Grassroots People's Assembly
Joint Statement

We the peasants, small-scale farmers and food producers, indigenous people, fishermen, garment factory workers, sex workers, entertainment workers, youth, land and environmental defenders, women's rights activists and feminists, human rights defenders, independent and community artists, civil society organizations, gathered together as members of the **ASEAN Grassroots People's Assembly (AGPA) 2022.**

The AGPA 2022 theme was: ***ADDRESSING CRISES, PARTICULARLY HUMAN RIGHTS, VIOLATIONS, POLITICAL TENSION AND VIOLENCE TOGETHER.*** The Assembly brought together participants from 20 provinces/cities in Cambodia; and some other friends and civil society organizations from different countries in the ASEAN region.

The 2022 Assembly has been held to address issues, challenges and impacts of the various crises that people are experiencing, especially the human rights crisis, the crisis of the Covid-19 epidemic, and the crises of neoliberalism, conflict and climate change.

This statement is a result of an almost year-long preparation process and in particular the consultative meetings with the communities listed above, as well as the outputs from the thematic workshops and the public assembly. We sincerely hope that the Royal Government of Cambodia, the host of the ASEAN summit, responds to our needs, requests and recommendations, which are fully contained in this Statement, and provides us with solutions in a just, efficient and transparent manner, including considering the formulation of policies to protect and support the general population.

Peoples' Needs, their Requests and Recommendations to the Government:

1. Food Security and Food Sovereignty for People

- To restore, promote and provide traditional seed varieties to peasants, small and medium scale farmers and food producers.
- To create a national policy to support peasants and small and medium scale farmers and food producers, creating/increasing the state budget for promoting agroecology and natural agricultural farming practices in order to restore the health of the environment, humans, animals and soil, and ensure food sovereignty and food security in local and regional contexts.
- To strengthen and control the flow of imported goods, especially agricultural products, foods and agricultural inputs to ensure the safety and well-being of people, animals and the environment.
- To increase tariffs on imported agricultural products, to ensure competition between local farmers and small-scale food producers.
- To rehabilitate and build water sources for farming and clean water for peasants, farmers and small-scale food producers.
- To control and take action against rice mill brokers for the exploitation of peasants/farmers and small food producers who lower the prices of agricultural products.
- To re-distribute social land concessions to peasants, farmers and small-scale food producers for agriculture and local food production.
- To provide technical support to agroecological farming practices such as providing seeds, animals, vegetables, rice and other resources to small-scale food producers.
- To stop importing all kinds of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and agrochemicals.
- To ensure a fair market for local farmers and small/medium food producers.

- To ratify the United Nations Declaration on Rights of Peasants (UNDROP).

2. Land Rights, Housing Rights, Indigenous Peoples and Natural Resources

- To review and confiscate any economic land concessions those violate the principles/agreement as state property and re-distribute those lands to the poor, especially small-scale farmers, and landlessness.
- To accelerate the resolution of land issues for the people and provide legal ownership to them all over the country immediately, especially the communities in Koh Kong, Siem Reap, Sihanoukville, Kampong Chhnang and Oddar Meanchey, to enable them to use these lands for a better livelihood.
- To provide social land concessions to the poor and landless farmers in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner.
- To organize consultations with local communities and civil society, on any investment projects or development plans that may result in land grabbing and/or cause the degradation or destruction of forests, environment and natural resources.
- To recognize the rights and expedite the registration of collective land for indigenous communities.
- To recognize the rights of and to allow forest communities and networks to participate in the protection of natural resources, especially for Prey Lang, Prey Preah Rokar and other protected areas throughout Cambodia.
- To order the Apsara Authority to stop the forced evictions of people from the Angkor area.
- To stop using the judiciary system from putting pressure on and suing the land victims, especially people who live in Koh Kong, Sihanoukville, Kampong Chhnang and other provinces.
- To prevent all kinds of crimes pertaining to fishing as well as stop the import of all kinds of illegal fishing gear and its distribution, to improve the livelihood of fishermen and the ordinary people.
- To cancel any notification (Government order), sub-decree or any investment project that affects the forest communities and natural resources.

3. Human Rights, Freedom, Civil Space and Democracy

- To guarantee the right to assembly and meetings, and freedom of expression for workers inside and outside the system.
- To stop considering communities, environmental defenders, artists and others as opposition parties or opponents.
- To stop monitoring of and violating the rights of citizens, especially the rights of indigenous peoples.
- To fully respect civil and political rights of citizens.
- To provide necessary freedoms in using art and music to participate in and promote development and social justice.
- To provide support to needy artists, especially the older who have sacrificed their whole life to participate in promoting our Cambodian art/culture.
- To stop using art as a business promotion tool, since art is the heart and soul of the nation;
  We call to uphold real democracy and peace
  To uphold free and fair elections
- To keep the National Election of Cambodia fully independent.

4. Decent, Dignified and Fair Work for Formal and Informal Workers

- To amend punitive laws and policies against the sex workers and recognize their rights as workers' rights.

- To provide access to justice, and stop discrimination between workers working formal and informal systems.
- To establish necessary mechanisms and provide legal protections to ensure effective employment of women and migrants.
- To ensure their rights and secure employment for workers, and the termination of the use of short-term employment contracts for formal and informal workers.
- To provide job security and stability, good working conditions, reasonable wages and living conditions for workers in and out of the system.
- To ensure that investors, especially with reference to foreign direct investment, make deposits for payments and provide fair compensation in accordance with the Labor Law, to both formal and informal workers, in the occasion of a crisis or when a factory goes bankrupt.
- To promote decent living conditions, dignity, security and safety for workers formal or informal, by ensuring incomes in line with living costs as room rents, water, electricity and sanitation services.
- To establish a mechanism to provide protection for workers' rights, freedoms and other benefits in accordance with the Labor Law, and the implementation of the National Budget and Social Security provisions for all workers, including informal or unregistered workers.

5. Impact of Free Trade and Investment Flows on Natural Resources, Environment and the Local Food System

- To ensure balance and provide protection to garment workers, small and medium enterprises in line with what the Government has done for large investors, both foreign and local.
- To include the voices of garment workers in the process of amending the articles contained in the Labor Law of the Kingdom of Cambodia.
- To urge multinational corporations and brands, and Evergreen Factory owner to pay workers under the Labor Law or provide a settlement mechanism to the nine workers of Evergreen.
- To mandate the direct responsibility of the factory owner when a factory closes or goes bankrupt, and avoid the use of state advance packages that detract from the national budget.
- To ensure the inclusion of the voices of farmers, small-scale food producers, workers and local people in all development policy-making processes, and that the rights and interests of the people are guaranteed and protected.
- To conduct study the negative effects of free trade and investment agreements in advance.
- To cancel any investment projects and free trade agreements that affect the nature, local economy, food system and people's livelihood.

6. The public health situation and Covid-19 Crisis

- To provide free and efficient health care and treatment services to the poor and vulnerable people.
- To provide universal, affordable and adequate health services for all citizens, including for workers in both the formal and informal sectors.
- To promote the implementation of social protection for workers in both formal and informal sectors.
- To continue to provide vaccines, medicines, care and treatment to people who got Covid-19 free of cost.
- To increase the national budget on public health expenditures to reduce the direct expenses from the out-of-pocket health expenditure by the people.
- To strengthen efficiency, quality and access to health services through the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) and the social protection system.

Phnom Penh, 3rd November 2022