



**UN undecided on inquiry at Cambodian war crimes court
October 21, 2011**

Phnom Penh - The United Nations said Friday that its legal chief would report back to New York before any decision was taken on whether to mount an investigation into allegations of judicial misconduct at Cambodia's war crimes court.

Patricia O'Brien, who heads the Office of Legal Affairs, wrapped up her visit to Phnom Penh Friday after meeting government officials, tribunal staff, donors and court observers.

UN spokesman Lars Olsen said in an email that the world body was concerned over allegations of inadequate investigations into two cases that the Cambodian government has long said it would not permit.

But he gave no indication that an inquiry into the tribunal office responsible has been decided.

'O'Brien will be gathering information and views from senior officials at the [tribunal] and others during this visit to Phnom Penh so that the United Nations can taken an informed decision as to what action, if any, would be appropriate,' Olsen said.

O'Brien's visit came during a period of unprecedented upheaval at the court, sparked by concerns that its two investigating judges were bowing to political pressure and sabotaging their own investigations into the two cases.

One of those judges, German national Siegfried Blunk, quit October 9, citing political interference.

In a statement late Thursday, O'Brien said she had told the government of her concerns, adding that the UN expected all involved to respect the judicial process. She said Phnom Penh must cooperate fully with the court and refrain from interfering with the two cases.

The Office of Legal Affairs has come under increasing pressure to mount an investigation into the Office of the Co-Investigating Judges.

O'Brien met Cambodian observers Friday who told her the UN must take action to rebuild trust in the court, starting with a comprehensive investigation of the investigating judges office.

The court announced Tuesday that opening arguments in the trial of the four surviving Khmer Rouge leaders would commence November 21. The elderly defendants have denied charges of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes for their alleged roles in the deaths of up to 2.2 million people under the 1975-79 Khmer Rouge regime.

The case is the second to come before the tribunal. In its first, the court last year sentenced the regime's security chief, Comrade Duch, to 30 years in prison after finding him guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Duch has appealed.