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ការិយាល័យនៃឧត្តមស្នងការទទួលបន្ទុកសិទ្ធិមនុស្សប្រចាំកម្ពុជា



**Human Rights Day  
Phnom Penh, 10 December 2010**

**Statement by Christophe Peschoux  
Representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Cambodia**

Dear friends,

Today is an occasion to reflect about human rights, their value in our life, and our commitment, individually and collectively, to promote and protect them.

**What human rights are?**

I think it is always useful to remind ourselves about what human rights are, especially when these notions are often clouded and distorted by misconceptions, ignorance, indifference or deliberate calculation to associate them with evil in order to discredit them.

Those who are deprived of the most fundamental human rights – human rights to life, to personal security, to physical and mental integrity, to health, education, housing, livelihood or employment - usually know the value of human rights in their lives. A girl deprived of education because she is a girl, or is too poor, understands the value of the right to education. A father who sees his child dying because he is too poor to afford him medical treatment understands the value of the right to health. A journalist who is imprisoned or murdered

because of his writings understands the value of freedom of opinion and press. The farmer who is deprived of the land that he has cleared and cultivated for years, understand the value of the right to land. A factory worker struggling with others to improve wages and working conditions knows the value of the right to form a union and to peacefully demonstrate. A child who sees its home bulldozed in front of his own eyes, and becomes homeless as a result, understands the value of the rights to land, housing and security.

Human Rights reflect the profound aspiration of every human being to be treated with respect by others, and in particular by the State, and to realize one's life to its full potential. In this respect, the right to development concerns every human being, if by development one understands the conditions by which we create the economic, social and cultural environment in which we can realize our life to its full potential. It is only when one can realize one's life that one feels this sense of fulfillment that is called happiness. Human rights are about freedom, respect, cooperation and responsibility. They are the basic values of living together that makes individual life and collective life worth. This why these values have been valued and cherished by people the world over, and why they will continue to be cherished in the future because they are about the quality of our life.

### **Who is a human rights defender?**

Human Rights defenders come from all walks of life, from ordinary people defending their land, their houses, the graves of their ancestors, their community, their environment and their work, to students, journalists, trade union workers, doctors, teachers, lawyers, NGO activists. They are all those who are acting, in their life, in their work, and in society to combat discrimination, exclusion, oppression and violence; to promote justice for victims, and accountability for perpetrators of violations; and transparency in government action.

In this regard, human rights defenders may also be Government officials, and should primarily be Government officials, for the primary responsibility to promote and protect human rights rests with Governments. A Minister or a Governor who authorizes a legal and peaceful demonstration to go is acting as a human rights defender. A doctor who actively promotes universal access to anti-retroviral treatment is acting as a human rights defender. A judge who applies the law in a fair manner acts as a human rights defender.

What it involves to act as a human rights defender is the consciousness of the value of rights, commitment and courage. Courage - - because human rights defenders are often putting at risk their own life, safety, and that of their families. This is why they must be protected. And it is primarily the responsibility of a Government which is serious about human rights, to enable and protect them, not only in words but most importantly, in deeds. The recognition of the role of human rights defenders and of the responsibility of Governments to respect, enable and protect them was translated in 1998 by all Member States of the United Nations into a declaration dedicated to their protection and commonly-known as the “human rights Defenders declaration”.

For all these reasons, this day is important to remind ourselves the role and work of human rights defenders in the building of our communities, in our country but also in the growing world community, and to pay a special tribute to them. To close, I would like to invite all of us to devote some of our thoughts today to all those who are deprived, imprisoned, tortured, killed or otherwise abuses and discriminated against because they are striving to protect their rights and the rights of others to make our world a better place to live.

Thank you