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Opening Statement of the Honorable **Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman**
Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific Hearing:
“Cambodia’s Descent: Policies to Support Democracy and Human Rights”
December 12, 2017

(As prepared for delivery)

“Thank you, Chairman Yoho, for calling this timely hearing on the demise of democracy in Cambodia and the ongoing human rights abuses the Hun Sen regime is carrying out.

Since Cambodia held its deeply flawed elections in 2013, we have seen significant attacks on those Cambodians peacefully opposing their government. Hun Sen’s thuggish regime continues to crack down on political opposition and other activists, arresting and beating those who oppose his rule. Freedom House consistently rates Cambodia as ‘Not Free,’ noting harassment of the government’s political opposition.

That’s putting it mildly. Two years ago, opposition lawmaker and American citizen Nhay Chamreoun was severely and brutally attacked by plainclothes bodyguards, who repeatedly kicked and stomped him. He was hospitalized for months. Several months later, Kem Ley, a popular Cambodian political commentator, was murdered in broad daylight for his outspoken protests of the regime.

And over the last few months, Hun Sen has dispatched any notions of democracy in Cambodia, dissolving the CNRP and arresting its leader Kem Sokha, who faces spurious treason charges. Despite deep flaws, the 2013 national elections and this year’s communal elections saw gains made by the CNRP. Since that time, we have seen a complete dismemberment of the political system in Cambodia. Make no mistake, the government is now run by an authoritarian thug.

The Trump administration has responded with some positive steps. Last week’s announced visa ban on those undermining democracy is welcomed, but by no means should this be the last stop. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on what additional measures we should take to support Cambodia’s democracy.

Again, thank you Mr. Chairman for holding this very important hearing on a country that frankly, does not get the attention it deserves.”