

Asian Perspectives Seminar: The Dynamics of Change in Cambodia

April 11, 2000 • Washington, D.C.

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Introduction

by Jon Summers

Good morning. I am delighted to be here, and pleased to be moderating this session. I am flanked by three distinguished people on my left. I am pleased that our Cambodian colleagues were willing and able to come for this session and that you were interested in meeting with us. Let me make a few remarks about The Asia Foundation's program in Cambodia before I introduce my colleagues.

The Asia Foundation's Cambodia Program is characterized by its work in the area of human rights and the development of democracy. Under the human rights and democracy label, I would place rule of law issues, electoral processes, free flow of information, and our work with the media. We also support some work on public policy issues in Cambodia. We have a program that we call women's political participation, political with a small "p." In addition, we support some activities related to economic development.

There are many different ways to explain our Cambodia program. In some respects, I describe it as a human rights program. Because, one way or another, it comes back to rights, whether those rights pertain to men, women, children, or economics. We are pleased to work with our colleagues seated here and several others on issues related to civil society. The nongovernmental organization (NGO) sector in Cambodia is large and dynamic.

In many respects, we describe ourselves as a partnership that includes Cambodian NGOs, U.S. Agency for International Development, the Department of State, and the private sector. We have titled today's program, "The Dynamics of Change in Cambodia." There is significant change in Cambodia, and you will hear positive and negative

things on that subject from our colleagues in the discussion.

These three people, who have come from Cambodia, are very impressive people. They are deeply committed to what is going on in Cambodia. They are committed to change and reform. Every day, they deal with the process of democratization in one way or another. These Cambodians do not deal with, as Dr. Lao would say, the language of democracy. Rather, they deal with the substance of democracy, the substance of citizen participation, and economic issues. These people are well aware, more than any of us, about the challenges the country faces.

They are aware of the opportunities in Cambodia for development. We are now at a stage where true development surely is possible. The country is coming out of the tragic and traumatic situation it has faced in recent years. Some people are impatient when it comes to Cambodia. But if you view the development of democracy as a process, it is an important process in Cambodia. What many of us are trying to do is figure out how we can advance and enhance the process of development and the process of democracy.

Now let me just make a few comments about my colleagues. Dr. Lao Mong Hay is the executive director of the Khmer Institute of Democracy. He has a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Wales. He has a degree in public administration. I know there are many people in Cambodia who hear from Dr. Lao on issues related to public administration and a variety of other issues. He is an intellectual. He is a scholar, and an activist. And one of the things I like the most, he is a man of supreme integrity.

Ms. Chea Vannath is president of the Center for Social Development. She has a master's degree in public

administration and is a specialist in program development. She is a very creative, highly professional person.

Mr. Sok Hach is economic advisor to the Cambodia Development Resource Institute. He has a degree in statistics and economics from France. For six years, he was an economic advisor to the Ministry of Economy and Finance. He is a teacher and researcher. He is an excellent analyst and a delightful person.

I think you will enjoy your interactions with these three interesting, perceptive people. We are grateful to them for taking the time to travel here, because they are very busy people, as all of you are. They came to engage with you and other colleagues. Thus, my three colleagues will make fast presentations, and then we will open the floor for discussion.

Democracy and Change in Cambodia

by Lao Mong Hay

Thank you very much. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It is difficult to be first on the list, but I will try somehow to make a short presentation on democracy in Cambodia.

Democracy, according to one Western scholar, is an instrument man has invented for peaceful change. Indeed, things have changed peacefully in Cambodia since the reintroduction of democracy in Cambodia way back in 1993. I said “reintroduction” because Cambodia had embraced democracy in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, not just with the arrival of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) in 1992-1993. Similarly with human rights — we did have human rights once, enshrined in our first constitution of 1947.

So the idea that human rights, the rule of law, and democracy itself were Western ideas imposed on Cambodians against their will is unfounded. Actually, it mocks of the memory of our elders who had introduced this system of government more than half a century ago.

Cambodia has tried all the major political systems over this half-a-century period since the end of the Second World War. We have had absolute monarchy, constitutional monarchy, different forms of republics (a military republic, two communist republics), and we are back to a constitutional monarchy with liberal, pluralistic democracy. Along the way, about 2 million people have been killed and our country destroyed.

All Cambodians, or Cambodian factions, who took part in the peace process realized the failure of their respective regimes, and they were compelled to operate a pluralistic,

liberal democracy, respecting the rule of law and human rights as enshrined in the Paris Peace Accords of 1991, which put an end to the war in Cambodia. That war failed to achieve peace. Only one aspect of democracy achieved that peace: the elections of 1993.

I remember returning to Phnom Penh from western Cambodia. The day I arrived, December 21, 1991, there was a medical students’ demonstration. Some of them were shot. Then there was a police state. If you had been there, you would have been followed everywhere, discreetly or directly. And my own experience was that my mother told me not to go to visit her so frequently in the countryside. Because, after my visit, a police officer would go and interrogate her. That was way back in 1992-1993.

Things have changed since then. Since the election of 1993, we have had a democratic government for several years. And gradually, we have had peace and freedom of movement. Cambodian society has undergone dramatic change. And I would like to emphasize “dramatic change.” An observer would not have failed to notice that change.

If I may consider Cambodian society as a child of 6 or 7 years old in 1992-1993, now that child is 13 or 14 years old. It is old, with growing pains. But that child has one particular problem, a problem that it needs you all to help solve. It has the same clothes that are now very tight. In everyday life, we are free to go about our business. We have taken to the streets to make ourselves heard. Demonstrations, elections, the national assembly, and voting rights have become part of our everyday vocabulary.

These days people are talking about upcoming elections. And one thing I have noticed, and perhaps for the first time

in our history, even peasants have come to town to protest, to exercise their rights. In the old days, some of them would have gone to the jungle to take up arms to fight for justice. Now they are facing the problem of land confiscation or land grabbing by some powerful people who invariably have guns. The other day they sent some people to burn people's houses in one region in the northwestern part of Cambodia.

However, all of these changes remain very fragile. And I say "very fragile" because in July 1997, when few people had expected that our rulers would resort to violence, to armed clashes, and all of that, they actually did. They made war in the middle of our capital. Lately, two coalition parties in the government have waged a campaign against the small opposition party in an attempt to eliminate it. That was in January of this year. And the campaign was conducted on television and radio, continuously, for several days. Some people panicked.

On December 2, there was a decision by our prime minister to rearrest those people the court had acquitted, charging the courts and judges as corrupt. This rearrest of all those who had been acquitted by the court's rule was a violation of the principles of the law. But there is less violence than before, so it is an improvement. But we are facing quite a number of challenges inside and outside Cambodia.

The decision by Asian countries to oppose a motion by the U.N. Commission for Human Rights in Geneva to send an international investigation team to East Timor was an indication that Oriental despotism still prevails in Asia. I think the Asian nations need to do a lot more work to

eliminate that Oriental despotism.

