

UN NEWS CENTRE

UN Calls on Cambodia To Appoint International Judge to Genocide Court January 20, 2012

The United Nations today voiced concern at Cambodia's decision not to appoint the current reserve judge as the new international co-investigating judge at the tribunal set up to try former Khmer Rouge leaders, saying it breaches the agreement that set up the court.

Yesterday the Government of Cambodia formally notified Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of the decision not to appoint the current reserve international co-investigating judge, Judge Laurent Kasper-Ansermet, to the position of international co-investigating judge of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC).

"This is a matter of serious concern," Mr. Ban's spokesperson said in a statement, stating that the decision is a breach of the 2003 agreement between the UN and the Government that set up the court, which states that the person appointed to fill this particular vacancy must be the reserve international co-investigating judge.

The vacancy on the ECCC resulted from the resignation in October of Judge Siegfried Blunk, the international co-investigating judge, who cited attempted interference by Government officials in the court's proceedings.

The Government had raised ethical concerns in relation to Judge Kasper-Ansermet in November, according to the statement issued today. The UN thoroughly reviewed the concerns, determined that they were unfounded, and requested that the country's Supreme Council of the Magistracy proceed with his appointment.

"The United Nations continues to support Judge Kasper-Ansermet and Cambodia should take immediate steps to appoint him as international co-investigating judge," said the statement.

It added that the newly designated Special Expert to advise on the UN Assistance to the Khmer Rouge Trials (UNAKRT), David Scheffer, is travelling to the capital, Phnom Penh, today for discussions with the Government and senior ECCC officials.

The ECCC is an independent court that uses a mixture of Cambodian staff and judges and foreign personnel. It is tasked with trying those deemed most responsible for crimes committed under the Khmer Rouge between 1975 and 1979 during which as many as two million people are thought to have died.