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UN legal chief calls on donors to help fund Cambodian genocide tribunal

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The United Nations legal chief today called for donors to provide funds to support the UN-backed tribunal in Cambodia trying Khmer Rouge leaders accused of mass killings and other crimes during the country's genocide in the late 1970s.

Under-Secretary-General Patricia O'Brien, the UN Legal Counsel, voiced concern about the financial situation, including the cash flow, of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), after holding talks with the country's Deputy Prime Minister Sok An in the capital, Phnom Penh.

Ms. O'Brien and the Deputy Prime Minister issued a joint statement after their meeting in which they urged the international community to provide contributions and pledges to national and international components of the tribunal.

The ECCC was set up in 2003 by the UN and Cambodia and is tasked with trying senior Khmer Rouge figures and others responsible for the worst atrocities between 1975 and 1979. It is composed of both national and international judges and staff. In their statement Ms. O'Brien and Mr. An stressed their continued strong support for the ECCC and their intention to work closely together to ensure that the tribunal is successful.

They noted the completion of the trial phase in the case of Kaing Guek Eav, also known as "Duch," who is charged with crimes including torture and premeditated murder while he was in charge of the notorious S-21 detention camp.

"The ECCC has confirmed its ability to conduct complex international criminal trials to international standards, and is living up to the hope for it to be a model court," according to the statement.

"The proceedings have attracted unprecedented interest and support, as witnessed by the fact that over 30,000 Cambodians have attended court proceedings since its inception."