Cambodia has been backing itself more and more into the Chinese corner these days, and China has increasing influence on our rulers. So what now? Does China want a full-fledged democracy in Cambodia? I rather doubt it.

Cambodia has been admitted into ASEAN. How many countries in ASEAN are democratic and respect human rights? Look at Myanmar, or Burma. And we have two

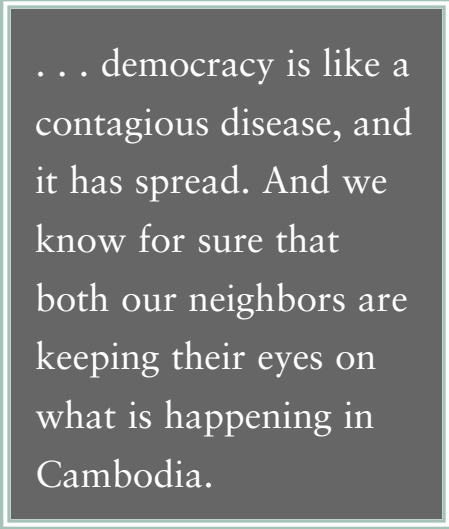
next-door neighbors, Vietnam and Laos, which have remained very much communist regimes. Mind you, democracy is like a contagious disease, and it has spread. And we know for sure that both our neighbors are keeping their eyes on what is happening in Cambodia.

I already mentioned the land grabbing inside the country. Barely 10 years after communism, we are experiencing two parallel developments: landlordism and

landlessness. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, on record, the biggest landholding was 132 hectares. We had a population of around 6 or 7 million.

Now if you were to go to Cambodia and if you were curious enough to look at the fences, or empty land walled up, you would see that, these days, there are landholdings of many hundreds of hectares, many thousands, many tens of thousands, even hundreds of thousands of hectares, and we are now 12 million people. No doubt, the issue of land has been rising very assiduously.

So evolution has not stopped. It could lead to a feudal society, ruled by an oligarchy, not an aristocracy. I put emphasis on "oligarchy."



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Another challenge is whether the present-day promised reform (military reform, amnesty reform, economic reform, and especially legal and judicial reform) will be successful or not. If they are not successful, it is very difficult to expect democratic institutions to work. Now one democratic institution, the open-air people's meeting called National Congress, has not seen the light of day yet, some six or seven years after our constitution was written.

Based on the past, a national congress could form as an anti-corruption institution. In the old days, corrupt ministers and senior officials were removed from their positions following criticisms at these congresses — a form of direct democracy. But why have they not yet established this kind of institution?

How about civil society? These days, because of the presence of a very small opposition party in the parliament, it is very difficult for that small party to be effective using the parliamentary process. So confrontation comes from civil society — from the press and from the international community.

These days there are some 400 local NGOs. Some of them just keep quiet, regardless of the lawlessness and powerlessness, and do not speak up. A few dare to risk their necks. That includes our Institute of Democracy.

So I would stop here and I would like to engage in a discussion or debate with you in the hope that I could learn a few things and have something to bring back to my country and help me continue my work.

Civil Society and National Reconciliation

by Chea Vannath

The openness of the country in 1992-1993 brought everything to Cambodia: the good, the bad and the ugly. But since Cambodia is poor, it is very vulnerable. The most vulnerable group in Cambodia is women and children. We have trafficking of women and children inside Cambodia itself and abroad. Children have been trafficked outside of Cambodia for labor purposes.

Cambodia is not just an intermediary country for drugs, but it also has domestic drug factories, especially amphetamines and marijuana. Based on a report from last year, 1,000 tons of drugs were confiscated abroad. In Canberra, 85 percent of the confiscated drugs are from Cambodia.

Just in the city of Phnom Penh, with a population of over one million people, we have more than 10,000 prostitutes. And those prostitutes do not have, or have very limited access to, medical care and no basic human rights. Based on one report, everyday 100 people die of AIDS. Most children either never go to school or drop out at the primary school level.

Corruption is very widespread. Our Center, the Center for Social Development, conducted a survey on corruption, with over 1,500 samples. Eighty-four percent of the respondents said that bribery is the normal way of doing business in Cambodia. At the same time, 98 percent said it is very important to stop corruption.

Our Center is fortunate to work with the government, including the Ministry of Public Relations and the Senate to develop anti-corruption legislation. The first mandate of the government dealt with the National Assembly. But the issue of corruption was not a priority of the government at that

time. So they kept postponing passage of the legislation. In their second mandate, the government called itself the “combat” government, and they have placed the fight against corruption on their political agenda.

Our Center produced an anti-corruption poster — a big poster to educate the public about the problems that corruption might cause. We distributed it to all the ministries and departments. We sent it to one of the highest institutions in October 1999. More than six months later, it has not been distributed. I followed up, and they responded in writing, saying that they had our poster in the secretariat, but that we did not need to send any more anti-corruption posters. But we are still pursuing it.

We are also currently working with the Ministry of Education to develop a curriculum for high schools on anti-corruption, based on ethical values and good governance. This curriculum will be tested before being integrated into the formal educational system.

Regarding freedom of expression and freedom of the press, Cambodia was fortunate that, due to the presence of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia in 1992 and 1993, the country was suddenly opened to the world. We now enjoy freedom of expression and freedom of the press. Compared to our neighboring countries, we are the most advanced in terms of freedom of expression.

In terms of freedom of the press, we are classified in the same category as Thailand and the Philippines. That means we enjoy much freedom. But how far down this freedom extends into the society is very questionable.

Our Center conducted public fora or town hall meetings on the Khmer Rouge and national reconciliation issues at

three different locations. After we finished, we taped it, and we asked our national television station to broadcast it for the public to view. Before we were able to do that, I had to ask permission from the prime minister. It is just by pure coincidence that I was able to meet with him to request that he air it on national television. We were successful in getting the first meeting broadcast.

The second one, in Phnom Penh, was never shown on television. And the response was:

Why is your Center stirring up the issue of the Khmer Rouge? There is no more Khmer Rouge. Why don't you develop a bridge, a school, or a hospital? Why do you talk about the Khmer Rouge?

So we wrote a letter to the responsible minister. We said: Sir, you witnessed the authorization from the prime minister to broadcast that. So could you please broadcast our cassette? And we called. And they said: The Cambodian New Year is coming and we have run out of show time. Sorry; we will broadcast the next one.

So there are challenges to democracy, on the one hand, but some progress. On the Khmer Rouge and national reconciliation, my concern is that the trial is merely a way for certain parties to garner respect. The trial of the Khmer Rouge is not the whole answer. The whole answer will tell us how to achieve a long-lasting peace and sustainable national reconciliation for Cambodia.

