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ECCC officials to seek funds in US

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OFFICIALS from the Khmer Rouge tribunal will attend a UN meeting in New York next week in an attempt to secure funding for the hybrid court, where national staff members are facing the prospect of no pay this month as a result of budgetary concerns, court officials said Wednesday.

Though funding for the 2010 operations of the court's UN side has already been provided by donor countries, court spokesman Reach Sambath said the 290 members of the tribunal's national staff are facing "a very difficult situation".

"It is a great concern, because now the work of the court has reached a peak point," Reach Sambath said, citing the upcoming verdict in the court's first case and preparations for a possible trial in Case 002.

"I think we are in a critical situation, and I think we wish to notify and appeal to the [donors]... to look into the situation and try to solve the problem as soon they can," he said.

UN court spokesman Lars Olsen said Tony Kranh and Knut Rosandhaug, the tribunal's director and deputy director of the Office of Administration, plan to attend a meeting in New York next Tuesday that will be "chaired by the senior leadership of the UN". All UN member states have been invited to participate in the meeting, he added.

"Since the donors ... have approved the budget, we hope they follow through with the necessary pledges," Olsen said.

Juergen Schilling, country director for the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) organisation, said Wednesday that Germany was working towards an agreement to provide funding for the national side.

"It's an open issue at the moment, and we have almost finalised it," he said. The funding, he said, would be "conditioned for supporting project activities of the Victims Support Section".

US Embassy spokesman John Johnson said in an email that American officials “understand that other funds have been pledged to directly support the Cambodian side of the tribunal, but that those funds have not yet been delivered”. The US announced a US\$5 million contribution to the tribunal in March, but those funds were earmarked for the UN side.

The court released its 2010 and 2011 budgets last month, allocating \$42.9 million in total for this year and \$44.2 million for 2011. Reach Sambath said Wednesday that the national side needs \$8.5 million in additional funding to complete its activities in 2010.