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UN welcomes Cambodia's commitment to women's rights in being the 100th country to ratify new procedure

Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The Cambodia Offices of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and of UN WOMEN welcome Cambodia's ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which comes into force on 12 January 2011. "OHCHR and UN WOMEN congratulate the Royal Government for evincing an ongoing commitment to protect and promote human rights and in particular, women's human rights," UN WOMEN Representative Wenny Kusuma said. "The Government's acceptance of the CEDAW complaints procedure shows that it takes seriously its international obligation to ensure that real, timely and enforceable remedies exist for violations of the rights of women".

By ratifying the CEDAW Optional Protocol, Cambodia now allows individuals and groups who believe their rights have been violated to submit complaints to the UN committee dealing with women's rights. The Committee can only look at complaints once all avenues to complain in Cambodia have been exhausted. In addition, the Committee can by itself initiate inquiries into grave or systematic violations of women's rights. In being the 100th State to ratify the Optional Protocol, Cambodia also becomes a leader in Southeast Asia in providing an international avenue for complaints, with the Philippines and Thailand being the two other ASEAN countries to have taken this step.

"The complaints mechanisms established by the international human rights treaties give concrete meaning to women's right by providing individuals an additional means of seeking redress for violations of their rights in their lives", OHCHR Representative Christophe Peschoux said. "The Cambodian Government is to be congratulated for taking this progressive step. We hope Cambodia will build on this start and ratify the complaint mechanisms under the other human rights treaties".

Other individual complaints mechanisms open for acceptance by Cambodia are those under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Such mechanisms also exist under the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and may be accepted by Cambodia once it has ratified these treaties.

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