

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

My name is Charles Twining, and I am honored to be asked to speak on this historic occasion celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Paris Accords. Permit me first of all to pay my respects to His Excellency Prak Sokhonn, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, and to all others who have worked for the cause of peace in Cambodia.

For several years before 1991 I was a participant with our Cambodian friends and international partners in efforts to find a settlement to the ongoing conflict, one marked by terrible violence, a large flow of refugees to neighboring countries, and instability. Negotiations, often conducted in an atmosphere of great distrust, were far from easy. Various proposals were examined that would bring Cambodians together but there were invariably problems from one side or another. At times, particularly with the failure of the first conference in Paris in 1989, you wondered whether the Cambodian parties would ever have the will to make the necessary compromises.

It was important to persevere, however. The role of so many in the international community, both individual countries and organizations like ASEAN, proved to be an invaluable assist in pressing for agreement. I must point out the active involvement of the United States in both pushing the negotiating process and in drafting the documents. I believe that all of us were aware that the price of failure would be terrible.

The Agreements of October 23, 1991, were a major step toward the establishment of a new, hopefully violence-free, and unified Cambodia. They would permit the country to rejoin the community of nations. Shortly after Paris I re-established the American presence in Cambodia, as did the other signatories, our roles being to support the Agreements, the Supreme National Council headed by His Royal Highness Prince Norodom Sihanouk, and the UN peacekeeping operation. There were frequently challenges to the implementation of the Accords, but we kept the process moving forward toward the 1993 elections despite differences.

As we reflect on where Cambodia stands 25 years later, I believe it is important to remember some of the major objectives of the Paris Accords and to reaffirm them today. Ones I choose as particularly vital both then and now are the following:

- Ending Violence.
- Supporting National Reconciliation and National Unity.
- Ensuring that the policies and practices of the past can never return.
- Ensuring respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and,
- Respecting the constitutional provision that Cambodia will follow a system of liberal democracy.

All was accomplished through compromise and dialogue. Although no Cambodian participants were entirely satisfied, they agreed to work together for the greater interest of their country. I suggest that this is a key lesson worth bearing in mind as you look forward to the next 25 years.

Since leaving Cambodia I served for a time in Burundi. In that country torn by civil war and ethnic conflict, ten years of negotiations led to a peace agreement in 2002, a large UN peacekeeping operation, and a transitional government striving for national unity. Sadly, that way forward has not endured, and Burundi is once again deteriorating into violence.

You can be proud that your history since 1991 is more positive. You have seized the development benefits flowing from peace, stability, and the maintenance of a

democratic system. May Cambodia continue to represent peace and happiness, serving as an example to the world of what one country with a long and proud history can accomplish.

Thank you very much.