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Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology & Innovation

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Press Release
Kick-off Ceremony of the ACMECS Branding Project
“SMEs Technology Adoption for Resiliency and
Competitive Market”

1. Phnom Penh, 17th November 2022, from 8:30 am to 11:35 am, the Kick-Off Ceremony of the ACMECS Branding Project “SMEs Technology Adoption for Resiliency and Competitive Market” were presided over by **H.E. Prof. Dr. CHHEM Kieth Rethy**, Minister Delegate Attached to the Prime Minister, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology & Innovation (MISTI) to highly represent **His Excellency Kitti Settha Pandita CHAM Prasidh as Senior Minister and Minister of MISTI**, and **H.E. Mr. MIKAMI Masahiro**, Ambassador of Japan to the Kingdom of Cambodia. Representatives from relevant ministries, embassies, universities, the private sector, and other organizations attended the ceremony at the Himawari Hotel, which was organized by MISTI through coordination of the General Department of Science, Technology & Innovation (GDSTI) serving as the secretariat of the National Council of Science, Technology, and Innovation (NCSTI).
2. **H.E. Mr. MIKAMI Masahiro** congratulated on the official commencement of the project in his welcoming remarks. He emphasized the critical roles of the Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the Mekong Region’s economy, but these businesses are struggling amidst the COVID-19 pandemic due to their limited resources and capacity. He said there is a need to support their resilience so that they could overcome the adversity caused by the pandemic and adapt to the “new normal.”
3. **H.E. Mr. SOK Soken**, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and Alternate ACMECS SOM Leader of Cambodia, shared the relevance of this project in the context of the Mekong subregion’s development cooperation architecture as well as on how it complements the efforts of the Royal Government of Cambodia in key sector development. H.E. also added that it will pave the way in enhancing the capacity of our SMEs to be more resilience and competitive in the digital economy world. He further mentioned that Japan has also long played an essential role in the sustainable development of the Mekong sub-region through the Mekong-Japan Cooperation mechanism and, bilaterally to Cambodia, through the provision of impactful technical and financial assistance that has been proven to drive real socio-economic progress for our people, particularly Cambodia and Japan recently have agreed to elevate relations to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" next year, in the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries which is a crucial milestone in the efforts to further strengthen the two countries’ cooperation and relations.

4. Technology has evolved into one of the most important tools in response to the pandemic, which has negatively affected the economy, especially SMEs, on both the supply and demand sides, as pointed out by **H.E. Prof. Dr. CHHEM Kieth Rethy** in his opening remarks. Technology is very crucial to boost the competitiveness of businesses, especially when dealing with the constantly changing business dynamics and the emergence of numerous developmental techniques of conducting business. Unlike major businesses, SMEs are unable to invest a significant amount of money in technology due to a lack of funding and very little understanding of the advantages of incorporating technology in their business operations for boosting productivity. Since SMEs have very limited access to technological tools and expertise in technology, they are barely able to adjust to the pandemic crisis and survive.
5. “To realize the Royal Government of Cambodia's ambitious visions of becoming an upper-middle-income country by 2030 and a high-income country by 2050, strengthening the national technological capabilities and innovation performance is indispensably critical. Therefore, it is crucial to undertake needs assessments, adopt technology, and establish platforms for SMEs in order to prepare them for potential threats and recovery from those threats,” said **H.E. Dr. HUL Seingheng**, Project Director and Director General of GDSTI of MISTI, “To support SMEs in real time with regards to market access, technology adoption and scouting, and better understanding the supply chain, resiliency, and competitiveness, it is essential to establish a Business Intelligence System of relevance.”
6. With the financial support from the government and people of Japan, the ACMECS Branding Project “SMEs Technology Adoption for Resiliency and Competitive Market” aims to establish an effective system and platform as a foundation to support SMEs in Cambodia for adopting technology to be more resilient and competitive.
7. “The Government of Japan highly values the ACMECS Framework, sees it as a unique initiative by the Mekong Region, and is willing to support as much as possible in the future as an ACMECS development partner. We do hope that Japan and the Mekong Region countries can cooperate to get things returned to normal very soon,” said **H.E. Ambassador Mr. MIKAMI Masahiro**.

Phnom Penh, **17** November 2022

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& Innovation**

