



**International Convention for
the Protection of All Persons
from Enforced Disappearance**

Distr.: General
1 March 2024

Original: English

Committee on Enforced Disappearances
Twenty-sixth session

Summary record of the 474th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 20 February 2024, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. de Frouville

Contents

Consideration of reports of States parties to the Convention (*continued*)

Initial report of Cambodia (continued)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of the present record to the Documents Management Section (DMS-DCM@un.org).

Any corrected records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be reissued for technical reasons after the end of the session.



The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties to the Convention *(continued)*

Initial report of Cambodia (CED/C/KHM/1; CED/C/KHM/Q/1; and CED/C/KHM/RQ/1) (continued)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Cambodia joined the meeting.*
2. **Ms. Lochbihler** (Country Rapporteur), noting that there was no domestic law provision that prohibited in explicit terms the expulsion, return, surrender or extradition of a person to another State where there were substantial grounds for believing that the person would be at risk of enforced disappearance, or any specific mechanisms in place to assess that risk, said that she would be interested to know whether decisions authorizing the expulsion, return, surrender or extradition of a person could be appealed and whether such appeals had a suspensive effect. The delegation might respond to reports that the Government of Cambodia was colluding with other Governments to return wanted individuals without due process, and that Governments in the Greater Mekong subregion were failing to adequately investigate possible cases of enforced disappearance, including cross-border disappearances. She would welcome an explanation of the procedures under which Cambodia could, if necessary, provide legal assistance to and cooperate with other States in the investigation and prosecution of cases of cross-border disappearance.
3. Regrettably, Cambodia remained a source and transit country for human trafficking in Asia and many Cambodian nationals had fallen victim to trafficking for the purposes of sexual and labour exploitation. In the light of the concerns raised by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia in his 2023 report ([A/HRC/54/75](#)) and the recommendations made during the universal periodic review of Cambodia in 2019, she would be grateful to receive information on the specific measures taken to prevent victims of trafficking in persons from becoming victims of enforced disappearance. It would be helpful to know what results the five-year national strategic plan to counter trafficking in persons for the period 2019–2023 had yielded, and whether any data on the penalties imposed on human traffickers were available. Bearing in mind the Committee’s general comment No. 1 (2023) on enforced disappearance in the context of migration, she would welcome information on the steps taken by the State party to promote human-rights based migration processes and on the measures taken to prevent the disappearance of migrants, investigate such disappearances when they occurred, search for migrants who had disappeared and provide support to their relatives.
4. She wished to know what measures the State party had taken to guarantee the effective implementation of fundamental legal safeguards for persons deprived of their liberty, including their rights to be informed of the charges against them, to have access to a lawyer of their choice and to notify a person of their choice of their detention. The delegation might describe the practical measures taken by the State party to protect persons deprived of their liberty from enforced disappearance. For example, it would be helpful to know whether the particulars of such persons were duly recorded in an official register immediately following their deprivation of liberty, including in military and immigration detention facilities, and whether those registers were kept up to date. She wondered whether the Cambodian authorities were required by law to include in registers of persons deprived of their liberty all the details listed in article 17 (3) of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and how the State party ensured that persons with a legitimate interest had prompt and easy access to at least the details listed in article 18 (1) of the Convention, particularly in the light of article 98 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, which stated that persons in police custody could speak with a lawyer or another person of their choice only once 24 hours had elapsed.
5. Confirmation as to whether the training on international human rights law dispensed to judicial officials and the training programmes for other public officials made reference to the Convention and the obligations assumed by the State party upon acceding to it would also be appreciated.

6. Noting that Cambodia was the only member State of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to have acceded to or ratified the Convention, she said that it would be helpful to know whether the State party had reached out to other ASEAN member States to encourage them to ratify the Convention and to join efforts to combat enforced disappearance in the region, and whether the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) or other entities working to eliminate enforced disappearance in South-East Asia might be able to assist in those efforts. The State party might also consider asking the Committee to assist it in implementing tailored training programmes on the Convention for civil servants.

