

OPENING STATEMENT OF THE AGENT OF THE KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA

First Meeting of the Conciliation Commission

Open joint session (webcast)

Introduction and Thanks

Madam Chairperson, Members of the Commission, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

it is a great honour for me to address you as Agent on behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia at this first meeting between the Parties and the Commission.

Cambodia is grateful to you, Madam Chairperson and Members of the Commission, for having agreed to serve on the Commission, and for the breadth of experience that you bring to these proceedings. I also wish to thank the Permanent Court of Arbitration, and in particular Dr Di Giacomo Toledo, Ms Seok, and their colleagues, for their efficient conduct of the Registry's functions.

I extend our thanks to the representatives of the Kingdom of Thailand and to all other participants for their presence today.

Cambodia and its Decision to Initiate Conciliation

Before turning to the substance of Cambodia's presentation, I would like to speak briefly about the country I have the privilege of representing and to explain why Cambodia has initiated this conciliation.

Members of the Commission, Cambodia has a proud history but has faced considerable adversity.

The Khmer Empire, dating from the 9th century, was one of Southeast Asia's great civilizations. Its enduring legacy is reflected in monuments such as Angkor Wat and the Temple of Preah Vihear, both inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, as well as Cambodia's rich traditions of dance, theatre, music and martial arts, many of which are recognized as part of the world's intangible cultural heritage.

Cambodia became a French Protectorate in 1863. Its modern territorial boundaries were established through a series of treaties and maps, including the Franco-Siamese Convention of 1904 and Treaty of 1907 and the maps produced pursuant to them, which defined its land border with Thailand.

Following independence from France in 1953, Cambodia initially enjoyed relative peace and prosperity. This was shattered by the spill-over of regional conflicts of the 1960s and 1970s, during which Cambodia endured massive aerial bombardment. From 1975 to 1979, the Khmer Rouge regime perpetrated one of the gravest tragedies of the twentieth century, claiming the lives of approximately one quarter of the population and devastating the country's institutions, infrastructure and social fabric.

Cambodia began rebuilding in earnest following the 1991 Paris Peace Agreements and United Nations-supported peace process. Emerging from decades of conflict and

isolation as one of the world's least developed countries, Cambodia faced the enormous task of reconstructing its economy, institutions and society.

Few nations therefore understand more deeply than Cambodia the value of peace and the devastating human and economic costs of conflict. It is against this historical backdrop that Cambodia's commitment to resolving its maritime boundary peacefully and in accordance with international law must be understood.

From the mid-1990s, Cambodia has sought to resolve its maritime boundary with Thailand, with a view to gaining access to the resources necessary to fuel its industrial growth and economic development, which its neighbours have enjoyed for decades. To that end, Cambodia and Thailand initiated discussions in April 1995 concerning their maritime boundary.

By 2001, the two States had agreed a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the Area of their Overlapping Maritime Claims to the Continental Shelf. That Memorandum reflected a shared commitment to conclude agreements regarding their maritime boundary and the development of resources for their mutual benefit.

Despite their efforts to negotiate a solution, the Parties have not reached agreement on either a maritime boundary or a joint development treaty, and the resources beneath the undelimited waters remain unexplored. As the world confronts the greatest energy disruption in modern history, our region stands to gain, now more than ever, from the development of these resources.

On 5 May 2026, Thailand publicly announced its unilateral cancellation of the 2001 Memorandum of Understanding, despite Cambodia's repeated calls for it to be honoured.

Faced with that situation, the Royal Government of Cambodia gave careful thought to the peaceful options available to it under international law. In keeping with its commitment to the rule of law and to the peaceful settlement of disputes, Cambodia chose to initiate compulsory conciliation under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

At the time Cambodia instituted these proceedings, my Prime Minister, Samdech Moha Borvor Thipadei Hun Manet, delivered a Special Address on 2 June 2026. In his words:

“Both Cambodia and Thailand stand to gain from a fair and lasting settlement agreed with the guidance of the international expert conciliators and in accordance with international law. A peaceful resolution is in the shared interests of both countries and will contribute to peace and stability in the region. It will protect sovereignty, strengthen confidence, unlock energy resources, support development, and create new job opportunities not only for now, but also for the future generations of the Cambodian and Thai peoples.”

Cambodia took this step to find a peaceful pathway forward in accordance with international law. Cambodia sees this conciliation process as a means to rebuild trust, not as a form of escalation.

Cambodia sincerely hopes that Thailand will engage constructively in this process and, in parallel, will work towards improving bilateral relations through the full and effective implementation of all existing bilateral agreements, particularly the Joint Statement of 27 December 2025. This would facilitate the return of the more than twenty thousand displaced villagers to their homes, the preservation of important cultural sites which have been damaged in the fighting, and pave the way to the normalisation of our bilateral relationship. Such efforts would also contribute significantly to a de-escalation of tension and the rebuilding of mutual trust and confidence.

Restoring peace and stability between Cambodia and Thailand would benefit not only the peoples of the two neighboring countries, but also the broader ASEAN Community.

Cambodia's Objective

Turning now to Cambodia's objective in this conciliation.

Our overriding objective is to achieve a resolution that serves the peoples of both nations and contributes to peace, cooperation and shared prosperity in the region.

To that end, Cambodia wishes to conclude, with the assistance of the Commission and in accordance with international law, a treaty with Thailand delimiting a single, all-purpose maritime boundary between the two States.

In the alternative, Cambodia would be prepared to conclude an agreement with Thailand for the joint development and equitable sharing of resources between the two States, pending final agreement on their maritime boundary.

If a final agreement on either a maritime boundary or a joint development arrangement cannot be concluded, Cambodia would request the Commission to prepare a report containing recommendations to the Parties, on the basis of which such an agreement could subsequently be concluded in compliance with the Parties' obligations under UNCLOS.

Cambodia's Commitment to International Law

Respect for international law, the peaceful settlement of disputes, and the institutions that uphold these principles is deeply rooted in Cambodia's national experience. Our recourse to the International Court of Justice reflects our confidence in international institutions as a means of resolving complex disputes between States peacefully and in accordance with international law.

That experience showed that questions of the highest national importance can be addressed peacefully and through multilateral mechanisms rather than by force, and that international frameworks can provide a stable and enduring foundation upon which neighbouring States can manage their differences.

That same commitment shapes how Cambodia approaches its ongoing relations with the Kingdom of

Thailand. Cambodia and Thailand's relationship has been through a challenging period and Cambodia hopes that the Commission may be able to help the Parties turn a new page for their mutual benefit.

We draw encouragement from the outcome of the conciliation between the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste and the Commonwealth of Australia concerning the Timor Sea. That process demonstrated that compulsory conciliation under UNCLOS can break long-standing deadlocks between neighbouring States, and lead to a lasting treaty settlement.

Cambodia is confident that this Commission, with its distinguished composition, is well placed to assist Cambodia and Thailand in achieving a similar result – one that brings peace, stability, and shared prosperity to the region.

Closing

Madam Chairperson, distinguished Members of the Commission, on behalf of the Kingdom of Cambodia, I thank you for your attention and for the care and diligence with which you undertake this responsibility. We look forward to working with you, and with the Kingdom of Thailand, in the spirit of good faith and mutual respect.

I thank you for your attention