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UN Requests Court Officials For KR Trial

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The UN has called on member countries to submit the names of international judges and prosecutors they would like to see nominated for the Khmer Rouge tribunal.

The UN Secretariat sent a letter to member countries on June 30, with nominations for the positions—a total of nine from the international community—to be submitted by Aug 29.

"On behalf of the Secretary General [Kofi Annan], I have the honor to invite your government to suggest the names of individuals whom the Secretary-General might nominate for appointment," wrote Nicolas Michel, the UN's undersecretary-general for legal affairs.

Eight international judges and one international prosecutor will work alongside 11 Cambodian judges and one Cambodian prosecutor during the trial's expected three-year duration.

The international court officials will make \$129,400 per year calculated upon how long they actually work, the letter said. The officials will start at different times and serve for varying lengths of time depending on the phase—investigation, trials and appeals—of the tribunal they are involved in.

The judges and prosecutor will not receive medical insurance or a pension, the letter said, and no information about per diem allowances was included.

Once the submissions are received by the UN, a list of at least 13 nominees will be forwarded to the Supreme Council of Magistracy, which will select the final list of officials who will preside with the Cambodian judges and prosecutors, the letter said.

Sean Visoth, secretary of the government's Khmer Rouge Tribunal Taskforce, said the government has been told about the letter.

"We have been aware of this letter the UN Secretariat sent to the member

[countries] asking for applications for prosecutors and judges," he said Tuesday before saying he was too busy to comment further.

Canadian Ambassador Donica Pottie described the call for nominations as "particularly good news."

"I hope this will get excellent candidates," she said, adding the call wasn't a surprise to her considering the UN wants to ensure it has personnel in place and is ready to act whenever the tribunal begins.

In recent weeks, international diplomats have said that the UN is in the final stages of choosing a deputy coordinator for the tribunal who will work with a Cambodian coordinator to oversee the trial's administrative needs.

In addition, the UN Web site has been calling for applications for a person to oversee the tribunal's financial unit as well as chief of the tribunal's personnel department, both of whom will work under the deputy coordinator.

The deadline for applying for either position is today.

"I am hoping both the UN and [government] will speed up the appointment and recruitment processes," said Youk Chhang, executive director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia.

"They should widely announce and publicize it so that they can draw in many excellent candidates."

But several observers were taken by surprise by the call for nominations.

One senior diplomat praised the UN, but said there are still other obstacles to overcome.

"We're all focused on finding the funding on the Cambodian side right now," the diplomat said.

Sean Visoth has repeatedly stated that the tribunal cannot move forward until all funding, specifically an \$11.8 million shortfall on the Cambodian side, has been secured.

The government has maintained that it is waiting for international donors-many of which have already pledged money for the tribunal-to cover its shortfall.

In addition, Sean Visoth said last month that an offer to use Japanese bilateral aid-money that Cambodia already has-to pay for the tribunal would only be used as a "last resort."

International donors have expressed frustration and impatience with the government's apparent lack of will in finding alternative sources of income, and observers have questioned the government's commitment to the tribunal.

Rights groups have also asked for more information about the process through which Cambodian and international judges will be chosen by the Supreme Council of Magistracy, the step many consider the most important for ensuring the tribunal meets international standards.