7. She would be grateful to know whether there was a domestic law provision that explicitly recognized the right of victims to know the truth about the circumstances of an act of enforced disappearance enshrined in article 24 (2) of the Convention. She would also welcome information on any steps taken to design and implement a system to ensure the provision of all the forms of reparation listed in article 24 (5) of the Convention.

8. Lastly, she wondered to what extent article 41 of the Civil Code, under which the relatives of a disappeared person whose fate had remained unknown for a period of five years could petition the courts to issue a judicial declaration of disappearance, addressed the situation of vulnerability in which the families of disappeared persons often found themselves.

9. **Ms. Janina** (Country Rapporteur) said that she would like to hear whether, in the view of the delegation, article 327 of the Criminal Code and article 10 of the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, to which the State party referred in paragraph 78 of its initial report (CED/C/KHM/1), would be sufficient to anticipate and prevent the wrongful removal of children in the circumstances listed in article 25 (1) (a) of the Convention. She wished to know whether article 333 of the Criminal Code, which criminalized the substitution, false representation or concealment of the existence of a child, could be invoked in cases of children wrongfully removed in the context of enforced disappearance. She wondered what progress, if any, had been made towards finalizing the child protection bill and whether it would include protections against the wrongful removal of children in the circumstances described in article 25 (1) (a) of the Convention. She would be interested to know whether the State party had ever asked, or been asked by, another State party to assist in efforts to locate children who had been wrongfully removed in the context of enforced disappearance.

10. The delegation might comment on reports that several countries had banned adoptions from Cambodia owing to its alleged failure to fulfil child protection requirements, and on whether Cambodian adoption law was fully compliant with international adoption standards. Bearing in mind the joint statement on illegal intercountry adoptions adopted by the Committee and other stakeholders, she would like to know what measures the State party had taken to address that phenomenon; whether illegal intercountry adoption was considered to be a continuous crime under Cambodian criminal law; and how the State party ensured that all illegal intercountry adoptions were investigated in a comprehensive, impartial, diligent and effective manner, even in the absence of a formal complaint. She would appreciate up-to-date statistical information on illegal intercountry adoptions involving Cambodian nationals, including the dates of such adoptions and the number of persons whose true identity had been subsequently re-established. Lastly, she would welcome a more detailed explanation of the procedure for annulling adoptions that had originated in the context of enforced disappearance.

The meeting was suspended at 10.25 a.m. and resumed at 10.40 a.m.

11. **A representative of Cambodia** said that his Government was aware of its obligations with regard to non-refoulement, which were enshrined in a number of different laws. For example, article 10 of the Law on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters stated that an extradition request could be refused if there was reason to believe that granting it would expose the subject of the request to a risk of torture. Although no specific mechanisms for assessing such risks were provided for in law, assessments of that nature were, in practice, conducted by the competent authorities before expulsions, deportations or extraditions were carried out.

12. **A representative of Cambodia** said that, in Cambodia, the extradition process was normally regulated by bilateral treaties concluded between the Government of Cambodia and the governments of other States or, in the absence of such treaties, by the Code of Criminal Procedure. In determining whether to extradite a person, the Government considered whether doing so would violate his or her human rights, including his or her right not to be subjected to enforced disappearance. Extradition requests were reviewed by the Ministry of Justice, which submitted them to the Investigation Chamber of the Phnom Penh Court of Appeal. The Chamber then issued an opinion on the request, which the subject of the request could appeal before the Supreme Court.

13. **A representative of Cambodia** said that, pursuant to article 1 of the ASEAN Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, Cambodia and other States parties to the Treaty were to render to one another the widest possible measure of mutual legal assistance in criminal matters, namely investigations, prosecutions and resulting proceedings. The Law on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters provided that assistance of that nature should be rendered to all requesting States, regardless of whether they had concluded a bilateral agreement with Cambodia in that respect.

