

**KRT has 'right' to investigate  
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Foreign Minister Hor Namhong said yesterday that the Khmer Rouge tribunal had the right to conduct investigations into the court's third and fourth cases, following the resignation of international Co-Investigating Judge Siegfried Blunk in response to perceived political interference at the tribunal.

“[The government] clearly knows that the investigations into cases 003 and 004 are the right of the tribunal,” Hor Namhong told reporters at a press conference, following a meeting with Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremic.

He emphasised, however, that the government had to take responsibility for any outcome stemming from the court that caused “instability”.

“If this UN-backed KR tribunal does something that leads to instability of peace or war happens again in Cambodia, who will take responsibility? The government is taking responsibility for the national fate,” he added.

According to Judge Blunk's press release issued by the court on Monday, his decision to quit was sparked by statements from government officials regarding cases 003 and 004.

However, Hor Namhong yesterday denied that he had made comments in a media report, cited in Judge Blunk's statement, which quoted him as saying that Cambodia must decide whether to arrest further former Khmer Rouge leaders.

Last year, Hor Namhong told reporters that Prime Minister Hun Sen had told UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon that he would not allow prosecutions beyond the court's second case.

The United Nations confirmed yesterday that it had “noted” Judge Blunk's stated reason for his resignation.

Martin Nesirky, spokesman for the UN Office of the Secretary General, said via email: “We will continue to monitor the situation at the ECCC closely, including in consultation with the Royal Government [of Cambodia].”

Rights groups yesterday pressed the UN to address concerns about the tribunal's independence. In a statement, Amnesty International urged the UN to emphasise that any attempts to influence the court's work “will force the UN to review its involvement”.

“Any attempt by the Cambodian government to influence the work of the ECCC

undermines the entire tribunal,” Amnesty International Asia-Pacific director Sam Zarifi said.

New York-based independent monitoring group Open Society Justice Initiative welcomed Judge Blunk’s resignation and reiterated its request for the UN to open an inquiry into “allegations of judicial misconduct and incompetence during his 10 months in the position”.

“The UN needs to seek public guarantees from Prime Minister Hun Sen and his government of full cooperation in all four of the open cases before the court,” OSJI executive director James A Goldston said in a statement. “If those guarantees are not forthcoming, the UN should reassess its commitment to the court.”