Joint Statement

Youths, Civil Society groups and Grassroots communities call for removal of development license from Koh Kong S.E.Z Co. Ltd and regulate Koh Kong Krao island as a national protected area.

31 July 2020 – We, the undersigned youths, civil society groups and grassroots communities, are very concerned by the Royal Government of Cambodia granting Koh Kong S.E.Z Col, Ltd, a company publicly known as being owned by Ly Yong Phat – a powerful tycoon widely known for his involvement in human rights abuses, land rights violations and the destruction of natural resources – the license to develop Koh Kong Krao island in Koh Kong province. The authorization given to this company will potentially be a serious threat to natural resources on the island and biodiversity in the sea, including deforestation, wildlife extinction, illegal buildings constructed on the beach, water pollution in the sea, loss natural beauty of the island and loss the benefit for Cambodian people, etc.

For example, in the case on Koh Rong Samloem island, there is illegal construction on the beach land and polluted water draining into the sea. Another case is Songsa island; after the development, most Cambodian people cannot afford to stay on the island, because the price of accommodation is too expensive. Therefore, we are very concerned about the planned development of the island by the company, and call for the government to remove the development license for Koh Kong Krao island from the company and to take all effective measures to preserve the national resources and biodiversity in the sea surrounding the island.

On 03 June 2020, the Ministry of Environment issued statement No. 722 S.C.N to express their plan to regulate Koh Kong Krao island as a protected area, or “Maritime National Park”, in 2021 after having conducted research and prepared documents since 2016 and seen the potential of national resources, biodiversity, and beauty of the beach on the island. In similar to the ministry of environment’s vision, one year after seeing the potential of the island and its beauty, including many mountains, waterfalls, forest, various wildlife and marine species, coral, six beautiful beaches, and other biodiversity, the youth groups have made many awareness-raising videos and campaigns to the public to urge and request the government to designate this island as a protected area.

These campaigns are also in parallel with, and support, measures taken by the Ministry of Environment that aim to designate this island to be a protected area or “Maritime National Park”, keeping it as a legacy for the next generation of Cambodian people. The limitation of the number of tourists following the result of independent research should also be taken into account to maintain the forest cover for wildlife to shelter in and rely on, and to ensure that the natural beauty of the island is still maintained. Keeping the island the way it naturally is could also potentially help local villagers to increase their income through selling and creating small businesses for tourists, and contribute to the country’s economy with a flow of international tourists into the country.

The conservation tasks of the island could be placed under the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Tourism to ensure that there will be no destruction of natural resources on the island and the surrounding sea. We have seen the destruction of natural resources on Koh Rong and Koh Rong Samloem islands, including illegal construction on the beach, the polluted water drained into the sea and deforestation, even though both islands were regulated as “Maritime National Parks”.

We call on the government to remove the development license from the Koh Kong S.E.Z Co, Ltd company and declare the island as a naturally protected area or “Maritime National Park” under the management of the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Tourism in order to maintain its beauty and natural conditions for the purpose of eco-tourism, research and conservation.

Signed,
1. 92 Community (Phnom Penh)
2. 197 Land Community (Koh Kong)
3. 297 Land Community (Koh Kong)
4. 185K Thida Chambak Thom Community (Kampong Chnang)
5. Am Leang Community (Kampong Speu)
6. Banteay Srey community (Phnom Penh)
7. Borey Keila community (Phnom Penh)
8. Boeung Chuk community (Phnom Penh)
9. Boeung Kaz Community (Kampong Chhnang)
10. Bos Sa Am Community (Battambang)
11. Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
12. Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)
13. Cambodian Youth Network (CYN)
14. Chikor Kraom Land Community (Koh Kong)
15. Chikor Leu Land Community (Koh Kong)
16. Choeung Prey Community (Kampong Cham)
17. Chorm Kravean Community (Kampong Cham)
19. Dok Por Community (Kampong Speu)
20. Forestry and Natural Resource Community (Pursat)
21. Horng Samnom Community (Kampong Speu)
22. Indigenous community in Prame commune (Preah Vihear)
23. Indigenous Youth for Community (Ratanakiri)
24. Kean Teuk Land Community (Koh Kong)
25. Khum Da Community (Tbong Khmum)
26. Khmum Srakar Thlok Russei Community (Kampong Thom)
27. Khmer Student Intelligent League Association (KSILA)
28. Khmer Thavrak
29. Land Community (Pailin)
30. Lor Peang Land Community (Kampong Chhnang)
31. Mother Nature Cambodia (MNC)
32. Not One More Youths (N1M)
33. Ou Chheu Teal Community (Preah Sihanouk)
34. Phnom Bat Community (Phnom Penh)
35. Peam Ros Community (Kampong Speu)
36. Phnom Kram Community (Siem Reap)
37. Phnom Tnort Community (Kampot)
38. Phnom Torteong Community (Kampot)
39. Phnom Sleuk Community (Battambang)
40. Phsar Kandal Village Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)
41. Phum 22 Community (Phnom Penh)
42. Phum 23 Community (Phnom Penh)
43. Phum Dei Chhnang Community (Kampong Speu)
44. Phum Khva community (Phnom Penh)
45. Phum Russey Sros community (Phnom Penh)
46. Phum Prasat Rang Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)
47. Phum Sela Khmer Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)
48. Phum Ou Svay Land Community (Banteay Meanchey)
49. Prek Ksach Land Community (Koh Kong)
50. Prek Takung Community (Phnom Penh)
51. Prek Tanou Community (Phnom Penh)
52. Prek Trae Community (Preah Sihanouk)
53. Prey Chher Pich Changva Laor Chhert Community (Kampong Chhnang)
54. Prey Chheou Ou Domdek Community (Kampong Thom)
55. Prey Lang Community (Kampong Thom)
56. Prey Lang Community (Kratie)
57. Prey Long Community (Steung Streng)
58. Prey Peay Land community (Kampot)
59. Railway community (Phnom Penh)
60. Raksmey Samaki Community (Kampong Speu)
61. Rum Cheik Land Community (Siem Reap)
62. Samaki 4 Community (Phnom Penh)
63. Sambok Chab community (Phnom Penh)
64. Sdey Krom Fishery Community (Battambang)
65. Setrey Klaing Sang community (Phnom Penh)
66. Skun Land Community (Siem Reap)
67. Somros Koh Sdech Fishery Community (Koh Kong)
68. Srok Kiri Sakor Land community (Koh Kong)
69. SOS International Airport Community (Phnom Penh)
70. Spean Chhes Community (Preah Sihanouk)
71. Sre Ampel Water Fall Tourism Forestry Community (Kampong Chhnang)
72. Steung Bort village Land community (Banteay Meanchey)
73. Steung Khsach Sor Forestry Resource (Kampong Chhnang)
74. Tani Land Community (Siem Reap)
75. Ta Noun Land Community (Koh Kong)
76. Thmor Da Community (Pursat)
77. Thnong Land Community (Koh Kong)
78. Toul Rada Community (Phnom Penh)
79. Trapaign Sangke Community (Kampot)
80. Tunlong Community (Tbong Khmum)