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Cambodian Center for Human Rights

CCHR Press Release – Phnom Penh, 18 December 2011

CCHR Releases an Analysis of the Fourth Draft of the LANGO that welcomes the improvements made and highlights existing areas of significant concern

Today, the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (“CCHR”), a non-aligned, independent, non-governmental organization (“NGO”) that works to promote and protect democracy and respect for human rights – primarily civil and political rights – throughout the Kingdom of Cambodia (“Cambodia”) releases an analysis (the “Analysis”) of the fourth draft of the Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations (the “LANGO”).

CCHR welcomes the improvements made to the LANGO, especially in terms of clarity. Some of civil society’s recommendations have been listened to and implemented, which is to the credit of the Royal Government of Cambodia (the “RGC”). As a result, the fourth draft of the LANGO is a better piece of legislation than any of the previous three drafts. However, CCHR highlights three existing areas of significant concern, namely: (1) the pervasive discrimination against foreign associations and NGOs throughout the LANGO, which could not be much worse for such organizations; (2) the lack of clarity and transparency as regards the registration approval process; and (3) the power that the LANGO grants to the executive to de-register associations and NGOs – with no recourse to appeal.

CCHR strongly encourages the RGC to enter into meaningful consultation with civil society to enable these final improvements to be made, with a view to agreeing a law that can be used constructively to further the development of civil society in Cambodia. CCHR is committed to taking part in such a consultation process and engaging fully with the RGC.

Regardless of how much better the fourth draft is, and of how positive the next draft might be, the wider context should be borne in mind. In its [Briefing Book](#)¹ released in October 2011, CCHR outlined the threat posed by the LANGO to civil society and donor programs. This threat has not gone away; yet, the significant improvements to the LANGO in terms of clarity and the many welcome amendments, particularly with regard to the mandatory registration provision – however flawed it might still be – represent a notable reduction in the threat levels. The LANGO is still open to abuse, especially as regards foreign associations and NGOs, but CCHR is cautiously optimistic that the further required improvements highlighted in the Analysis will be included in a new draft, and that the resulting legislation will actually serve as a clear reference point for civil society in its dealings with the RGC – a tool to facilitate an “enabling environment” for

¹ http://www.cchrcambodia.org/index.php?url=media/media.php&p=analysis_detail.php&anid=16&id=5.

economic and social development in Cambodia, rather than an existential threat to civil society as previously feared.

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The Analysis will soon be available to view or to download in Khmer and English on the award-winning Cambodian Human Rights Portal, Sithi, at www.sithi.org, and on the CCHR website, www.cchrcambodia.org.

For more information please contact CCHR at this e-mail address: info@cchrcambodia.org.

Notes to Editor:

CCHR was founded in October 2002.

CCHR is a member of the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX), the global network for freedom of expression.

The Cambodian Human Rights Portal www.sithi.org is the 2011 winner of the Information Society Innovation Fund Award in the category of Rights and Freedoms.