As my colleague mentioned earlier, for the last half century of our history, we have had so many regimes, and we faced the complete destruction of our country. We now

have long-lasting peace. We now have a long-lasting reconciliation. The oppressor recognizes the victim. And the oppressed have become the rulers. After becoming the rulers, they still carry the pain they have in their hearts. The oppressed become the losers again. It is just a vicious cycle of the loser becoming the victims and the victims becoming the liberators, and the liberators becoming the rulers.

We have a saying: In the flooding season, the fish eat the

ants; in the dry season, the ants eat the fish. In the Cambodian context, the ants and the fish are Cambodian. Cambodians kill Cambodians. What else can we do besides the trials to reach a long-lasting peace and reconciliation?

Since 1993, after the general elections, the donor countries have poured in money to care for the children, to rehabilitate and develop Cambodia. In 1996, a group of donors established its own monitoring system. That means that, with the government, on a quarterly basis, they follow

up on the progress of implementation.

In 1997, after the so-called coup d'état, the U.S. Government stopped its bilateral aid to Cambodia. Since then, it has not resumed it again. From the U.S. Government's point of view, the coup was very undemocratic. But since then, we have made much progress. The change is for the better, but it is very slow. Sometimes it is very painful. As far as civil society is concerned, we still have seen a lot of positive change.

Last week I was in a group donors meeting on necessary reforms. It was like a little table with different countries:

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France, Germany, Great Britain, Canada, Japan, and the United States. The chair asked people to go around and give their input on the process. Every country said something about their involvement, and when it came to the United States, the representative said: I do not have anything because I am here as an observer only.

I feel that the U.S. Government has missed the boat. I feel that the U.S. Government, who cherishes democracy and human rights so much, should be part of the progress,

should be a partner for change. It is very critical during this period that the U.S. Government get involved in the process of positive change in the country.

We have to look beyond the politicians of Cambodia. By helping Cambodia to progress, the U.S. is not just helping Cambodia only, but the region. Cambodia is a member of ASEAN. So helping Cambodia also means helping ASEAN. So I feel that the U.S. Government should be involved, instead of isolating itself and just criticizing or blaming.

Economics and National Development

by Sok Hach

Ladies and gentlemen, I am very pleased to be with you today. Before coming here people told me that the American people are very pessimistic about Cambodia. They also said that I, too, am very pessimistic about Cambodia. Now we shall see who is the most pessimistic.

I would like to begin by discussing the Cambodian economy. As you certainly know, Cambodia is very poor. But to what degree is Cambodia poor? Forty percent of Cambodian people live below the poverty line. The infant mortality rate is among the highest in the world. And school enrollment, too, is very low. There are obvious technical reasons for this, but there are also what I call nontechnical reasons.

I will start by giving you three technical reasons. First, the fiscal system in Cambodia is very old and weak. In other less-developed countries in Asia in general, the ratio of state revenue to the GDP is about 20 percent. In Cambodia, it is about 10 percent. Although we have had some progress last year, our ratio is still only half of the neighboring countries.

GDP per capita in Cambodia is about 10 times lower than that of Thailand. That means that per capita state income is 20 times lower than in Thailand, for example. Some people say that government revenue is so low because of years of war and consequent high expenditures on defense and security. To give you another ratio, the budget for defense and security, and what fiscal specialists call “sovereign institutions” — the Royal Palace, the Council of Ministers and the National Assembly and Senate — comprise about 70 percent of the total budget. Social expenditure is only 20 percent of national revenue. That basically explains why, for example, the mortality rate in

Cambodia is so high and why improvement in education in Cambodia is so slow. We do not talk about investment because we rely almost totally on foreign aid.

Another technical reason is the banking system and the private sector. In the U.S., Europe, and even in Thailand and other less-developed countries, the banking system plays a very important role in boosting the economy. But in Cambodia, the banking system does not work. There is a total lack of confidence in the system and the currency. Everything is paid in dollars. In the western side of the country, people prefer to use Thai baht.

Before going into the nontechnical reasons for poverty, I would like to mention that before the Paris Agreement, the natural resources of Cambodia were significant. Everybody said that Cambodia’s natural resources might enable it to be self-sustainable. For example, at one time, there were about 50 different gem mining companies in Cambodia; now there is just one, and I am not sure if it is profitable.

In the 1960s we had about 13 million hectares of forests. Since then we have had at least 30 percent decline. However, of the remaining 8 or 10 million hectares of forest, most is not very valuable wood. This means that the value of forestry as a natural resource is very low.

For Cambodia, fish stocks are an important natural resource. Fish represent the most important source of protein in the Cambodian diet. But the remaining stocks are small.

To sum up, these are the technical reasons for Cambodia’s poverty: weak fiscal system, no confidence in the banking system, and serious declines in natural resources. Why? Now I will give you the nontechnical

reasons. The World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), and my organization, the Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI) are completing very good studies right now on governance problems in Cambodia. These conclude that in order to solve Cambodia's problems, we must strengthen the governance system and the rule of law.

For example, 70 percent of Cambodians are rice farmers. The Cambodian farm-gate price of top-quality rice is about 5 baht. In Thailand, Thai rice farmers sell rice for about 8 baht. That makes our rice about 3 baht, or more than 30 percent cheaper. However, transportation and other costs such as bribes are higher in Cambodia, so our rice is ultimately not competitive. This is a problem of lack of governance.

In 1993, most of Cambodia's roads were more or less repaired. However, these good roads are now being destroyed because trucks that exceed proper loads are allowed to use the roads. The police or other responsible authorities do nothing to prevent this kind of thing.

We borrowed a great deal of money from the World Bank, the ADB, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and Japan to rebuild the roads. If we continue on the same track of bad governance, our good roads will be destroyed in the next few years. That is why I think that to reduce poverty in Cambodia, you have to strengthen the rule of law and governance.

The scale of oil smuggling is another governance problem. The total amount smuggled represents more than

the combined amount of the money borrowed from the World Bank and the ADB. The price of oil in Cambodia is about 50 percent higher than in Thailand and Vietnam because of taxes and because the administrative system is so bloated.

But how do you improve things? Do we rely on the government or should we go through nongovernmental or private channels? I think there are some areas where we

have to work with government. But I understand also, that some countries, the U.S. in particular, don't want to work through government.

Over the last five years, there has been significant improvement in non-governmental areas. I think that The Asia Foundation, for

example, has done a very good job in this area. I also think that strengthening civil society is really important. I have heard that U.S. aid to Cambodia declined from \$40 million to \$10 million per year. This is unfortunate, given Cambodia's circumstances. I believe the U.S. should substantially increase aid to Cambodia, at least through civil society organizations.

In conclusion, I think at this time there is a well-developed civil society in Cambodia, but it is not sufficiently strong to propel faster development. Also, good governance in Cambodia is critical. Finally, the international community should continue to help Cambodia, especially in the areas of governance and the rule of law.

