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Opening Remarks

Jose Ma. Carlos
AMIC-Singapore
CONSULTATION ON MEDIA & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
December 7-9, 1998, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Opening Remarks by Joe Ma. Carlos  
Head, Seminars & Institutional Development Programme, AMIC

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

To all our participants, welcome to Cambodia and to the three-day Consultation on Media & Economic Development.

To our special guests, in particular, Minister He Lu Laysreng, Minister of Information, and His Excellency Sieng LaPress, media adviser to the Royal Government of Cambodia, thank you for your hospitality and accepting our invitation to this Consultation.

This meeting is a follow-up to the series of Consultation that began in Vietnam in November, 1996. That meeting focused on the role of media in the promotion of national identity and culture.

The theme of this meeting is truly relevant to Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam as they grapple with Asia's economic slowdown, globalization, trade liberalization and the advent of new communication technologies. They are dynamic forces that have long-term implications on the growth of these three countries, and mass media is a force to reckon with in this environment.

As countries modernize, the process of economic development demands an accelerated planned change in a society. It calls for investments in both the physical and material infrastructure on the one hand, and human resources on the other.

For that change to take place, there must be an increasing flow of relevant information about many issues, among them, better living conditions, better health and medical care, better agricultural and industrial output, labor productivity, more trade and investments. The presentation of this information must be in such a way as it awakens interest, stimulates aspirations for change, and encourages commitment to national development. This is an area where mass media can play a critical role.

In Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, there is a demand for accelerated change as they address the economic issues and the modernization process.
In such an environment, how has mass media performed in providing relevant information about better possibilities for change?

How has mass media performed to further the decision making process of modifying, strengthening and rejecting attitudes, valued practices, policies and regulations that promote economic development?

How has mass media performed in disseminating new ideas and information to broaden the mental horizons of the people?

How has mass media performed in helping teach the people new skills to address the changing needs of economic development?

These questions and issues are complex and have no easy answers. While we have more media participants in this meeting, policy makers are aptly represented. We believe that this mix augurs well in addressing some of the issues I raised. At the end of this meeting, we expect the participants to be convinced of their critical role in providing relevant information that promote economic development, to generate an agenda of action to strengthen the linkage between media and economic development, and enhance camaraderie for a lasting professional relationship.

Before I end my opening remarks, may I express our gratitude to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency and the Cambodia Communication Institute for their support to ensure the success of this consultation.

Thank you very much.