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**ការិយាល័យនៃឧត្តមស្នងការអង្គការសហប្រជាជាតិ
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Statement by the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Cambodia
Professor Dr Surya P. Subedi

Phnom Penh, 25 June 2009

It has been an honour and a pleasure for me to make a first visit to the Kingdom of Cambodia. I have had the privilege of meeting with His Excellency Prime Minister Mr. Hun Sen, His Excellency Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mr. Hor Namhong and Their Excellencies Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Mr. Sar Kheng, Senior Minister and Minister of Land Management Mr. Im Chhun Lim, Senior Minister and President of the Human Rights Committee Mr. Om Yentieng, the President of the Supreme Court Mr. Dith Munthy, National Police Commissioner, Mr. Neth Savoeun, the Governor of the City of Phnom Penh Mr. Kep Chuktema and a number of other senior government officials, leaders of the main opposition party in the National Assembly, the ambassadors based in Phnom Penh, the United Nations Country Team, the President of the Bar Association, the President of the Press Council, and representatives of civil society, indigenous groups and those affected by land evictions in the recent past.

I intended to make my first visit an opportunity to familiarize myself with the human rights situation in the country, to establish channels of communication with the senior members of the government and listen to people from a broad section of the population. I have been made aware of the positive developments that have taken place since 1993, including stability after many years of conflict, economic growth and the holding of regular elections to elect the government, including the one that took place in July last year, which apparently was by and large a peaceful one. I was pleased to observe that Cambodia has made considerable progress in the recent past in a number of areas and the Cambodian Human Rights Committee has enhanced its engagement with the United Nations human rights treaty bodies. Of course, no country has a perfect human rights record. Nor is there a perfect model of democracy that can be borrowed by or imposed on other States. The challenge for a country such as Cambodia is to continue with the process of reform and democratization with the degree of seriousness and sincerity required to implement the provisions of international human rights treaties most of which embody universal values and which are now part of Cambodian law. In this context, I was pleased to note that there was the capacity to acknowledge shortcomings and engage in a meaningful and constructive dialogue with my office to change and reform.

The human rights situation in Cambodia has been the subject of extensive analysis by four of my predecessors. Their observations have outlined and illustrated the challenges that this country has faced in promoting and protecting human rights and the dignity of each and every individual residing within its borders. The challenges ahead are many and of serious nature and my interlocutors have given me the impression that they are not shying away from that reality. I am of the view that progress in strengthening the rule of law, clearer separation of power between the three main branches of the government, protecting the independence of the judiciary, addressing issues such as impunity, conflicts over land, and control of corruption will contribute to the building of a more stable democratic nation and achieving lasting peace and equitable prosperity in the country.

I am pleased with the opportunity that I have had during my visit to outline my intention to engage in a constructive dialogue with the Royal Government of Cambodia and to offer my assistance in dealing with some of the pressing human rights issues confronting this nation. During my meetings with the senior members of the Government I have outlined the desirability of fostering an environment of cooperation with the civil society sector, which has a crucial role in scrutinizing governmental actions and outlining the shortcomings, in an objective, impartial and non-partisan way. In my opinion, the civil society has a great contribution to make in so many areas of activity to maximize the potential of the people of Cambodia and materialize the enjoyment of their human rights.

I hope to set out my observations and recommendations in my report to the United Nations Human Rights Council which is charged with reviewing the human rights records of every Member State of the United Nations. By joining this international organization and by ratifying several international human rights treaties Cambodia undertook to implement international human rights standards and accepted the notion that the human rights situation in every country is the legitimate concern of the international community. It is against this background that I would be leaving Cambodia tomorrow after completing my first mission to the country after being reassured by the Royal Government of Cambodia of their commitment to work with my office in promoting human rights in the months and perhaps years ahead so that tangible benefits could be achieved for the protection of these rights in the country.

I take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to His Excellency Prime Minister Mr Hun Sen and other senior ministers, the diplomatic corps, the United Nations Country Team and various other stakeholders in this society including the people in the NGO sector for their welcome. Last, but not least my sincere thanks also go to the national and international staff of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Cambodia for their welcome and support extended to me during my visit. In recent years, this office seems to have renewed an impressive programme of cooperation in several key and sensitive sectors through an approach based on dialogue, cooperation and constructive criticism and the search for reasonable solutions. I have been informed by several senior governmental interlocutors of their satisfaction of the cooperation extended to them by the High Commissioner's Cambodia Office and I hope this cooperation will continue and be further strengthened. I hope to return to Cambodia in not too distant a future to pursue my contribution to the collective endeavour to improve the quality of life for the people in this beautiful country with a rich cultural heritage!