

Welcome to Plenary

Phnom Penh

28 February 2008

Your Excellency Kong Srim, President of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, other distinguished members of the Tribunal both from Cambodia and from the many countries from which the international judges have been drawn. Thank you for the welcome you have extended.

It is a pleasure to return to Phnom Penh to continue the work that began in July 2006. As I said on the last occasion that the judges gathered in Plenary, there remained much work to be done before the co-investigating judges could begin their work in earnest and the trial process get under way. I am pleased to confirm that after the adoption of the Internal Rules of Procedure last June, this work has begun, and any trials that ensue, will begin later this year.

As with any exercise as complex as this, there is an enormous amount of work accomplished away from the eyes of the public. This includes the administrative work which involves everything from ensuring that the buildings are suitable for the purpose, to selecting and training a wide range of staff, including who have legal and administrative functions.

The judges themselves have been deeply involved in legal and judicial administration. The primary task – that of drafting and agreeing the

rules which will guide the law and procedure in this unique hybrid Tribunal took a great deal of cooperation and work among the judges. While the process must have seemed interminable for those waiting for the ECCC to begin the public part of its work, it needs to be said that most jurisdictions would be engaged for years in achieving what was done in months.

There have been many other responsibilities. The Judicial Administration Committee which supports the administrative staff in their work has met many times. The Pre-Trial Chamber has begun its deliberations, meeting formally and publicly for the first time last year. It will convene again next week. The Rules and Procedure Committee which completed the Internal Rules now meets to refine those Rules as new experiences and issues arise. As I have said, the two co-investigating judges You Bun Leng and Marcel Lemonde, have been working on the first major investigation since July last year.

All of this work is shared between Cambodian and international judges and administrators. This has meant that we have begun to form close working relationships, bridging the many difficulties of language, custom and legal systems – of which about 10 are represented in the ECCC.

There remain many difficult legal, judicial, administrative and financial issues to be resolved. But for my part, I am now satisfied that there is a real chance that the people of Cambodia will be able to see justice at work in a Court in their own country as we cooperate to complete this historic task.

The work of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia will always be complex and very difficult. But I believe that that we are all committed to working together to ensure free, fair and independent trials.