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Questions and Comments

by Dynamics of Change in Cambodia Panel

Closing Remarks by Jon Summers

If you will permit me, I would like to make two minutes of comments on the part of the glass that is half full. First, there is peace in Cambodia. Second, the Khmer Rouge are finished. The tribunal is a major issue for national reconciliation. Third, the 1993 election was incredibly important. It was followed by the 1998 election, which was also very important, and it was administered by Cambodians.

There is an elected coalition government. It is a functioning government. There is an opposition party, a functioning opposition party. There is a measure of stability in that country, which is critical to development. There is a functioning and relatively free press, chaotic and libelous in our terms, but free.

There are reform elements inside and outside of government. There is no place you look where you don't have challenges. A dynamic nongovernmental sector has developed in the past six years. This is a dramatic development.

So, I keep trying to fill this glass up a little bit. Now let us open the floor for comments, questions, and engagement.

Q Within the Washington policy community, the issue that comes up about Cambodia is the trial of the Khmer Rouge as simply an accountability exercise. There is a perception on this side that the United States has taken a very high profile on this issue. How is this perceived in Cambodia? And is this seen as being at odds with suspending assistance? Is there general agreement with the U.S. position or does it seem like something coming from Washington?

Ms. Chea Vannath: Firstly, it is because of the coup of 1997. As Dr. Jon Summers mentioned earlier, the American people have a tendency to look for a quick fix or a quick, tangible result. For me, as a Cambodian, I feel that we should not have the Khmer Rouge trial without properly preparing the ground for it. Just one example is the land legislation situation. We have a lot of problems about land and a lot of people die because of violent confrontation.

So international organizations joined our efforts, along with a local nongovernmental organization (NGO), to develop a newly revised land law. The existing legislation has been implemented, but it doesn't work. It even makes things worse. We rushed to have new legislation passed in order to meet the June date imposed by the international community. If you go to Cambodia, you can see people protesting in front of the National Assembly about claims on land issues.

The same can be said for the Khmer Rouge trial. I feel that the international community could have worked more closely with civil society in Cambodia to educate people to be aware of the issue first. The reason that my Center conducted town hall meetings to talk about the Khmer Rouge issue is because I was very frustrated by it, and I didn't know anything about the war. A lot of people discussed the trials in New York, Washington, D.C., China, and in other countries, but not with the Cambodian people.

Q How do you implement things without the participation of the public? The U.S. Government is still standing firm on not lifting the sanctions because of the Khmer Rouge issue.

Dr. Lao Mong Hay: There is the importance of the American initiative on the Khmer Rouge trial before the end of the Khmer Rouge as a military and political force. My opinion is that without the American initiative in demanding that the Cambodian Government address our past, the Khmer Rouge would have continued to struggle.

With the American initiative, the Khmer Rouge could not take refuge in Thailand. I am not blaming Thailand, but Thailand served as their sanctuary. Once they were denied sanctuary protection from Thailand, the Khmer Rouge gradually defected to the government side. They have surrendered more to save their skin than to achieve national reconciliation. I doubt they had a plan of cooperation.

Cambodian opinions are certainly divided about the trial. But I believe the majority want a trial in one form or another. To illustrate Cambodian attitudes towards Americans, I will describe a scene I have never forgotten. In September 1998, there were demonstrations against the results of the elections of that year. There was a crackdown on all the demonstrators. Many of them went to demonstrate around the American embassy compound. They were camping on the roadside there. They raised three flags: one Cambodian flag, one United Nations flag, and one U.S. flag. You can imagine to which country our people look up to. And with the trial, the debate has been going on and on. Our government changed its mind from requesting the U.N. to set up an international tribunal, to try the Khmer Rouge, to not wanting to try the Khmer Rouge at all.

The problems come from us, not from the Americans or the international community. I don't blame the international community at all, and least of all the American people or the American government. We changed our minds on whether we wanted to try the Khmer Rouge. If I were the prime minister, I would say, "Sorry, we don't want that because it would disturb our peace and order, full stop." There would be no need to waste any more resources or time. I think it would be better that way.

Q I would be interested to hear any of the panelists elaborate a little bit further on the status of NGOs. There has been discussion of NGOs and democracy, and many people define the role of NGOs as a key indicator of democratic progress. I would be particularly interested in your view of the government's attitude toward NGOs. Is it one of hostility? Are they viewed as nuisances? Or, are there patterns of constructive cooperation developing?

Ms. Chea: Right now, we have more than 800 NGOs, half national and half international. But among those NGOs, we have a variety of types. The NGOs are quite independent in terms of their staff. The NGOs that are supported by political entities call themselves NGOs as well, but mainly for partisan reasons.

The real NGOs that make an impact are quite few. We do make an impact, but it is still very limited because we lack a critical mass. At first, the government ignored the NGOs, especially the Cambodian NGOs, because they thought that the Westerners were behind them. They thought the Cambodian people were just doing what the Westerners told them to do. Later they realized that this was not quite true. We have our own ideas on doing things. The government also had pressure from the international community. Otherwise, they would have continued to ignore us.

Now things have changed a bit because the international community, the Asian Development Bank, and the World Bank, have started to work with civil society and NGOs. They put the pressure on the government to work with the NGOs as well. Currently, the situation is such that the government recognizes our contribution to the process. However, sometimes civil society is still being overlooked.

Sometimes the government uses the NGOs as a facade, to create the impression for the international community that they support civil society and that they have gotten

participation from civil society. But it is just an appearance. It is not profound; it is not at that stage yet. But I think that we will reach that stage in the future.

Dr. Lao: Just to add a few words to that. NGOs do not have any legal status at the moment in the sense that they do not have any law determining their functioning. We do have constitutional and international guarantees of our role. The Paris Peace Agreement spells out clearly that the Cambodian Government must undertake to assist Cambodians engage themselves in promoting human rights and a democracy process. That is in the actual agreement. And it is in our constitution, too. It guarantees the right to form associations.

But, now and again, the government has been using a draft NGO bill as a sword of Damocles over our heads. NGOs have to be careful, otherwise all funding from the international community would be channeled through the government. They want that kind of control. Nevertheless, on the surface they are committed.

But now the government has opened itself up to input from civil society. It still remains debatable and a lot remains to be seen whether, without international donor pressure, the government will continue to open itself up to civil society.

Mr. Sok Hach: Just a brief comment. I would say that the Khmer Rouge leaders do not understand why the trial should occur. They say there is a political agreement between the government and themselves. They do not understand why there is a lot of talk about trial. However if the government says that there will be a trial, I doubt that the Khmer Rouge will go back to the jungle and fight.

Concerning the role of NGOs in Cambodia, since there has been no administrative, political, judicial, or military reform, I think that the role of the NGOs is very important. To give you some background statistics on the social sector,

the percentage of government financing to the health sector is just 4 percent. If a household spends \$100 on health, the government contributes just \$4 of that. And on what? — the salary of a health official. For health, I think that NGO funding represents about 14 percent of total spending.

