



Australia Pushes for Release of Tribunal Funds
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May 7, 2009

Australia has urged the UN and Cambodia to reach an agreement over how to handle corruption at the Khmer Rouge tribunal and has officially demanded that the UNDP release \$456,000 for administration of the court, an official said Wednesday.

“We continue to urge the Cambodian government and the United Nations to intensify their efforts to develop a credible anti-corruption mechanism which builds on progress to date,” Fiona Cochaud, deputy chief of mission at the Australian Embassy in Phnom Penh, told VOA Khmer by e-mail.

“Like other donors, Australia is concerned about allegations of corruption in relation to the administration of the ECCC,” she said, referring to the tribunal by its initials, for Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia. “And we welcome the work undertaken to date by the Cambodian government and the United Nations to ensure that the ECCC administration operates in a transparent, fair and efficient manner.”

The tribunal, established in 2006 after a decade of wrangling between the UN and government, has been hounded by allegations by Cambodian staff they paid kickbacks for their jobs, in accusations strongly denied by tribunal officials.

The allegations have proven strong enough to give some donors pause, causing a budget crisis on the Cambodian side of the hybrid court, even as the first trial, of Khmer Rouge prison chief Duch, is underway.

Cochaud said Thursday that Australia is satisfied with the “broad progress” made by the courts in addressing corruption concerns, and it wants to ensure the administration will be able to support the functions of the tribunal.

“We are currently working with the UNDP on the modalities of the funds' release,” she said.

UNDP has not changed its position, the agency said in a statement Tuesday. “We are in discussions with our partners, but allegations of corruption must be resolved and genuine governance reforms must be put in place before UNDP is in a position to release funds.”