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UN suggests anti-corruption measure for Cambodian genocide

UN News Center

April 8, 2009

A senior United Nations legal official today underscored the need to address allegations of corruption surrounding the genocide tribunal in Cambodia, which has begun the first trial of a suspect accused of crimes committed during the notorious Khmer Rouge “killing fields” regime of the late 1970s.

Assistant-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs Peter Taksoe-Jensen has submitted a provisional ethics monitoring mechanism to Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister Sok An for his consideration, UN spokesperson Michele Montas told the press in New York.

Mr. Taksoe-Jensen has met with Mr. Sok An, who is also chair of the Royal Government Task Force on the Khmer Rouge Trials, several times this week regarding the UN-backed Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC).

In a statement to the press, Mr. Taksoe-Jensen stressed that for an ethics monitoring system at the ECCC to be credible, the staff should have the freedom to approach the Ethics Monitor of their own choice and put forward complaints without fear of retaliation.

“The United Nations will further strengthen its own anti-corruption mechanism within the Court,” added Mr. Taksoe-Jensen.

The trial of Kaing Guek Eav, also known as “Duch,” got underway last month, when he was charged by the ECCC in Phnom Penh with crimes including torture and premeditated murder while he was in charge of the renowned S-21 detention camp.

The ECCC, established in 2003 under an agreement between the UN and Cambodia, is tasked with trying senior leaders and those most responsible for serious violations of Cambodian and international law committed during the Khmer Rouge rule. It is staffed by a mixture of Cambodian and international employees and judges.

Estimates vary, but as many as two million people are thought to have died during the rule of the Khmer Rouge between 1975 and 1979, which was then followed by a protracted period of civil war in the impoverished South-East Asian country.