

## **Two Decades on a Journey with the Poor – Caritas Cambodia 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary 1990-2010**

**Phnom Penh, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2010**

**Address by Dr Lesley-Anne Knight, Secretary General, Caritas Internationalis**

Your Excellencies, honoured guests from the Royal Government of Cambodia, Dr Kim Rattana, Director of Caritas Cambodia, Caritas staff and friends from around the world, it is my joy and honour to be here in Phnom Penh today to mark 20 years of service of Caritas Cambodia to the poor.

It is an enormous pleasure to greet Bishop Emile Destombes, the founder of Caritas Cambodia, Bishop Kike Figaredo, the current Caritas Cambodia Chairman as well as Bishop Olivier of Phnom Penh, and Bishop Yvon Ambroise, President of Caritas Asia.

I am honoured to share this podium with our honoured guests, Her Excellency Dr Man Sam An, Deputy Prime Minister and His Excellency Tav Senghour, Senior Minister responsible for Special Missions and First Vice Chairman of Council for Agriculture and Rural Development.

On behalf of the President of Caritas International, His Eminence Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga S.D.B, and the 164 other Caritas organisations who together with Caritas Cambodia make up our global Caritas Confederation, our warmest congratulations to all our colleagues and friends in Caritas Cambodia.

Caritas Internationalis means “love across the nations” and it was that spirit of deep love and concern for the dignity of humanity across all ethnic and religious boundaries that moved the founders and directors of Caritas Cambodia, Mons. Destombes and Mons. Ramousse, working closely with Caritas partners, notably Secours Catholique – Caritas France in the early 1990s, to establish co-operation with the Royal Government of Cambodia, notably the ministries for Social Welfare, Health and Education to care for the poorest and most vulnerable. May I take this opportunity to give our special thanks to the Royal Government of Cambodia for its wonderful cooperation over the last 20 years.

Today in the global Caritas Confederation around the world, we are rightly proud of Caritas Cambodia. The unity of the Caritas network and our strong roots in the poor communities of the world, give us an authentic and respected voice on the world stage. Caritas Cambodia’s current expertise adds weight to the effectiveness of our work worldwide, in disaster preparedness and emergency response, migration and women’s empowerment, food security, the right to food and climate adaptation, and access to healthcare.

Caritas seeks to promote the common good, addressing the structural causes of poverty, whether economic, political or cultural. We believe that economic structures should put people before profit. We support fairer trade, further debt cancellation and increased aid, more wisely spent.

On climate change, Caritas calls on richer countries to cut their greenhouse gas emissions and to provide poorer countries with additional finance to stimulate sustainable development and mitigate the effects of climate change.

As poverty, conflict and climate change force ever more people from their homes each year, Caritas is working to protect the rights of migrants and to end the trafficking of people. Caritas is particularly concerned with the plight of women and girls who are increasingly becoming victims of trafficking and forced migration.

On our planet today more than a billion people do not get enough to eat. Food security threatens to become an increasingly urgent issue in the current decade and Caritas will continue to work towards universal recognition of the Right to Food. We are calling for more aid and greater investment in agriculture, aimed at small farms and women producers, who are the backbone of rural economies and crucial players in ensuring household security.

Caritas is also concerned and campaigns on behalf of those at risk from devastating pandemics, such as HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. We are calling for greater access to child friendly anti-retroviral drugs for children with HIV. Like Caritas Cambodia, more than 100 Caritas organisations worldwide are working in vital care of people affected by HIV.

I have had the privilege over the past few days of visiting the treasures of Cambodian culture and faith traditions – the temples of the Angkor Archaeological Park in Siem Reap.

In Bayon, the four smiling faces depicted on the towers speak to us all still today of those values which unite us across the nations, across ethnic and religious boundaries, in one common humanity. They are the values too of Caritas and my wish for Caritas Cambodia is that these values embodied in our faith reach out to all the poor and marginalized your serve in your beautiful nation: equality, sympathy, compassion and loving kindness.

In carrying out your mission of works of charity in justice, may you continue to promote true human development in Cambodia.

Thank you