The natural role of NGOs in Cambodia lies in the social sector; however NGOs increasingly participate in economic development. It is obvious that the NGOs should play a big role in the social sector, but concerning the provision of credit to rural people, let the banker play the role of banker, not the NGOs. Unfortunately, NGOs feel obliged more and more to foster economic development and provide credit because government is too removed from the poor, from the average person.

NGOs work mostly on human rights and democracy — that's very good. But it's not enough. They should also be working to develop the capacity of leaders at the village level. I say this because when I worked for the World Bank for several years as an economic advisor to the Ministry of Economy and Finance, I developed a lot of economic policies for Cambodia. But unfortunately, these policies were too "high level" and did not improve conditions at the grassroots. For that reason, developing leadership capacity at the community level is very important.

To improve leadership capacity at the village level, you need the involvement of NGOs. I don't know when we can shift from reliance on NGOs to reliance on government. I think we need at least two years for this, and probably 10 years. I don't know. As I said, as long as there is no administrative, political, military, or judicial reform, we need the NGOs.

Q Why is there no reform in all of these areas you enumerate? Since the social/political tensions in the first government have been resolved as the prime minister gave a speech to the donors favoring all these

things, why isn't there any reform in any of the areas you mentioned?

Mr. Sock: I would like to say that there has been reform, but for real reform, I would say "not yet." When I joined the Ministry of Finance in 1993-1994, there were about 140,000 civil servants. Now the number of civil servants is about 164,000. Reform of the civil administration should have been completed a few years ago, as the government pledged to the international community, but rather than a decrease of 15 percent, as promised, the number of civil servants has actually increased by about 15 percent. There has been no reform in this area; the situation instead is worse.

As for the military, they talk a lot about demobilization. But personally, I think the target should be military reform, not demobilization. There are far too many generals in the Cambodian army and police. The number of officers in Cambodia is about the same as the number of soldiers. We should be asking, what is the role of the military?

To sum up, there has been much talk and a lot of pledges, but real implementation has not occurred. That is why I say, "not yet" regarding government reform.

Ms. Chea: I happened to be at a meeting with a group of donors on administrative reforms. There is a report by the international community written after they monitored and followed up with the government. So far, they have removed more than 6,000 civil servants from the payroll of the government. There are already tangible results of administrative reform. Perhaps 6,000 of these civil servants are "ghosts" or already retired. But at least, yes, there is progress.

They also broke the 6,000 down into two groups of civil servants: one group selected by politicians and the other group graduates of administration school. On the topic of

the administration school, in Cambodia, all the civil servants used to come from l'Ecole Royale d'Administration. It's a very selective, prestigious school that produces all the "brains" of Cambodia. They re-started operations after the election of 1993. It is sponsored wholly by the French Government. A lot of people accuse the French Government of monopolizing the school. But, in reality, the French themselves requested international donors' assistance for the school as it is not possible to sustain it alone. Now Cambodia is a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). ASEAN is Anglophone, and the Ecole Royale d'Administration is Francophone. So how do you produce civil servants who speak French and go to meetings of the ASEAN countries? It doesn't work. In 1995, the director of the school and I requested assistance from The Asia Foundation to help the school at that time. But USAID and The Asia Foundation did not have a long-term commitment to the school. The U.S. was never involved with the school.

And at last week's meeting of the subgroup of donors, the director of the school again asked the international community to help the school. So I am here to ask all of you who have influence to do something about the school. We're talking about administrative reform. We're talking about progress. We're talking about positive change, and the school is a very good place for such change.

Dr. Lao: I would like to illustrate one of the reasons why there is no reform yet — not yet. [He holds up two documents.]

Who signed this book? The police commissioner of the Municipality of Phnom Penh signed this family book.

Who signed this passport? The director-general of the National Police, who is special advisor to our prime minister and who has the rank of a minister. With reform, I think all these people will not need to sign this book. That means less

power. Reduction of power means the reduction of extralegal income and patronage as well.

Q I am curious to know about the upcoming elections for the communes. Where does that reform lead when it comes to political interest for them? And what might be the effects if there are successful commune elections?

Ms. Chea: We are still working on draft legislation for the communes. We are supposed to have more than 200 articles, and so far we have just finished a little over 100 only. But we still do not agree on the principles. The government wants to have a proportional system that comes from the party's line. And the civil society, based on a survey, proposes individual candidates, because the voters want to vote for a candidate who they know, who they see every day, and who they like.

The election is supposed to give more power to the local governments. But with the way the commune law is applied and administered, power is not devolved. It's still very controlled by the central authorities.

A group of people, including myself, met with the prime minister to ask him to change the system of commune elections from a political party to individual candidate basis. And he feels that, based on what the experts told him, it's impossible to have individual candidates because we do not have a computerized system in Cambodia. So how do you deal with 1,600 communes in Cambodia without a computerized system? We tried to convince our prime minister that it was not difficult. He suggested that we follow up with the Ministry of Interior, which is responsible for drafting the commune election law.

Q There are 44,000 sub-districts in the Philippines, and it's all individual balloting. No computers.

Ms. Chea: That's what we tried to convince him of. We need to follow up on that issue. But I doubt we will be able to change that. But at least we tried our best to make our stand with the prime minister. Another illegitimate process is our national election committee. Right now we have 11 people on the committee, 10 from the ruling party and the existing party in the government. We proposed the restructure of the national election committee because, based on the last two elections, nobody respects the results of the elections. And since nobody respects the results, what is the purpose of having the national election committee? And our prime minister said that he might consider the proposal for the next election in the year 2003.

Dr. Lao: We are actually overruled with administration at the national, provincial, district, commune, village, 15-house group, townhouse group, and unit levels — seven layers. With the commune elections, the bottom layer will be eliminated and party control will decrease. Proper commune elections would mean, first, a loosening up of our society further and secondly, the loosening up of party control. And the party that used to control the grassroots does not want to lose that control.

Q It is really remarkable hearing these discussions about reforms that have yet to be put into place, because when I first visited Cambodia in 1990-1991, these very same problems were being discussed. Then, with UNTAC there, lots of elaborate programs were developed in 1993. UNDP had a very elaborate administrative reform project; all the donors were going to come in and ministries were being selected. There was a program being developed, with World Bank support, for military reform and reducing the numbers of generals. All these same things were being discussed. And it raises the question as to what the donors have been doing all these years or what their intents really have been. Could donor

pressure of some kind have made some significant difference in accelerating the attention given to these problems? Because the donor meetings, right from the start, were raising these issues. And there was a lot of saber rattling and threats and so on. There are two sorts of theories that have come along. Maybe there is a third one. One is the general theory that a country that is 90 percent dependent on the donors is so weak the donors really have no option but to go along with whatever the recipient does, because withdrawal means collapse. The other theory is that the donors really don't care at a very high level. I mean, The Asia Foundation cares and we care, but the donor governments at high levels are really not concerned. Their main concern is that there should be sufficient political quiet to ensure that Cambodia does not once again return to conflict and become a really irritating problem, so to speak, on the international table. And therefore you don't really push too hard or rock the boat. Neither of these two are very nice theories. Maybe there is a third one. But it would be interesting to know if you think that the donors could have used their position to really have forced administrative reform.

