



## **Statement and Key Asks from International Conservation NGOs National Forum on 'Protection and Conservation of Natural Resource'**

We, Birdlife International, Conservation International, Flora Fauna International, Wild Earth Allies, Wildlife Alliance, Wildlife Conservation Society and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), would like to congratulate the Royal Government of Cambodia on the legal designation of new protected areas and corridor connectivity, with a total 7.43 million hectares - almost half of the country's land - for legal protection. We congratulate the Royal Government of Cambodia for maintaining its status among the fastest growing economies in the world, with an average of 7% per annum during the last decade. We acknowledge that the natural capital of Cambodia - and the ecosystem services its supports - is a fundamental underpinning of the country's economic performance.

We acknowledge that ecotourism is the fastest growing tourism sector in the world. Globally wildlife viewing is a major component of ecotourism generating millions of dollars annually and creating tens of thousands of jobs in remote rural communities. The northeast of Cambodia where government has already identified as a third tourism destination in the Kingdom of Cambodia, has huge potential for developing attractive ecotourism products. Tiger is a magnificent creature and is the best-loved animal on Earth. Saving tiger, we save so much more. To protect tiger, we must protect the great forests, grasslands and other wildlife species.

***Question 1: Can the Prime Minister confirm the government's commitment to making tiger reintroduction in Srepok Wildlife Sanctuary and tiger focused ecotourism central to the economy of Monduliri province?***

We note that the mandate, roles and responsibilities of Ministry of Environment (MOE) are enormous. However, the capacity and resources to deliver this huge task is still limited. The national budget allocation to MOE in 2017 was around 0.4% of the total annual government budget (amounting to approximately US\$20 million). This annual budget allocation is insufficient to effectively protect the country's extensive protected area network of 46 Protected Areas and 1.4 million hectares for wildlife corridors.

***Question 2: Can the Prime Minister commit to increasing the Ministry of Environment's annual budget from the current 0.4% to 2% of the total national budget; of which 1% of this budget is allocated directly for Protected Area Management?***

We realize the urgent need for the economic development of Cambodia. Finding the equilibrium between resource use and protection is a critical element of Cambodia's sustainable development goals. The key to achieving this balance is spatial planning for each province where protected areas are cornerstone to land use plans. Spatial planning brings stakeholders together through a landscape approach, and is therefore a vital contribution to sustainable development and supporting a local economy founded on non-extractive sectors.

***Question 3: Can the Prime Minister commit to working with Provincial authorities to develop comprehensive land use plans by having protected areas as cornerstone of plan?***

At the end, we would like to thank the government under the great leadership of Samdech Akeak Moha Sena Padey Techo **Hun Sen** for conducting this annual Forum giving access to all relevant stakeholders to voice their thoughts in order that we can closely work together to protect our country's natural resources.