



**Remarks by  
His Excellency Sok An  
Senior Minister, Minister in Charge of the Office of the Council of Ministers  
Chairman of the Task Force for Cooperation with Foreign Legal Experts and  
Preparation of the Proceedings for the Trial of Senior Khmer Rouge Leaders**

**at the Signing Ceremony of the  
Agreement between the United Nations and the Royal Government of Cambodia  
Concerning the Prosecution under Cambodian Law of Crimes Committed during  
the Period of Democratic Kampuchea**

**6 June 2003  
Chaktomuk Theatre, Phnom Penh**

This is indeed a historic day for Cambodia and for all humanity. I stand here today humbled by the task ahead of us as we move forward in partnership with the United Nations to bring to account the perpetrators of one of the greatest crimes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in which more than one third of the population of Cambodia lost their lives.

I recall clearly the hushed atmosphere in August 1979, as witness after witness gave moving testimony, speaking graphically of their own personal experiences or presenting reports of field investigations on the common graves found throughout the country and on the social problems faced by all sectors of the surviving population.

In this very room we held the world's first genocide trial. At the time President Heng Samrin expressed the confidence that "the tribunal of history, the tribunal of mankind's conscience... will join with the Kampuchean people in pronouncing its verdict".

We have waited a long time for this prediction to come true. Almost a quarter of a century -- a whole generation -- has passed, during which geopolitical complications stood in the way of a proper international recognition of the crimes committed. Now at last we have emerged from that period.

Six years ago this month, Cambodia requested assistance from the United Nations Secretary-General. I was honoured by my appointment by Samdech HUN SEN, the Prime Minister in August 1999 to lead the Cambodian Task Force and to head the Cambodian delegation through the five rounds of talks. For most of that time my co-signatory here today, His Excellency Hans Corell has been my partner, leading the team from the United Nations Secretariat.

I take the occasion today to pay tribute to his work and to those on his team from the Office of Legal Affairs and the Department of Political Affairs as well as the United Nations representatives on the ground here in Phnom Penh who have facilitated their visits.

I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to the Member States of the United Nations who have maintained their confidence and commitment to this process, without which we would not be signing the Agreement today. During the past four years we have appreciated the assistance and advice given to us by all, especially by France, Japan, Australia, India, the Russian Federation, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, and all the members of Asean. In 2002 twenty-seven countries formed a Group of Interested States to deliver the mandate requested by the Secretary-General; and thirty-three countries sponsored the resolution successfully presented to the United Nations General Assembly.

Last but not least, may I thank the Cambodian Task Force and its Secretariat and other members of the Cambodian who have worked tirelessly and under difficult circumstances over this entire period.

During the past four years we have been engaged in complex and at times difficult negotiations as we sailed in uncharted waters. Despite the fact that we were fully entitled to prosecute the Khmer Rouge in a national court, and indeed were obliged under the Genocide Convention to act, we sought international involvement in the process, preferably through the United Nations. On the one hand because we were all too acutely aware of the weaknesses in our judiciary, and we wanted help to make certain this trial was able to meet internationally accepted standards. On the other hand, we felt that it was appropriate for international participation in dealing with these crimes against humanity as a whole.

I have no doubt that the road ahead will also not be easy, as we move from the negotiating phase to the implementation phase. Now the Agreement is signed, we will pass it to the legislature for ratification in accordance with our internal law and procedures. We expect that later this year we will be in a position to establish the Extraordinary Chambers, which will have the heavy responsibility of meeting justice for the most serious crimes against international humanitarian law and Cambodian domestic law.

We appeal to all who have encouraged us along the way now to translate such expressions of support into material terms, including making pledges to the

United Nations Trust Fund, nominating judges and other personnel of the highest calibre, and making other contributions in kind. We want to make sure that the Extraordinary Chambers are established as soon as possible, and that they are at a level that meets international standards.

It is likely that this historic Chaktomuk Theatre -- a pride of our architectural achievement, and a showplace for Cambodian culture -- may once again play the role of silent witness to our people's suffering, as sessions of the Extraordinary Chambers may be held in this room. This time we earnestly hope that the outcome will be recognized and respected throughout the world.

On behalf of the Royal Government of Cambodia, I pledge to the souls of those who perished, to their surviving relatives and friends, and to all our people who suffered during the terrible period of three years, eight months and twenty days to continue our efforts to reach a satisfactory legal and historical accounting of the period of Democratic Kampuchea.

Thank you for your attention.