Mr. Sok: This is from the economic point of view and not from a civil society point of view. They talk a lot about sovereignty in Cambodia when they want to implement new campaigns. That's okay; Cambodia is a newly independent country, but the government needs donors' money to run the country.

Sixty percent of the Cambodian economy comes from external assistance and foreign investment in the private sector. This amounts to more than half of GDP. And because of this assistance, there have been some improvements in urban areas. Now, in Phnom Penh, you have more electricity. The roads are also a little bit better. And you have water to drink in Phnom Penh. But in the countryside, it is another story.

What is the role of foreign assistance? I think that the government commits, or at least pledges, a lot of reforms. Every quarter there are monitoring meetings between donors and the government. And thanks to this process, there have been some positive results, although the process of change is not very fast.

The World Bank places strict conditions on the government to make reforms. I think that if the World Bank and other bilateral donors require the government to adhere to these conditions, the government will follow through. I worked for six years on financial issues; I know why, for example, the first International Monetary Fund (IMF) program collapsed. Now, with conditions imposed, the situation with loans should improve.

The IMF, in general, sticks to its principles. But the World Bank is, at times, less strict. If the World Bank and other donors are not strict enough in making the government meet required conditions, the failures of the past six years will be repeated.

Because of international pressure, we are democratizing. On the economic side, we are also liberalizing. And what does liberalism mean? For me, liberalism means the rule of law. It is not a communist system where the party orders you to do something. But in a liberal system, we have laws which everyone must respect. If there is no rule of law, who then forces the government to respect it? At the moment, only donors.

Now think about the poor Cambodians in the countryside. The rural areas are very underdeveloped in terms of understanding how to function democratically. That's why NGOs are so important in assisting rural Cambodians to understand their civil and political rights. This is important for commune-level (village-level) elections. My organization, CDRI, facilitates a meeting every month with representatives from all three major political parties, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Finance, and some

NGOs to plan for the commune elections.

Unfortunately, there is a problem of confidence in the national election committee. How can they control and monitor elections in 1,600 communes? I think our colleague, who mentioned the Philippines, can speak more about that. In the countryside in Cambodia, they have no experience in holding elections. The three main parties and others have drawn up lists of candidates, so the process is likely to be very political. Madam Chea Vannath wants to make commune elections less political, but I think this will be difficult.

There are many problems in preparing for the commune elections. There are plans to create new structures of government at the provincial and commune levels but it hasn't been determined what budget will be allocated for these new governments or where it will come from. Nor are the responsibilities and reporting requirements of these levels of government clear in respect to the national government.

Some people suggested to the prime minister and other leaders, including the opposition leaders, to create a kind of "pilot province" because working with 1,600 communes all at once is too unmanageable. You need a lot of financial and political support. But if we can create a test province to show how it can be done, I think we would solve the monetary and other problems very easily, even if there is a politicized election.

Dr. Lao: Regarding the donors' attitude and work so far prior to the formation of the current government, their experts and consultants were too specialized. Cambodia is a society in the making. We need more generalists than specialists. Secondly, they were led to believe that Cambodia was lacking in human resources, which is a myth.

There was also a lack of or faulty prioritization. Running a country and society first means security — protection of the people — through the rule of law. You

have to have instruments that aid the civil service and public administration in order to implement your policy and to get feedback for policymaking.

Donors lack proper coordination and have different policy objectives. The French, Japanese, and Americans have had no coordination until recently. However, they still have different policy objectives. So we ask all of the donors to sit down together.

There are plenty of reports, surveys, and mission reports gathering dust on shelves and not being read or implemented. It is about time to collect all of this and present it to our rulers. We have to ask them to make decisions now. There are a lot of recommendations. They must prove their commitment. Then an independent party needs to follow up.

Of course, it is a little better now that we have monitoring mechanisms. However, some people feel pressure to brush over lingering problems. At the end of their missions, they say, "Okay, I'll write a very nice report and get a promotion."

Dr. Jon Summers: I think it has been alluded to or discussed several times in terms of the consultative group meeting in Japan in 1999 and the quarterly follow-up meetings. Those are starting to work. Based on what I've seen in my four years there, the two people who head the World Bank mission and the ADB mission, they are very impressive professionals. They're starting to build up their capacity. They're starting to try to do more coordination. But, absolutely, there needs to be more of that.

Q A little while ago there was a comment that because of ASEAN being an Anglophone organization it could not be of any help to the administrative school. I wonder to what extent the panel thinks that there may be some advantages in being part of an Anglophone community in terms of better economic relationships with

the other countries in Southeast Asia and the outside world, and to what extent membership in ASEAN could actually have some positive advantages for administrative reforms and some of the other issues that all of you have been talking about.

Ms. Chea: Of course, the fact is that English is the language of the world. There are only two languages in the world: computer language and the English language. And we realize that. But, unfortunately, in education, French is the first priority. However, if there are any English classes, about 95 percent of the students attend them. This is a dilemma of the educational system in Cambodia right now. I think this area would be the best one for the U.S. to invest in should it resume aid in the future.

The benefits of ASEAN are very debatable. We do have a lot of pros and cons, advantages and disadvantages. The advantage is that we cannot just be by ourselves. We need to be part of the regional associations. Another benefit is that a lot of ASEAN countries now have a policy of strengthening the less-fortunate members of ASEAN. Many Cambodians have been sent to other ASEAN countries for either short-term or long-term training. Perhaps my colleagues here will be able to explain the disadvantages, particularly to the economy, of ASEAN membership.

Mr. Sok: The original position was that Cambodia could not stay out of ASEAN. In the short run, Cambodia does not have much to gain. But if Cambodia does not join, it gets lost. In the longer term, on the economic side, Cambodia can benefit from joining ASEAN.

But as I said, we are completely uncompetitive vis-a-vis Thailand, particularly in rice. But Cambodia has to make very strong reforms in governance to reduce what I call the cost of bad governance in Cambodia. The fact that we have joined ASEAN has pushed the Cambodian government to make reforms.

About the language issue, I am French-speaking, unfortunately. That's why I speak English so poorly. In Cambodia though, if you go, for example, to the Ministry of Finance, you have to speak French if you want to get information because the directors of the Ministry of Finance are French-speaking. The international community increasingly understands this situation. For example, the representative of the IMF is French-speaking and so is the representative of the World Bank. If you want to work with the government at the higher levels, you have to speak and understand French.

