

## Operation Storm Final Meeting and International Law Enforcement Training Seminar on Combating Counterfeit Drugs

Phnom Penh, 17-19 November 2008

Opening speech by H.E. Sar Kheng, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, Cambodia

Excellency Ronald K. Noble, Secretary General of INTERPOL,  
Excellency Minister of Health,  
Chairmen,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia and Ministry of Interior, I would like to express my very warm welcome to Excellency Ronald K. Noble, Excellency Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, and our foreign country representatives in this important forum.

The Kingdom of Cambodia and the law enforcement agency are greatly honoured today to host the final meeting of Operation Storm to combat the illegal production and distribution of counterfeit drugs, and also the law enforcement training seminar initiated by the joint efforts of INTERPOL, the World Health Organization (WHO), and World Customs Organization (WCO).

Taking this special occasion, I would like to thank INTERPOL, WHO, and WCO for their co-operative efforts and mutual assistance on a global scale, particularly in Southeast Asia, and their success in combating the illicit production and distribution of counterfeit drugs.

Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We all know that the production, trafficking, and distribution of counterfeit drugs are spreading and threatening the health and lives of the people, and potentially destroying the economic foundation of the world, particularly in developing countries.

A survey conducted by WHO in 2007 estimated that approximately 20,000 people lose their lives each year due to the consumption of fake medicines, especially anti-malaria pills, and it also stated that if such medicines were strictly checked and controlled for their quality, about one million lives would be saved annually. Another survey conducted by the US-based Centre for Medicines in the Public Interest estimated that the financial scope of the counterfeit medicine trade will increase to 75 billion US dollars by year 2010, representing a 92% increase compared to 2005.

The spread of counterfeit drugs can be caused by a number of contributing factors including the high price of genuine drugs on the market compared to fake drugs, lack of resources and control mechanisms and monitoring, lack of test kits to identify the source and quality of drugs on the market, limited training on drug quality identification for health workers and law enforcement officers, particularly within developing countries, and opportunistic criminal groups who continue to threaten the health and lives of innocent people. Moreover, a number of studies conducted by experts indicate that the production and distribution



of fake drugs share common characteristics with transnational organized crime which could potentially affect many countries if no concrete solution is found.

Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

With a view to preventing and curbing the negative and harmful spread of counterfeit drugs, the Royal Government of Cambodia – under the leadership of Samdech Aka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia – in previous terms and its fourth term, has placed significant attention to setting up mechanisms and measures to protect and promote the health of the people and reduce dangers caused by counterfeit drugs. Recently, laws on drug control have been developed and adopted by the National Assembly and the Senate and promulgated by the King of the Kingdom of Cambodia for official implementation.

Moreover, although Cambodia is not a producer nor distributor of counterfeit drugs, the Royal Government has established a national body namely the “Committee to Combat Counterfeit Drug and Illegal Health Service” comprised of members from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Economy and Finance, Ministry of Forestry and Fishery, and other relevant institutions. Side by side, similar mechanisms have been set up at sub-national level to manage, control, and monitor the illicit trade of fake medicines and small traditional herbal medicine enterprises and businesses operating in the Kingdom of Cambodia. Joining this effort, the Government has placed great importance on civil society participation to ensure more effective and fruitful measures against the illegal production and distribution of fake drugs. These measures will be connected to regional actions, including the exchange of information and experiences in a regional and international forum, particularly within the Great Mekong Sub-region.

Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It must be emphasized that no one state alone can fully succeed in fighting against the production and distribution of counterfeit drugs. We must rely on close co-operation to exchange intelligence, share our respective roles and responsibilities, particularly between source, transit, and destination countries – where there are high potential risks of people using counterfeit drugs – in order to take appropriate actions to prevent and eliminate fake drugs.

Some countries have already undertaken certain activities to prevent and suppress the production and distribution of counterfeit drugs by establishing stricter controls on importation and designated entry points where drugs can be imported into the country; stricter requirements for drug production licenses; detailed information of importers for inspection teams to conduct checks prior to approval; and the development of mini-laboratories to test drug quality. These measures have undoubtedly contributed very much to the reduction of quantities of counterfeit drugs and their distribution, and helped protect many lives.

Despite the above, in today's world of globalization with modern technology everything is changing very rapidly, so the means and methods of producing and distributing fake drugs are developing and increasing in quantity, posing a grave threat to people's health and lives.

During the final meeting of Operation Storm being held today, followed by the law enforcement training in the next two days, the forum will listen to experts in the field with experience of the international situation of counterfeit drugs and related investigation techniques, which will shed more light on our understanding of this complex issue. I trust that, Ladies and Gentlemen, you will make good use of this important forum to further expand your knowledge on the measures which have been established thus far and to share your personal views and opinion to ensure the meeting and training session are a meaningful forum to promote our campaign against the production and distribution of counterfeit drugs.

Taking this precious occasion, I would like to share with all of you the following recommendations:

Each state takes appropriate measures to ensure national legal frameworks are consistent with all international mechanisms which have already been set up to combat counterfeit drugs;  
Promote law enforcement activities targeting crimes related to illegal licensing, production, and distribution of counterfeit drugs and ensure strict punishment for individuals involved in counterfeit drug-related crime;

Each state shall have its dedicated team to facilitate, receive recommendations, and exchange relevant information and intelligence on harmful risks for regional co-operation to combat the production and distribution of counterfeit drugs;

Authorities along the respective borders shall engage in close co-operation in investigating suspicious counterfeit drug-related crime and, on a regular basis, exchange information relevant to the chain of production and distribution, identification of criminals, organizations, means and methods of distribution. Information and evidence must be submitted in a timely fashion to relevant co-operation partners in order to expedite arrest, investigation, and prosecution of offenders;

Public and private sectors shall work together to monitor and transfer modern technology such as drug quality test kits to medical professionals and law enforcement agencies in developing countries;

Promote education and awareness among health workers, pharmacists and the public of the harms and dangers caused by counterfeit drugs.

I trust that the above-mentioned suggestions help contribute to the discussion in this workshop and to the future development of policy, plans of action, and practical measures to combat counterfeit drugs.

I, once again, would like to thank the General Secretariat of INTERPOL, WHO, and WCO for all their support in organizing this important meeting and training course.

I wish your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen every success and a pleasant stay while in Cambodia and now declare the meeting and training workshop open.

Thank you.