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ការិយាល័យនៃទីស្តីបន្តបណ្តុះបណ្តាលសិទ្ធិមនុស្សប្រចាំកម្ពុជា



STATEMENT BY UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS
LOUISE ARBOUR

Phnom Penh, 19 May 2006

It has been an honor for me to make a first visit to Cambodia, a country in which my Office has been operational for more than a decade now. I have had the privilege of being granted an audience with His Majesty the King, and I have met with Prime Minister Hun Sen, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior Sar Kheng, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Council of Ministers, Sok An and Minister of Justice Ang Vong Vattana. I have also met with a broad range of representatives of Cambodia's civil society, the United Nations country team, members of the diplomatic community and officials of the Extraordinary Chambers for the Khmer Rouge trials.

My visit has afforded me an opportunity to become more familiar with the human rights situation in Cambodia. I was told repeatedly of positive developments in the country since 1993, including stability after many years of conflict, economic growth and the holding of regular elections. Evidently, no country has a perfect human rights record. I believe the most promising sign of eventual progress is the capacity to acknowledge shortcomings. The human rights situation in Cambodia has been the subject of extensive analysis by four successive Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. Their observations illustrate the difficulties this country has yet to overcome.

My visit has also allowed me to focus on one issue I consider of capital importance for the consolidation of democracy under the rule of law, namely the strengthening of the judicial branch of governance. An independent, professional judiciary with recognized integrity would not only be essential in protecting fundamental rights and freedoms but also facilitate the resolution of a number of the difficulties evident in Cambodia, including impunity, conflicts over land and corruption.

The ability of civil society actors to work freely and safely is another key indicator of a functioning democracy. The professionalism and commitment of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is a remarkable asset for the development of this country and one that needs to be safeguarded and supported.

My visit to Cambodia takes place during a time of considerable change in the global human rights system. A new intergovernmental body, the Human Rights Council, will meet for the first time next month. Among its many tasks it will be charged with reviewing the human rights records of every member State of the UN. In other words, there can be no ambiguity that the human rights situation in every country is the legitimate concern of the international community. Against this backdrop, I leave Cambodia reassured by the expressed commitment of the Government to strengthen our longstanding cooperation and determined to ensure that our work yields tangible benefits for the protection of human rights in Cambodia.