The Eleventh Meeting of the States Parties to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (11MSP) was officially opened this evening under the chairmanship of Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen, Prime Minister of Cambodia.The UN has set only eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), but Cambodia has nine.

"This is not a mockery to the UN, but Cambodia cannot forget the mines and UXOs issue," said Samdech Techo Hun Sen in his opening speech, calling on the mine-affected countries to also include the issue in their MDGs."For Cambodia, this presidency is a privilege to serve and a major responsibility to fulfill," said Cambodia's Prime Minister Hun Sen. "The history of mine clearance and the release of land for agricultural production began after the liberation of the country from the Pol Pot genocidal regime in the early 1979, where Ms. Kong Saroeun became a national heroine for having bravely led a mine-clearance company to remove landmines in the eastern part of the country," he said.According to Samdech Techo Hun Sen, the humanitarian demining formally commenced since 1992 in order to provide safe land to more than 350,000 repatriates under the Paris Peace Agreement.H.E. Prak Sokhonn, Minister Attached to the Prime Minister, Vice President of the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA) and the President-Designate of the 11MSP said as the world comes to Cambodia, one of the birth places of the movement, we all embrace a golden opportunity where we can reflect on two decades of effort and make important decisions to save more lives and spare more arms and limbs.It is the political commitment at the highest level of the Cambodian government and its genuine commitment to the Convention that shaped Cambodia's decision to host and assume the presidency of the meeting, he added."Cambodia has always been at the forefront of the commitment to free the world from landmines. We are confident that as the international community gathers here in Phnom Penh our balls of progress will keep rolling," he said.Miss Song Kosal, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) Youth Ambassador, said "the first mines survivors who told their story to the world were Cambodians.""We did this at the United Nations in Vienna in 1995 and in Geneva in 1996. Tonight, six of us from that era are here with us. A conference we held here in Phnom Penh in 1995 was the beginning of anti-landmines campaigning around the world. In Cambodia we were so proud that our King and Prime Minister supported our campaign to ban landmines as early as 1993. They were part of the movement that led to the Ottawa Convention and they remain part of the movement today," said Miss Song Kosal.Cambodia is among the many countries where people have suffered terribly from the mines and UXOs, Ms. Helen Clark, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).It is an opportunity both to celebrate progress to date in overcoming the menace of anti-personnel mines, and to acknowledge that much work still remains to be done to rid the world of them, she said.There is a strong link between effective mine action and progress on the Millennium Development Goals. With the legacy of decades of conflict, our hosts here in Cambodia understand this well. The contamination of so much land in this country with landmines has resulted in more than 63,900 deaths and injuries over the past three decades, she added.In partnership with UNDP and other development partners, the government of Cambodia has strengthened the capacities of its mine action sector. It adopted a ten-year National Mine Action Strategy to achieve the objectives set by the AP Mine Ban

Convention and its ninth Millennium Development Goal in 2010, she said.“The progress over the last two decades of mine action in Cambodia has been impressive with a reduction in the number of victims from 4,320 in 1996 to 286 in 2010. The invaluable experience gained here is now being shared with other countries through South-South knowledge exchanges”, she said.Demining operators here have cleared some 700 square kilometers of contaminated land from mines and explosive remnants of war. That has provided hundreds of thousands of Cambodians with safe land for resettlement, agriculture, and infrastructure development, she added.According to a press release of the 11MSP, the formal sessions of the 11MSP begin tomorrow, on Nov. 28, bringing together over 1,000 participants, including Ministers, diplomats, landmine experts and survivors. The 11MSP is the largest multilateral meeting ever to take place in Cambodia.At the 11MSP, delegates will consider the Phnom Penh Progress Report, a detailed document measuring progress in the past year and highlighting priority areas of work to be acted upon for the year to come, it said.On Nov. 30, the 11MSP will feature a special session marking two decades since the anti-landmines movement emerged from countries such as Cambodia. In addition, throughout the week, over 30 side events will take place with several showcasing Cambodia’s efforts to clear mined areas and to assist survivors, it added.The Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention was adopted in Oslo in 1997, opened for signature in Ottawa the same year and entered into force in 1999.To date 158 states have joined the Convention with 153 of these reporting that they no longer hold stocks of anti-personnel mines. Over 44.5 million stockpiled mines have been destroyed by the States Parties.34 of 50 States that at one time manufactured anti-personnel mines are now bound by the Convention’s ban on production. Most other parties have put in place moratoria on production and / or transfers of mines.Demining has resulted in millions of square metres of once dangerous land being released for normal human activity. TopCambodian Premier Receives WTO Deputy Director-General

Cambodian Prime Minister Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen yesterday met with visiting Ms. Valentine Sendanyoye Rugwabiza, Deputy Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO).In the meeting, the WTO deputy director-general said 152 members of the WTO have congratulated and highly appreciated Cambodia’s achievements as a member of this organization, H.E. Ieng Sophalet, Assistant to the Cambodian premier told reporters upon the meeting.They also admired Cambodia for having taken a short time to become a WTO member, she added.Her visit to Cambodia is to inspect Cambodia‘s trade policy after the country became a member of the WTO, said the assistant.In reply, Samdech Techo Hun Sen welcomed the WTO’s inspection on Cambodia’s trade policy. This inspection will show what Cambodia needs to further fulfill as a member of the WTO, he said.