Opening remarks at the

Reception/Banquet to launch the

Two-day IDRC-Cambodia All Partners’ Meeting

Phnom Penh, Cambodia
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Maureen O’Neil
President, International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

Thank you, Mr. Rotha, our Master of Ceremonies. Your Excellency Dr. Mok Mareth, invited guests, representatives of our collaborators in this event from the Community Based Natural Resource Management Learning Institute and the Cambodia Development Resources Institute, IDRC partners present, past and future: it is an honour and a pleasure to be with you this evening.

I am the president of Canada’s International Development Research Centre and I have served in that capacity for a decade. When I look out at the faces of our partners in an important country such as Cambodia, I am reminded of how important your work is and how special our responsibility is to work with you.

Cambodia is a country at the crossroads. Your civilization goes back millennia. Your democracy is but a decade old. Your social and economic circumstances are challenging. Your natural resources are abundant. Your strategic position in Southeast Asia is promising, while your challenges in infrastructure and institutional development remain compelling.

But above all of this is the need for capable, trained, seasoned Cambodians to help make your democracy function, your economy prosper, and your community and people benefit. I see the future in your faces. Your talent, skill, vision, and perseverance will make the difference about what kind of future your country has.

Our organization funds mostly research networks. While the work we do in the environment, in social and economic policy, in ICTs for development, and, now, in innovation and S&T takes place in countries, we have come to believe that networks of applied researchers trying to address development problems across borders is a special niche and role for us.

While this is our general practice, very recently we asked ourselves, if we were to have a bit more of a country focus, where would we do this and what would it look like.
Our regional office in Southeast and East Asia was the very first to respond to this question. They went through a systematic process of reviewing the work our organization had done in the region and of the development opportunities and challenges faced by nations in this region.

The country they picked where we will attempt this new approach is Cambodia. Cambodia is not only the first country that we picked in Southeast Asia, it is the first country that we have selected for this process in the more than 100 countries where we work in the developing world.

So, now that we have “picked” Cambodia, what will this mean? How will it change what we do? How will it change what YOU do? Over the next two days, we hope that IDRC’s first-ever national All Partners’ Meeting will help us begin to answer these questions.

My colleague, Rich Fuchs, our new Regional Director for Southeast Asia, will tell you a bit more about what we hope to accomplish in his introductory remarks tomorrow. But, rest assured that we are most interested to see how our partners want to construct the future of our programming in Cambodia. We also hope that you will use this opportunity to get to know one another even better.

I want to thank His Excellency, the Minister of the Environment, for being with us this evening. I am very much looking forward to his words. A man of such great experience and wisdom has so much to offer us all.

Let me close by offering my hope that you have a wonderful dinner together. My hope extends to the aspiration that our work together can be of assistance as your wonderful country marks its passages through the crossroads of this very important time in its history.

Thank you.