

Cambodia: UN rights expert launches fact-finding mission on women and indigenous peoples

GENEVA / PHNOM PENH (17 March 2016) – The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia, Rhona Smith, will carry out an official visit to the country from 21 to 31 March 2016 to assess the enjoyment of rights by women and indigenous peoples in the country.

“I will be focusing on discrimination during my second official visit to Cambodia, examining the situation of marginalised and disadvantaged groups, such as women, indigenous peoples, and victims of race and ethnic discrimination,” the expert noted.

“A closer examination of the human rights situation with respect to marginalised and disadvantaged groups in the country will enable me to assist the Government’s efforts to achieve an equitable and prosperous society,” Ms. Smith said, while stressing that the visit will also allow her to assess progress on other human rights issues in Cambodia. ‘The mission will also cover a range of human rights issues of concern to the Government and Cambodian people’.

During her ten-day visit, the independent expert will meet with senior members of the Royal Government as well as the Senate and the National Assembly. She will also meet with representatives from civil society, the UN country team and the diplomatic community. The independent human rights expert is also expected to undertake field visits to gather first-hand information.

The UN Special Rapporteur undertakes regular visits to Cambodia and reports annually to the Human Rights Council. Since her appointment in March 2015, she conducted a visit to the country in September 2015, and shortly after, reported to the Council’s 30th session, which renewed the mandate for a further two years. Ms. Smith will present her next report to the Human Rights Council in September 2016.

The Special Rapporteur will hold a **press conference** at the end of her visit, on Thursday 31 March at 3 p.m. at the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR), 10 Street 302, Boeng Keng Kang 1, in Phnom Penh. Access to the press conference is strictly limited to journalists.

Ms. **Rhona Smith** was appointed by the United Nations Human Rights Council in March 2015. Ms. Smith holds Professor of International Human Rights in the United Kingdom. She has also taught international human rights law as a visiting professor in China and Canada and spent time as a distinguished visitor in Vanuatu. Professor Smith has also been a visiting professor at Pannasastra University in Cambodia where she worked on designing and developing course curricula for the re-launch of Cambodia’s first master level program in human rights law. Learn more, log on to:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/SP/CountriesMandates/KH/Pages/SRCambodia.aspx>

The Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human

Rights system, is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms. Special Procedures mandate-holders are independent human rights experts appointed by the Human Rights Council to address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. They are not UN staff and are independent from any government or organization. They serve in their individual capacity and do not receive a salary for their work.

Check the reports on Cambodia: http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?m=107

UN Human Rights, country page – Cambodia:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/AsiaRegion/Pages/KHIndex.aspx>

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