

5th Sunhak Peace Prize Award Ceremony: Make the World Better for the Future

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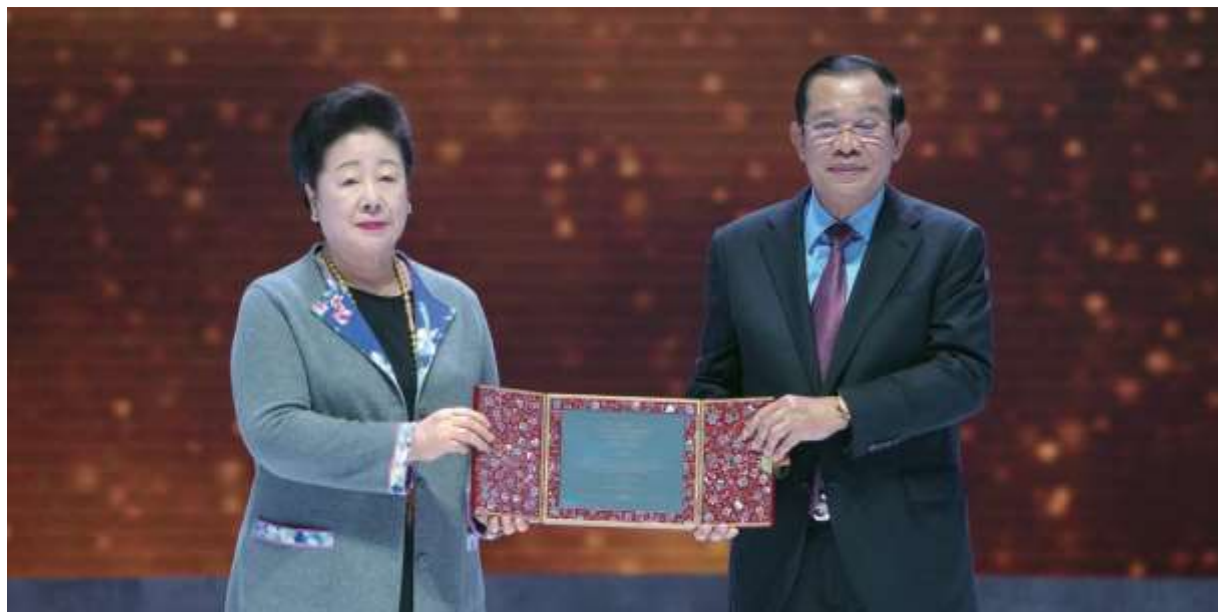
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Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia



I am profoundly moved and touched to have been selected as the laureate of the 2022 Sunhak Peace Prize. I am so honored and would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the Sunhak Peace Prize Committee for recognizing my work in ending the long civil war and building long-lasting peace in Cambodia.

On this auspicious occasion as well, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Professor Dame Sarah Catherine Gilbert, co-developer of the AstraZeneca vaccine, for having also been selected as a laureate of the 2022 Sunhak Peace Prize. Your work has greatly contributed to the fight against COVID-19 pandemic and saved millions of lives around the world.



For me, this 2022 Sunhak Peace Prize is not something that I did alone. Many other people also deserve to share this prize for their support of my effort to build peace in Cambodia. First, the late King Father, Norodom Sihanouk, the Queen Mother, and our current monarch deserve our deep gratitude for their roles in promoting the spirit of national unity among all Cambodians as a big family. Second, I must thank my family for their love and support throughout my adventure searching for peace for my country. Third, the other leaders and members of the Cambodian government and the armed forces from all factions have played crucial roles in our collective endeavor to build and promote peace. Fourth, friendly countries and the international community aided Cambodia's peace process and post-conflict national reconstruction. Last, I must thank my countrymen for their enthusiastic support of the government's Little Angels policy that has created a conducive environment for a robust peace ecosystem in Cambodia.

For me, peace is more precious than anything. It is the most beautiful thing. It gives people hope and puts a smile on people's faces. People who have not experienced hardship and suffering created by wars may take peace for granted. Those who have lived through periods of violent conflicts or wars know how precious peace is. I wish to share my own experience of growing up and living through decades of the civil war in Cambodia. I was forced to quit my studies in 1970 when my country became deeply divided, and war was looming. My childhood and teenage self, which should have experienced great joy if the country had been peaceful, went through only hardship and suffering. I was in great despair about my future and the future of my country.

From that moment, I devoted my life to searching for peace for Cambodia. It took almost three decades to realize my dream, and I had to endure hardship and take life risks along the way. I was wounded and lost one eye. I had to escape on foot to Vietnam through minefields and the heavily militarized border at night while leaving my pregnant wife behind in Cambodia.

In 1996, I took a life risk again by negotiating with the Khmer Rouge at their stronghold to persuade them to put down their arms and join the government under the Little Angels Policy that guarantees their lives, right to property ownership, rank and profession. The policy allowed Cambodia to achieve full peace in 1998. It has enabled the government to focus its full attention on national development, and the Cambodian people enjoy the benefits and opportunities that peace and development offer. Cambodia has maintained peace for more than twenty years, and we are committed to protecting and promoting it.



From Cambodia's experiences with wars and peace, I wish to emphasize "No peace, No hope. No peace, No development. No peace, No respect for human rights and democracy." And I share the same belief as Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon that "peace is concrete action, not a vague dream." That is why my government has made it a priority to send thousands of Cambodian soldiers to participate in UN peacekeeping and mine-clearance operations in Africa and the Middle East, hoping to help restore peace in those regions.

Moreover, although our country is small, we assist the peace process in the region and the world with goodwill, responsibility and honesty.

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen: Peace in our region and the world remains fragile and under stress due to compounding factors, including great power rivalries, rising nationalism, terrorism as well as poverty and food insecurity, due to climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. These have the potential to damage human progress at best and wipe out the whole human race at worst if left unaddressed.

Therefore, we need to increase and diversify our collaborations and partnerships to minimize the impacts of those threats while enhancing a robust peace ecosystem.

Promoting peace is essential for our present, but, more importantly, as the Sunhak Peace Prize's slogan succinctly expresses will "Make the World Better for Future Generations."