

## Civil society groups call for more graft protections as corruption talks stall

Written by  
Friday, 10 April 2009 03:00

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As you may have read in today's *Post*, the UN and Cambodian government have [failed to reach an agreement](#) on anti-corruption mechanisms at the court. The latest round of talks was seen by many as a "last ditch effort" to resolved the nagging corruption issue, which would unfreeze funds that are being withheld from the ECCC's Cambodian side.

Now the UN has said there will be no more negotiations.

Peter Taksoe-Jensen, UN Assistant Secretary for Legal Affairs, said the UN has left a proposal with Deputy Prime Minister Sok An to consider. What will happen if this proposal is not accepted is unclear.

The UN says it will strengthen its role in corruption monitoring as much as possible. But will this be enough to reassure donors and restore the tribunal's legitimacy?

That certainly won't be enough to satisfy members of civil society.

"We are concerned that the Cambodian Government is apparently reluctant to adequately address previous corruption allegations and to agree on an effective joint mechanism to deal fully and independently with any future corruption allegations," representatives from a number of civil society groups wrote Thursday.

They called on the UN and Cambodian government to resolve previous corruption allegations as soon as possible, and to "immediately agree on a joint mechanism to deal fully and independently with future corruption allegations."

On Thursday, DC-Cam Director Youk Chhang also sent a letter to Taksoe-Jensen, suggesting that he solicit the advice of Ambassador Thomas Hammarberg.

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"I highly recommend that you engage [Hammarberg] to meet with UN staff both in Phnom Penh and New York so that he can share his experiences negotiating with the Cambodian Government for the establishment of the Extraordinary Chambers," he wrote. "In my view, the difficulties he faced in reaching an agreement with the Government were much more severe than those faced today at the Extraordinary Chambers."

Meanwhile, the Trial Chamber heard from its first witnesses -- including former [M-13 prisoner Francois Bizot](#)

-- Wednesday and Thursday. I will write more about their testimonies tomorrow.