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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**RGC Puts Reputation on line on Forestry Reform**

Statements made at the Tokyo CG meeting by Hun Sen and Secretary of State for Agriculture, Chan Tong Yves commit the RGC to sweeping reforms of the forest sector. Cambodia's donors were presented with a six year plan, *Sustainable Forest Management Policy and Action Plan (1999-2004)*.

"Forestry seems to be the key agenda item at this meeting," said Global Witness' Simon Taylor. "The difference between this CG and the last two is that Hun Sen and the RGC have made their firmest and most detailed commitments yet to forestry reform, directly to all their major donors. If they do what they say they'll do, then there is real hope for Cambodia's forests and hopefully the international community will be impressed. But if they fail to deliver this time then they are going to lose donor support for sure."

Of particular importance Chan Tong Yves' statement confirms that more concessions will be terminated and concession areas reduced, based on concessionaires breach of contract; the Steering Committee for Forest Policy Reform will be reactivated; the RGC will hold a regional symposium to elicit support from neighbouring countries and the international community to curb illegal timber exports.

"The RGC has basically reinforced and added to their 6th and 26th January 1999 statements on forest reform," said Patrick Alley of Global Witness. "But this year the donors are far more interested in implementation than words. We know that Sok An evaded important questions from delegates regarding the cancellation of, amongst other things, illegally operating concessions. This does not bode well. Furthermore we know that many of the concessions already cancelled were economically unviable, and some were already completely logged out."

We will continue to provide the RGC with evidence of concessionaires breach of their contracts and look forward to some meaningful concession terminations. In the meantime, until the ADB's concession review process is complete, the activities of all existing concessionaires should be halted.

In order to carry out all the necessary reforms the RGC have called on the international community for political and financial support to exert pressure on Cambodia's neighbours to cooperate with the timber export ban, and to fund elements of the Forest Policy Reform Project. "It is essential that the international community positively responds to these calls," said Taylor. "If the RGC are serious about reforms they are going to need help in implementing them".

For further information contact Global Witness in Tokyo (until am 27/2/99).  
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