

**SREP Pilot Countries Meeting
Phnom Penh, February 1-3, 2017
Zhihong Zhang
Climate Investment Funds**

Opening Remarks

H.E. Dr. Bun Narith, Under Secretary of State, Ministry of Mines and Energy,

H.E. Victor Jona, Director General, Ministry of Mines and Energy,

Mr. Samiuela Tukuafu, Country Director for Cambodia, Asian Development Bank,

Representatives of SREP Pilot Countries,

Representatives of Multilateral Development Banks, Development Partners, Private Sector, and Civil Society,

Colleagues and Friends,

Good morning! On behalf of the Climate Investment Funds, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to you for your participation in the SREP Pilot Countries Meeting in the lovely city of Phnom Penh – the Pearl of Asia.

The Scaling up Renewable Energy Program in Low Income Countries, or SREP, is one of the four programs of the Climate Investment Funds. SREP's mission is to empower low-carbon development in the world's poorest countries by expanding energy access through the use of renewable energy.

Today 1.2 billion people worldwide live without electricity, and 2.7 billion people rely on traditional biomass to meet their basic energy needs, such as cooking and heating. Poor people cannot be lifted out of poverty without modern energy services; poor countries cannot achieve sustainable development without electricity to power their economic growth.

One of the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015 is to ensure affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all by 2030.

SREP has been supporting 27 of the world's poorest countries to tackle this sustainable development challenge. The investment provided by the SREP is often the first of its kind in these countries to create an enabling environment and local capacity for renewable energy development and to reduce the risks of deploying renewable energy technologies, ranging from geothermal to solar, wind, small hydro, and biomass.

To date, 19 SREP countries are implementing their investment plans and projects. Eight additional countries are at various stages of completing or developing their investment plans.

The goal of this meeting is to foster peer-to-peer learning among SREP countries on practical issues related to the design and implementation of SREP investment plans and other renewable energy activities and to enhance collaboration between the SREP and other related funds and initiatives.

Cambodia was the newest country that presented its SREP investment plan in June 2016. Renewable energy is still at a nascent stage of development in Cambodia whose electricity generation has been dominated by coal and hydro. I was reading The Phnom Penh Post yesterday, and the headline in the Business section read “Coal-fired plant tests new power generator”, referring to the third unit of a 700-megawatt coal-fired power plant under development in Preah Sihanouk province.

I hope that in the near future the newspaper headlines will be on solar and other renewable energy. And I hope that we, the Climate Investment Funds, are sowing the seeds for a transition toward a sustainable energy future in Cambodia, and in all the countries that are represented here.

Thank you.