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# The CAMBODIA DAILY

## **Tribunal Staff Warned Jobs in Jeopardy**

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U.N. special expert to the Khmer Rouge tribunal, David Scheffer, on Friday informed staff at the court that they needed to prepare contingency plans as funding to continue operations may not materialize, meaning they could lose their jobs.

Mr. Scheffer said the closed-door meeting with staff was not held to cause alarm, but was requested by the U.N. Human Resources division in New York, because there is a funding shortfall of \$3 million to see the court through to the end of this year.

Mr. Scheffer added that he was “moving mountains” to ensure that no jobs would be lost. “This was a closed door meeting with the staff in order to alert them to the possibility of notifications regarding their contracts,” he said. “We are obligated to do that under U.N. regulations, so they are not in the dark.

“If the funding does not come through, they need to know as soon as possible about contingency,” Mr. Scheffer said. “Nothing is happening right now; this is a prior indication to them that there is a possibility that if funding is not received, they might receive a notification.”

A source on Friday said the mood at the meeting was emotional, and that many of the court staff who attended were “not happy at all.”

Mr. Scheffer said he had urged staff to continue their work, and that he was doing everything to avoid job losses.

Beyond the staff meeting, Mr. Scheffer also spent Friday engaged in “intense discussions” with representatives from several foreign missions in a bid to plug the \$3 million funding shortfall. These talks went into the evening, he said, but left him “very hopeful that we will resolve this issue for 2012, which is a \$3 million gap in funding.”

Yoshi Abe, second secretary of the Japanese Embassy’s culture and information department, confirmed that Japanese representatives met with Mr. Scheffer on Friday. Japan is the largest donor to the Khmer Rouge tribunal, contributing almost \$76 million to the court as of June.

Tatsuya Machida, counselor at the embassy of Japan, wrote in an email: “In today’s meeting, views were exchanged on various issues, including the judicial process and

financial situation that the KR tribunal court faces. However, due to the informal character of the meeting, we refrain from making comments.”

This is not the first time the tribunal, which relies on foreign donations, has been on the brink of financial collapse. National staff at the court did not receive any salaries between October 2011 and February.

On Wednesday, Trial Chamber President Nil Nonn announced that hearings would be scaled back to three days a week when proceedings resumes on November 5 after a short recess. The reduction in working days was attributed in part to the lack of funds.

Mr. Scheffer said the most pressing threat to the court’s future is ensuring funds come in next year in order to lift a hiring freeze implemented in July.

“The real challenge is ensuring that I raise enough pledges of funding by governments for 2013, so that the hiring freeze can be lifted,” Mr. Scheffer said.

He said he is hopeful that the call for 2012 funds would be met, and that that would provide the basis upon which funds for next year could be secured.

Mr. Scheffer also called for patience on the part of the court’s staff.

“I asked [staff] to be a bit patient with me—let me work this problem—I am totally dedicated to this challenge and will be flying from here to the capitals of other countries to press this case,” he said.