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New UN rights envoy must explain attempts to try Duch abroad: PM Vong Sokheng June 19, 2009

Hun Sen asks why a UN official wanted to 'take Duch out of the country'

Prime Minister Hun Sen has asked Surya Subedi, the new UN human rights envoy to Cambodia, for an "explanation" as to why a UN representative 10 years ago wanted to try former Khmer Rouge jailer Kaing Guek Eav, alias Duch, at an international court outside the country.

Speaking at their first meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Thursday, the prime minister asked Subedi to work with the head of the government's human rights committee, Om Yentieng, to find out why Christophe Peschoux, the country representative of the UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, had tried to "take Duch out of the country", Eang Sophalleth, Hun Sen's spokesman, said.

Peschoux had interviewed Duch in 1999, during which the former Khmer Rouge leader claimed in his trial earlier this year the UN official told him he would go to prison in Belgium.

Before Cambodia's UN-backed Khmer Rouge tribunal was established, Peschoux and others had suggested he be tried internationally for fear of a lengthy pretrial detention.

"Why was there an attempt to take Duch out of Cambodia while the government and the UN were in negotiations to establish the tribunal to try former Khmer Rouge leaders?" Eang Sophalleth said.

"We want to know the reason and will send documents related to Peschoux to the UN human rights body in Geneva."

Subedi and Peschoux would not comment following the meeting.

Subedi began his first visit to Cambodia on Monday.