

30 April 2007

U.N. Finally Sees Smooth Path to Khmer Rouge Trial

PHNOM PENH — International judges on the Khmer Rouge tribunal said on Monday they saw no more barriers to the start of the trial of Pol Pot's top henchmen after the Cambodian Bar Association cut fees for foreign lawyers.

"It was the only obstacle that remained and this has been solved," said French judge Marcel Lemonde in response to the CBA's offer to cut registration fees for foreign defense attorneys to \$500 from \$4,900.

"Now there is no reason why the process should not move ahead," he told Reuters.

Calling the CBA's initial registration fees excessive, the United Nations-backed international judges boycotted a full session of the court this week at which both sides were due to have agreed on the procedural nuts and bolts of the joint trial.

Court spokesman Reach Sambath said the Cambodian and international judges should now be able to convene towards the end of next month to sign off on the \$53 million court's "rules".

Once the rules are agreed, prosecutors will be able to file initial cases against those they deem most responsible for the atrocities of the "Killing Fields", Pol Pot's 1975-79 reign of terror in which an estimated 1.7 million people died.

Likely defendants are "Brother Number Two" Nuon Chea, former Foreign Minister Ieng Sary, former President Khieu Samphan, and Duch, head of the Tuol Sleng interrogation and torture centre in Phnom Penh.

"Brother Number One" Pol Pot, presumed architect of the ultra-Maoist regime, died in 1998. His one-legged military chief Ta Mok—dubbed "The Butcher" for his alleged role in mass internal purges—died last year.

Copyright 2007
Reuters