

MR KEAT CHHON

Citation for the Conferral of Doctor of Business (*honoris causa*)

Keat Chhon was born on 11 August 1934 in Kratie Province of Cambodia. He is married to Mrs Lay Neari and has two children, a daughter and a son.

Keat Chhon was amongst the first group of high school graduate specialising in mathematics in Cambodia, enabling him to obtain a state scholarship to study in France where he earned a degree in Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering in 1959, and later a degree in Nuclear Engineering. Following his studies and research work in France, Keat Chhon returned to Cambodia and over the following years served in a broad range of positions of successively greater importance, culminating in his appointment from 1970 to 1975 as Minister in Charge of the Council of Ministers of the Royal Government of the National Union of Cambodia, under the aegis of the then Head of State, Samdech Norodom Sihanouk.

In his own words, Keat Chhon “survived” the terrible years of the Khmer Rouge regime, during which his family was scattered and each member taken hostage. In the early 1980’s he worked in France, and from 1988 till 1992 worked for the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation as Co-Director of the *Strategic Management of Industrial Development Project* in Zaire, where he gained an insight into the multiple problems of economic development. After the Paris Peace Agreement, Keat Chhon returned to Cambodia where his valuable skills as an economist and his outstanding credibility were quickly recognised by the fledging government of the State of Cambodia. He was elected a Member of Parliament in 1993, and later was appointed Senior Minister in charge of Rehabilitation and Development. In this role he spearheaded Cambodia’s integration into the regional and international economies, and played a critical role in mobilising external support for Cambodia’s rehabilitation.

Keat Chhon served as Senior Minister and Minister of Economy and Finance of the Royal Government of Cambodia, and Vice-Chairman of the Council for Development, since 1994. Under his leadership the Minister has implemented a wide range of fiscal reforms to strengthen economic and financial management in Cambodia, including improvement of tax and customs administration, and of budget and treasury management.

As Chairman of the Committee on Economic and Financial Policies, established by Government decree in June 1997, Keat Chhon led negotiations to implement programs and policies with international financial institutions, and contributed to the development and implementation of Cambodia’s Financial Sector Development blueprint for 2001 - 2010. In this capacity he helped steer the Cambodian economy to unprecedented high and steady growth, despite the ravages of the Asian Financial Crisis, domestic floods and droughts, domestic instability and more recently, the threat of international terrorism. As well as helping to secure macroeconomic stability in Cambodia, Keat Chhon contributed to the restoration of full peace and territorial unity of Cambodia at the end of 1998.

Over the past seven years, Keat Chhon has played a pivotal role in several key development strategies, he has oversight of the Seila Task Force, responsible for the decentralisation of fiscal and administrative power to local authorities; he coordinates the Government-Private Sector Forum, introduced to facilitate development of the private sector; and his *Interim Policy Reduction Strategy Paper*, provide strategies for reducing poverty by promoting opportunities and empowering the poor. From 1996-1999 Keat Chhon served as the ASEAN

Economic Minister for Cambodia, working with other Ministers to prepare the groundwork for Cambodia's accession to the World Trade Organisation. Keat Chhon is a strong advocate of Cambodia's interests in the international arena, and has contributed significantly to the improvement in relations between Cambodia and Australia.

Keat Chhon serves on the Boards of a number of professional associations and Government task forces and committees, including Chairmanship of the Board of Directors of the Economics and Finance Institute and the National Higher Education Task Force, and Vice-Chairmanship of the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace. He is an energetic writer, and has contributed to and written several publications, his most recent titled *Visions for a New Century*.

Keat Chhon is a leading figure in the recovery and revitalisation of the Kingdom of Cambodia. He is a visionary who has placed great stress on human capacity and intellectual ability as crucial elements in the development process. Through the agency of the economics and Finance Institute (EFI) he has ensured that the enthusiasm and skills of Cambodia's younger generation have been harnessed, preparing them as leaders of the future and ensuring Cambodia's sustainable development. Keat Chhon has supported several training and capacity building programs and projects that are linked with Australian institutions. The Master of Business Administration program, the result of collaboration between EFI, the Intellectual Resource Group Incorporated and Charles Sturt University, will provide quality training of Cambodia's future analysts, economists and managers.

Keat Chhon is unquestionably one of Cambodia's most profoundly influential and respected leaders. Yet he remains a quite, gentle and humble man, willing to listen and share the concerns of his fellow Cambodians. In recognition of his enormous contribution to the development of Cambodia, Keat Chhon has received the following awards: *Grand Crix* of the Royal Order of the Kingdom of Cambodia, Grand Officer of the Order of Her Majesty the Queen Kossamak of Cambodia, Grand Officer of the Order of Sowathara (Economy) of Cambodia, Commander of the Legion of Honour of France, Gold Medal of Labour of the Kingdom of Cambodia, and Chevalier of the Order of Monissaraphon (Culture) of Cambodia.

Chancellor, I present to you Keat Chhon, a great intellectual and visionary leader whose contribution to the recovery and revitalisation of the Kingdom of Cambodia has been monumental, and on whom Charles Sturt University is proud to confer the award of Doctor of Business (*honoris causa*).

Dated this Fourth Day of April Two Thousand and Three