

**Statement to the Press by His Excellency Sok An
on the approval by the United Nations General Assembly
of the Draft Agreement with Royal Government of Cambodia on the establishment of the
Extraordinary Chambers**

On Tuesday 13 May 2003, the 85th Meeting of the 57th Session of the UNGA approved the Draft Agreement between the United Nations and the Royal Government of Cambodia regarding the establishment of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia for the Prosecution of Crimes Committed during the Period of Democratic Kampuchea.

This is indeed welcome news and marks the culmination of negotiations begun almost six years ago when Cambodia requested UN assistance. We are most thankful that the long period of negotiations is now coming to such a fruitful end. The Council of Ministers has already (on 28 March 2003) approved the text of the Draft Agreement. Now we are eagerly awaiting the arrival of His Excellency Hans Corell in Phnom Penh for the signing of the Agreement. Originally he advised us that he would come on 18 May, but this has been postponed due to his commitments at UN headquarters in New York.

Once signed, the Royal Government of Cambodia can then submit it to National Assembly for ratification. The Office of the Council of Ministers is now preparing the necessary text to submit ratification of the Agreement. At the same time it will submit to the National Assembly draft amendments to the Law promulgated on 10 August 2001 made necessary by the agreement made last year between the Prime Minister, Samdech Hun Sen, and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Kofi Annan to reduce the number of instances or levels of the Extraordinary Chambers from three to two.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those countries who have supported and encouraged us along the way: the sponsors of the resolution, led by France and Japan; the Group of Interested States; the Asean countries; and, those which extended valuable technical and legal help to us, including the United States, Russia, India, France and Australia.

We appeal to all those countries that have encouraged this process now to translate such expressions of support into material terms, as well as nominating judges and other personnel of the highest calibre, to make sure that the Extraordinary Chambers are established as soon as possible, and meeting international standards.

Next week, on 20 May the Cambodian people will commemorate the Day of Remembrance for all those who suffered and died during the three years, eight months and twenty days of the rule of Democratic Kampuchea. This year we can know in our hearts that we have moved one step closer to the long-delayed goal of honouring their memory by bringing the perpetrators of those crimes to justice.

Sok An

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Phnom Penh
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