationwide. Earlier this month, the NBC further partnered with Mastercard to expand the app's functionality, allowing foreign tourists to make seamless transactions. Upon arrival in Cambodia, international visitors can easily download the app, top up their Bakong accounts by linking it with their Mastercard issued in their home countries for convenient payments throughout Cambodia.

**Excellencies, Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Besides the conference, I hope that you will find some time in your busy schedule to explore the World Heritage Park and discover the rich culture of Cambodia.

To end my remarks, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the EU Global Facility and the APG for making this conference possible, and I very much appreciate the hard works of the organizing teams from Cambodia Financial Intelligence Unit (CAFIU) and the NBC Cabinet for facilitating this event. I also wish to thank all guest speakers and participants for dedicating their valuable time to this Conference.

Last but not least, I would like to extend my best wishes to Your Excellencies, distinguished guests, resource speakers, ladies and gentlemen, for good health, good luck, and success in all your endeavors, and hope you have a pleasant stay in Siem Reap.

**Thank you!**