Dr. Lao: Yes, with regard to language and ASEAN, there are again different policy objectives of donors. And the French seem to be quick to fund higher education. For example, the Institute of Technology is funded by the French. The French have their television station, Radio 2, and a big cultural center. The French have their own self-interest in trying to introduce Cambodia to the French-speaking community and to "La Francophonie." However, the younger generation do not seem to want to learn French. It seems that the Anglophone donors do not coordinate their work. New Zealanders try it their own way; the English try it their own way; and the Americans don't try it their own way at all. I have been advocating among the English-speaking donors for a council or an English-training center. So far, no pooling of resources has been carried out. The French are insistent, and the other donors do not insist at all.

Inevitably, we needed to join ASEAN. But there are pros and cons. In the long run, I'm not so sure that ASEAN will survive.

Q On the subject of international or multinational organizations as you have alluded, I would like to know specifically about UNTAC. There have been several accounts that it has not been an ultimate success. I

would like to know if you have noted any failures or weak points in the United Nations organization in general. What do you foresee in the road leading up to the 2003 election? What role will the U.N. play in them?

Dr. Lao: UNTAC's failure resided in the capacity of its leader. I don't like to be personal, but I was with him for one year, serving the National Supreme Council of Cambodia (SNC). I had the opportunity to be present when UNTAC met with the SNC. The tasks were too enormous for the U.N. and its leaders. It was the largest mission so far in the history of the United Nations. Perhaps we need more time to see. But in the end, I blame Cambodian leaders. Whenever they approach a decision to be made that would serve the national interest, they do not care much.

If they could benefit either themselves or their party, they rush to do it. Of course, there are plenty of projects, but the Khmer Rouge didn't care, and the whole state of Cambodia didn't care. And then some people blamed the presence of AIDS on UNTAC. With or without UNTAC, AIDS would have spread to Cambodia anyway. In Thailand and Vietnam, there was no UNTAC. So there is no need to blame UNTAC, just ourselves.

On the upcoming elections, I think the international community should not judge us too easily. They should send strong teams of observers there. And we have learned our lessons. A civil society has organized election monitoring organizations to help us to strengthen ourselves. We have a network.

Q First, the issue of a free press has sort of been taken for granted — that there is a free press in Cambodia. And I think it's very important to note that, as in this country and most countries, the main source of information for the people is the electronic media. And there is nothing free about radio and television in Cambodia. It was a major problem in the last election. It was wholly

controlled by the CPP and by Hun Sen personally. If that doesn't change and the donors don't work on making that change, there won't be free and fair elections in the future. Second, I think that one way to look at the role of the problems of reform is sort of a case of mutual bad faith or lack of good faith. I think, as a human rights worker in Cambodia, we saw no good faith from the Cambodian Government from the start. It wasn't a question of needing technical assistance in the end, because plenty of it was provided. But these cases simply aren't resolved. All the political killings related to the coup, the killings of journalists, the killings during elections in 1993 as well as 1998 are completely unresolved. There has not been one successful prosecution for one political murder in Cambodia since the United Nations arrived in 1991. And if there was some good faith, there would have to be some case that could be resolved. There has to be some low-level official who committed some act of political violence that could be resolved. But there is complete impunity and complete protection for these people. I subscribe to the second theory of Mr. Muscat, which is that the donors didn't really care; they really weren't interested in reform. I am researching a book and interviewing people who were involved in that process, and they almost laugh at me when I suggest that democratization was a key plank of the UNTAC process. For the donors, the purpose of getting into Cambodia was to get out of Cambodia. Their purpose was to resolve the longstanding conflict in Cambodia and to normalize their relations. The best way to get out of that problem was to get into Cambodia. I've been told that it's a tertiary or not even a serious objective of the donors. And I was very disappointed to hear that an American ambassador or diplomatic representative can go to a donors meeting and say he has nothing to say. The United States has bought into this process to the tune of over \$1 billion in this decade. They have every right to go to these donor meetings and say what they have to say. And they should say what they have to say and they should say it forcefully. The last question I

have for Mr. Hach is on donor assistance. I've sort of done a rough sketch, but you're the expert. Is it fair to say that donor assistance has essentially substituted for the government proportion of the national budget in social services, while freeing up government revenues to fund the security services? There seems to be a fairly neat match there. About 60 percent of the budget is for security, which is what the government funds; about 40 percent is for social services (20 percent for social services and other things), which is what the donors fund. Isn't there an argument that continuing to provide budgetary support has allowed the government not to reform, because they can keep using their own resources to pay for an army that actually has no particular role at this point?

Mr. Sok: The money is fungible, even sometimes if it is earmarked to build roads, etc. But I think that if the money is earmarked, for example, to build schools and to help people, it is less fungible. I agree with you. Technical assistance in Cambodia represents a substantial part of foreign aid. Only 40 percent of it goes to infrastructure.

The lesson learned from the last five years is that the World Bank gave a lot of loans to the Cambodian Government as "direct budget" loans. It was not earmarked. The money was given to the government as a kind of emergency credit and it failed to help Cambodia progress in making reforms.

Currently the World Bank is trying another policy. They give direct budget support providing the government meets certain conditions in making reforms. If the government meets these conditions, they will be given the money and can do what they want with it. I don't want to make any comment on this approach because it remains to be seen how well it will work. But I can say that the last policy of the World Bank failed. More than 100 million U.S. dollars was given to the government — most of which went to defense and security. If the World Bank makes the

government adhere strictly to its conditions, I think it would help. If not, we will have the same failures we had with previous loans.

Dr. Summers: You have to have the conditions in place to move forward. I think the conditions are in place to move forward. If we want to talk about the problems of Cambodia, please stay for lunch and dinner and we'll have you here tomorrow to talk about the problems of Cambodia. They are endless.

But how long did it take us to develop our democratic process? How long did it take a number of countries to develop?

I think the points that have been made on economic development and the points that have been made on the consultative group and donor support show that there is a tremendous need for more coordination, for more of what I call "creative pressure." And not creative pressure that's only verbal, but benchmarks. The World Bank is working with the government on demobilization. Are you going to demobilize or not? Are you going to demobilize in a way that makes sense?

How are you going to reform? You increased the bureaucracy. Why? Because you bring people in. The Khmer Rouge defect. What are you going to do with them? Where are you going to put them? How are you going to pay them?

These are massive interrelated problems. Let's not focus on politicians. Let's focus on processes. Let's focus on institutions. Is everyone happy with the politicians in countries X, Y, and Z? How many politicians come along who we are really happy with in terms of the results?

Politicians are important, but institutions are more important. Somebody needs to work on the judiciary. There are people who are starting to focus on that. There needs to be political will. Political will does not come from altruism, in my experience. Politicians have political will because it's in their interest to have political will.

I've only been here four years, and this room is full of people who know more about Cambodia than I do. But based on the past four years, we have been up and down. It has been a roller coaster ride. But if you look at the previous three decades, it has been a roller coaster ride, but the country is moving forward in all kinds of ways. It is not going to move forward, however, without support in creative and, in some respects, very critical ways — from the NGO community and civil society. There must be support in terms of creative pressure from the donor community and more coordination.

