

UN Human Rights Council 41: Cambodia

Thank you, Madam Vice-President,

The UK welcomes Cambodia's engagement in the UPR process.

We recognise that some positive steps have been taken by the Cambodian Government including: the renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of the High Commission for Human Rights; the removal of the requirement for NGOs to give the local authority three days' notification of activity; and the commitment to end human trafficking and forced labour.

We welcome Cambodia's support for our recommendation to improve and expand identification and protection procedures for victims of these crimes.

We are also encouraged by Cambodia's support of our recommendation to implement a coherent resettlement policy and simplified process for granting communal land titles. The UK notes Cambodia's acknowledgement that its land allocation system is flawed. We welcome policies on proper land use and registration and ask that these be transparent and equitable.

However, we remain gravely concerned by restrictions placed on freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly. The dissolution of the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP), the forced closure of media outlets, and the provisions of the Criminal Code that criminalise defamation and restrict freedom of expression and peaceful assembly are troubling. We are disappointed that our recommendation on these critical issues was only noted.

We urge Cambodia to release Kem Sokha and to ensure that he, and the remaining 108 banned former CNRP politicians, can freely engage in political activity. While we welcome the amendment of the Political Party law in January 2019, we are concerned that the provisions require individuals to request permission to return to politics, leaving them open to arbitrary decision making.

Thank you, Madam Vice-President.