

17 August 2007

## **'Cambodia trials won't slow down'**

A Cambodian judge vowed yesterday that his departure from the country's genocide trials would not disrupt the UN-backed court's effort to try former leaders of the Khmer Rouge regime.

You Bunleng is one of the court's co-investigating judges, making him key to determining which suspects will go to trial.

But he was abruptly appointed head of Cambodia's Appeal Court last week, after its former president was sacked over bribery allegations.

The move will force him to resign from the tribunal, and raises fears of further delays in trying to prosecute one of the 20th century's worst atrocities.

You Bunleng, in his first public statement since his appointment, said it was his duty to ensure "there is no interruption or delay in the process."

He had earlier told media that he would continue working at the tribunal until a reserve judge is familiar enough with the cases currently under investigation to take over. Yesterday, he said he had begun working with his staff and his international counterpart, French judge Marcel Lemonde, "to reach a mutually acceptable and constructive solution that does not disrupt our work."

But his departure comes at a crucial time during which he and Lemonde are investigating the first cases filed by prosecutors.

"It will have a disruptive effect ... you have a relationship, a dynamic and institutional knowledge of one year that is going to be gone," said co-prosecutor Robert Petit. "This court is so time-

sensitive and resource-limited that people on both sides have to be sure they're going to be here for their tenure. ... Without a doubt, this is a loss," he said.

After months of delay, You Bunleng and Lemonde in July began reviewing charges against five former leaders of the brutal 1975-79 regime.

After months of delay, You Bunleng and Lemonde in July began reviewing charges against five former leaders of the brutal 1975-79 regime. Only one of the five\_ former prison chief Duch, whose real name is Kaing Guek Eav\_ has been detained by the tribunal.AFP

Copyright 2006

Powered by Atex