

Public Statement:

DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS CALL FOR HALT TO EVICTIONS OF CAMBODIA'S URBAN POOR

July 16, 2009--- Development Partners are calling upon the Royal Government of Cambodia to stop forced evictions from disputed areas in Phnom Penh and elsewhere in the country until a fair and transparent mechanism for resolving land disputes is put in place and a comprehensive resettlement policy is developed.

Development Partners recognize that land issues are an ongoing challenge to development in Cambodia and urge the Government to adopt fair and transparent systems for land titling, including in urban areas, which recognize and protect the equal rights of all citizens. Development Partners stand ready to support the establishment of national policy guidelines which would ensure that evictions and resettlement follow due legal process and provide just compensation to affected individuals.

The World Bank and a number of Development Partners have been working closely with the Government on securing land titling in Cambodia. The Government is commended for issuing more than one million land titles because this offers the opportunity for improved growth and poverty reduction.

However, in an environment of escalating urban land values in Cambodia and speculative land buying and selling, urban dwellers are under threat of being moved to make way for high value property development. This has become a major problem in Phnom Penh and other fast growing cities in Cambodia – creating uncertainty for, and putting at risk the livelihoods of, thousands of poor people living in disputed urban areas. This is a result of policies and practices that do not reflect good international practice in dispute resolution and resettlement and do not make effective use of the procedures and institutions allowed for in Cambodian law.

International experience has established that secure land tenure is vital in ensuring economic growth and reducing poverty and that fair, well-implemented resettlement processes are key to an effective land tenure and titling system and protecting the rights of all people.

Development Partners reaffirm their commitment to work with the Government to help address land issues in a just and equitable manner and to ensure that the rights of poor people are promoted and protected.

signed by:

Embassy of Australia

Embassy of Bulgaria

Embassy of Germany

Embassy of the United Kingdom

Embassy of the United States of America

Embassy of Denmark / Danida

Swedish International Development Agency (Sida)

Asian Development Bank

Delegation of the European Commission

United Nations

World Bank

contact: Saroeun Bou, World Bank +855 23 21 7301 Email: sbou@worldbank.org