



Special Representative of the Secretary-General  
for Human Rights in Cambodia

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**Statement by Ambassador Thomas Hammaberg, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Human Rights in Cambodia**

26 August 1997

I strongly urge the international community, particularly donors, to continue to support human rights and other NGOs in Cambodia. In recent days, certain donors have reportedly suspended or are currently considering the suspension of aid to Cambodia in the aftermath of the coup d'état of 5-6- July. While I take no position on the issue of suspension of aid in general, such suspension of society, which is still very fragile.

As the Special Representative of the UN Secretary- General for Human Rights in Cambodia, I am particularly concerned about the adverse impact that suspension of aid will have on human rights NGOs in Cambodia. NGOs, particularly human rights NGOs, represent a positive legacy of the peace process initiated in 1991. Due to lack of domestic sources of funding and a tradition of an independent civil society, most of these NGOs have relied on foreign sources to support their operations.

As a result, suspension of aid to NGOs will most certainly result i their closure, That would have a devastating effect on Cambodia's ability to sustain even minimum levels of economic development or democratic reconstruction, In particular, the next national election scheduled for May 1998 is almost impossible to have any credibility if, among other factors, Cambodian NGOs do not play an independent monitoring role.

NGOs continue to have a very important role to play in the economic and democratic reconstruction of Cambodia. They constitute the nucleus of Cambodian civil society and currently function as the pillar of Cambodian democracy.

The human rights NGOs have a direct role to play in the promotion and protection of human rights and are performing their tasks with courage, determination and hope under very difficult circumstances. Their role has never been more important than now.

I strongly urge international donors to continue to support human rights and other NGOs in Cambodia.