

Speech of Nicolas Michel, UN Under Secretary General and Special Representative of HE Kofi Anan

(This speech was delivered late Monday July 3 at the Reception at Le Royal)

Your Excellency Deputy Prime Minister Sok An, Senior Minister in Charge of the Council of Ministers and Chairman of the Taskforce,

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The time for justice has finally arrived.

We all know that criminal justice alone cannot repair or render full account for all the crimes and injustices committed during the period of Democratic Kampuchea. Especially after so many years have gone by. Does this, however, mean that one must leave unpunished atrocities systematically committed on such a massive scale? Must one resign to total impunity? Cambodia chose not to do so. Instead, Cambodia chose the path of justice, the path to peace- durable and sustainable peace.

A historic landmark has been reached today, on this road to justice and sustainable peace. It is an honour and a pleasure for me to be representing the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, in passing on to you his most cordial greetings, as well as his message of gratitude and encouragement.

To begin with, a message of gratitude to the authorities, organizations and persons whose support has been essential for the Extraordinary Chambers to come into being, to be given an infrastructure and to have been rendered operational. This message is primarily addressed to the Cambodian authorities which, Your Excellency, Deputy Prime Minister Sok An, you are representing this evening, particularly in your capacity as Chairman of

the Taskforce. The active engagement of the national authorities has been, and remains crucial in moving this historic process forward.

A special message of gratitude on this inaugural day goes to you, ladies and gentlemen, the judges and prosecutors of the Extraordinary Chambers. Much important work rests on your shoulders. To the extent that external factors will allow you to exercise fully your functions, as I am hopeful they will, it is on you that Cambodia and the international community count on to fulfill the purpose of the Extraordinary Chambers. Cambodia and the international community count on your talents and qualities: your professionalism, your impartiality and your independence. You will be supported by talented and dedicated staff, who have already shown proof of their hard work. They also deserve our sincere appreciation.

Another message of special gratitude goes to the Member States which have given their support to the Extraordinary Chambers, especially the Groupe des Amis des Chambres Extraordinaires. These States have played a crucial role in the creation of this new jurisdiction. This is just the beginning, however, and their vigilant attention and constant support remain essential. The Secretary-General of the United Nations recognizes and appreciates this role, and underscores its importance now more than ever. He thanks each State which has brought its assistance to the Extraordinary Chambers and highlights with appreciation the fact that France and Japan have taken it upon themselves to assume the co-chair of the Groupe des Amis des Chambres Extraordinaires.

Another message of gratitude is addressed to the non-governmental institutions and organizations, national and international. Motivated by dedicated, talented and courageous staff, they have played and, I am certain, will continue to play a decisive role. It is becoming increasingly clear that today, no public authority is in a position to face and provide comprehensive solutions to the challenges we all face without fully engaging civil society.

I would finally like to thank the members of the media. Their accounts and reporting must continue to be vigilant of truth and guarded in their independence, a deontological necessity of their profession. Such reporting will allow Cambodian society as a whole to participate in the judicial developments of the Extraordinary Chambers, and to become an essential part of the process, laying deeper foundations to justice and peace.

The message which I have the honour to bring to you this evening is also a message of encouragement and support. We know that difficulties and challenges will arise. There will be moments of great satisfaction, but also moments of doubt. It is at such times, honourable judges and prosecutors of the Extraordinary Chambers, that your best qualities will be required: moral strength and the determination to reach our goal. You are directly associated with a historical enterprise. In fact, you are its actors. You are writing yourselves into history. Cambodian history, as well as that of an international community increasingly engaged, here and elsewhere, in creating a culture of accountability to replace the sinister culture of impunity. In the name of the Secretary-General, I wish you strength, courage, wisdom, a little patience and the satisfaction of a job well done.

I would leave unmentioned the most important message of this evening if I did not directly address the Cambodian people. Your country, my Cambodian friends, has lived tragic moments, moments which can be counted in days, months, and years. Many lost their lives. Many suffered and many continue to suffer from the loss of loved ones and the brutal treatment suffered. You are thirsty for truth, justice and reconciliation. You are thirsty for peace. You want to move forward together to a better future. Today, in cooperation with your Government, the international community answers your call and offers you its full support.

Let us work together to make the Extraordinary Chambers a success. Such success will stand as a beacon in the region signaling that the sinister culture of impunity is, indeed, being replaced by a culture of accountability. It would also leave Cambodia with a positive legacy for its efforts in strengthening the rule of law. Finally, if we succeed in

achieving our goals, the Cambodian people will have reached a landmark on their road to justice, peace, liberty and wellbeing.

This is what I wish for you, with all my heart.

Thank you.