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ORAL STATEMENT

Item 10: Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia

CAMBODIA: REVERSE SEVERE DETERIORATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION

UN Human Rights Council
Forty-eighth regular session
13 September – 8 October 2021

Madam President,

We welcome the first report of the new Special Rapporteur on Cambodia, Professor Vitit Muntarbhorn. We wish Professor Muntarbhorn well during his tenure in the years ahead.

We are alarmed by the continuing deterioration of Cambodia's human rights situation since 2016, including the relentless attacks on civic and political space, the arbitrary dissolution of the only viable opposition party, the unjust prosecution of dozens of critics and human rights defenders, the enforced closure of independent media outlets, and the introduction of numerous new laws which unduly limit the ability of civil society and the Cambodian public to participate freely in public life.

Over the past year, specifically, Amnesty International has documented the severe repression of environmental and youth activists, such as those affiliated with Mother Nature Cambodia, and the introduction of several alarming new laws, including the Covid-19 Law, the State of Emergency Law, and the Sub-Decree on the Establishment of a National Internet Gateway – all of which fly in the face of Cambodia's human rights obligations.

We are further alarmed by the continued marginalisation of Indigenous and grassroots environmental defenders by the Ministry of Environment, such as the Prey Lang Community Network. Indigenous groups should be empowered to conduct forest protection activities and patrols - not harassed, threatened and marginalised for doing so. Cambodia cannot credibly position itself as a responsible climate actor while repressing independent environmental activists in this way.

We would like to ask the Special Rapporteur what he is doing to address the ongoing assault on environmental and Indigenous activists, and what practical steps could be taken in this regard by the international community?

Thank you.