Let us not expect Cambodia, to use Dr. Lao's metaphor, to go from childhood to adolescence to running 100-meter dashes. They are going to get there, but they need a lot of help in the process. And they are getting help. But now they need to account for that help in a more rigorous manner than they have been accounted for in the past. And that is also our responsibility, as organizations and as individuals who are engaged with Cambodia. That's my homily.

This is a special country. You are here because you know it is special, with special people, who have tremendous capabilities. And one of the most important things that came out of this meeting for us to all internalize — and my wife who does some volunteer teaching at the university would underscore this — that the university is in real trouble, right? It is struggling. Guess what? They produce graduates. And those graduates are smart. There are all kinds of bright

graduates coming out, who are being hired by a lot of people.

So on the capacity issue in Cambodia — absolutely, there is capacity in Cambodia. Is it thin? Of course it's thin. But the point is education is taking place; things are happening.

From ASEAN, there absolutely must be support. In Malaysia, the National Institute for Public Administration received a lot of support. It is a tremendous public administration institution.

Where should Cambodia turn for educational support and all kinds of support? I think they should turn to ASEAN in all kinds of ways because there are amazing resources there.

It has been a great pleasure for me to have my colleagues here. These are but three representatives of the Cambodian scene. We could have brought other people, but we brought these three people because we thought they were superb representatives of the Cambodian situation and what is happening in that country at this time. We want to thank them very much for coming a long way to tell us about what they are doing in their country.

We want to thank you folks for coming and spending this time with us. And let us hope that we can all, one way or another, in our various ways, near and far, work with Cambodians. This is ultimately what we are about. We are working with Cambodians to help that country function better.

Seminar Participants

Lao Mong Hay

Lao Mong Hay is the executive director of the Khmer Institute of Democracy (KID), a Cambodian nongovernmental organization (NGO) based in Phnom Penh, and lecturer in political history at the University of Phnom Penh.

Previously, Dr. Lao was acting director of the Cambodian Mine Action Centre (CMAC) and a delegate in the peace process to end the Cambodia conflict (1988-1992). He served as director of the Institute of Public Administration and aide to the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) leadership as well as head of the KPNLF's Human Rights Unit. In addition, Dr. Lao was a research fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore and research executive at the National Bank of Cambodia.

Dr. Lao has participated in numerous regional and international missions and meetings as a public official, academic, NGO leader, and private citizen. Amongst other positions held, he was the Lyon Human Rights Guest Chair at the University of Lyon, France, a member of the People's Tribunal on Food Scarcity and Militarization in Burma, and a member of the Centre for Research into Communist Economies in London. His work in human rights earned him the Human Rights Watch Honour in 1997.

Dr. Lao has been widely published in newspapers in Bangkok, Hong Kong, Singapore, Phnom Penh, London, Hamburg, and Washington, D.C. Dr. Lao is the author of the book *The Unfinished Settlement of the Cambodian Conflict* (1995), and two booklets, "A Visit to Banteay Chhmar" (1990) and "Cambodia: The Tasks Ahead" (1992).

Dr. Lao holds a degree in public administration from the Royal School of Administration, Phnom Penh, a degree in law and economics from the Faculty of Law and Economics, University of Phnom Penh, and a doctorate in economics from the University of Wales.

Chea Vannath

Chea Vannath is the president of the Center for Social Development (CSD), a Cambodian nongovernmental organization advocating for good governance through the institutionalization of democratic values and principles. The CSD conducts public meetings on national issues, and acts as a nonpartisan and neutral forum to discuss issues of concern to society.

Under Ms. Chea's leadership, the CSD has taken numerous first steps for Cambodia including: the development of Cambodia's first voters' guide in 1998; the establishment of the first series of open forums for

debating national issues publicly; the first national survey on corruption; and the development of the first national curriculum on ethics for Cambodia's Education Ministry and local NGOs.

Prior to joining the CSD, Ms. Chea served as the compliance analyst for The Asia Foundation office in Phnom Penh. She was a United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) officer and a program specialist with the Oregon State Department of Human Resources.

Ms. Chea holds a masters in public administration from Portland State University and a Brevet des Fonctionnaires Moyens from the Ecole Royal of Administration, Phnom Penh.

Sok Hach

Sok Hach is the economic advisor to the Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI), an institute in Cambodia working to support capacity development within selected government and civil society organizations. He is also a professor of Cambodian Economy at the Economic and Finance Institute and the Faculty of Economic Sciences, both in Phnom Penh, with previous postings teaching economics and business in France at the Université d'Assas and the Université de Dauphine.

Prior to his position at CDRI, Mr. Sok was an advisor to the Cambodian Ministry of Economy and Finance and a consultant with the World Bank. In addition, he directed economic policy at several consulting firms and organizations. He served as economic consultant to COGEMA and the Paris Chamber of Commerce and Industry, director at SOCOFI, chief economist at The WEFA Group, and senior economist at CISI-Wharton.

Mr. Sok has written on economics in Cambodian, English, and French. Some of his recent articles include: "Prospects of the Cambodian Economy in 2000," *Cambodian Development Review* (2000); "Un Cadre Economique pour la Reconstruction et le Développement du Cambodge," *Mensuel Chatomukh* (1991); and "World Economic Outlook," *Wharton EFA Quarterly* (1985-1990).

Mr. Sok holds a degree in statistics and economics from Ecole Nationale de la Statistique et de l'Administration Economique, Paris.

Jon L. Summers

Jon L. Summers is the representative of The Asia Foundation in Cambodia. Since 1996 he has been responsible for developing and managing programs in Cambodia that focus on support for

nongovernmental organizations working in the areas of rule of law, human rights, democratic development, women's political participation, and media.

Dr. Summers joined The Asia Foundation in 1979 as representative for Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei. From 1985 to 1987, he served as director of the Asian-American Exchange Division and regional manager for Partners for International Education and Training (PIET), a consortium in which The Asia Foundation was a partner. From 1987 to 1991, he served as representative for Bangladesh and Nepal, managing the then largest Foundation program (Bangladesh). From 1991 to 1996, Dr. Summers served as representative for Indonesia.

Before joining the Foundation, Dr. Summers held the position of executive director at The Afghan- American Educational Commission.

He also taught at the following institutions: Kabul University in Afghanistan (Peace Corps volunteer); the University of Missouri; Texas Tech University; Luther College; The American International School (Austria); Leysin American School (Switzerland); and Fergusson College (India).

Dr. Summers has received a Distinguished Service Award from Luther College, a Distinguished Teaching Award from the University of Missouri, and the President's Award for outstanding service from The Asia Foundation.

Dr. Summers is a graduate of Luther College. He earned a master's degree in English at Texas Tech University and a Ph.D. in English literature from the University of Missouri.