14. **A representative of Cambodia** said that Cambodia and other ASEAN member States were in the process of drafting a treaty on extradition. Another treaty, on the transfer of prisoners, was also under discussion; the combination of those treaties would enable comprehensive cooperation on criminal matters in the region.

15. **A representative of Cambodia** said that the Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, which had entered into force in 2008, was compliant with the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The national committee to combat trafficking in persons, which worked in partnership with civil society organizations, comprised several interministerial working groups responsible for, inter alia, implementing anti-trafficking legislation, providing support to victims and promoting international cooperation.

16. **A representative of Cambodia** said that the delegation would provide statistics on cases of trafficking in persons and sexual exploitation to the Committee in writing.

17. **A representative of Cambodia** said that his Government had adopted numerous policies and programmes to protect migrant workers and to promote their employment, including a policy platform and strategy for growth, employment and equity; a national strategic development plan; a security and social protection policy framework; various plans and policies on vocational education, training and employment; and a country programme on decent work for the period 2019–2023. Legislation aimed at improving the Government's handling of labour migration had also been adopted. In addition, the Government, under its strategic plan on employment, security and vocational training, ensured that Cambodian citizens going abroad to work were aware of their rights.

18. **A representative of Cambodia** said that, in terms of cross-border cooperation with neighbouring countries, the Governments of Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Viet Nam had set up a joint committee on security and organized crime to share information and best practices in order to gain a better understanding of how criminal law was interpreted and enforced in their respective legal systems. The committee also organized seminars and workshops on the prevention and punishment of relevant offences in each country.

19. **A representative of Cambodia** said that persons deprived of their liberty had access to a lawyer, could inform their family or any person of their choice about their detention and, in the case of foreign nationals, had the right to communicate with the consular authorities of their country of origin. In addition, every effort was made to ensure that comprehensive, up-to-date and confidential records were kept of all persons detained in any place of deprivation of liberty, including rehabilitation centres of various kinds. Each detainee had an individual file indicating their name and the place of deprivation of liberty in which he or she was being held. Every page in a detainee's file was to be signed by a representative of the prosecution; special care was taken in respect of women and juveniles. Registers must be made available to the court or to any competent judicial police officer on request.

20. Specific registers were kept for each category of detainee at each stage of the proceedings: in prisons, for example, new detainees were listed in one register, accused persons were listed in another, still another listed persons who had been convicted but who could still appeal, released prisoners had their own separate register and the particulars of visitors were also recorded. Similar records were kept in social service centres and correctional facilities. The Cambodian Human Rights Committee was entitled to inspect the records to check that they were in order.

21. **A representative of Cambodia** said that all public officials working with the law and human rights were strongly encouraged to attend training courses on key topics in those areas. The Cambodian Human Rights Committee provided support for training in international human rights law for civil servants, law enforcement officials and the armed forces, and worked closely with ministries and local authorities to disseminate the principles of national and international law. Following a period in which international human rights law had been removed from the curriculum for trainee judges and prosecutors, the Government had accepted the request by OHCHR in Cambodia for it to be reinstated. Conversely, the Cambodian Human Rights Committee had asked OHCHR to run a workshop specifically on the Convention for the competent authorities in places of detention, including medical personnel, and for the police and the military police. During the past year, the Cambodian Human Rights Committee had run 158 training courses on human rights and the law for high school students, trainee teachers, local authorities and the general public, in order to raise awareness of the need to promote and protect human rights in Cambodia. Other workshops had been run in recent years on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the universal periodic review mechanism.

22. **A representative of Cambodia** said that, under the Constitution, a Cambodian citizen could be arrested, detained and prosecuted only as provided for by law, the applicable law being the Code of Criminal Procedure, articles 96 to 104. A warrant had to be obtained from the prosecutor, and the judicial police officer was required to inform the individual of his or her rights, including the right to remain silent and the right to legal assistance. A record of detention in police custody was to be kept, noting the time of arrest and the name and rank of the police officer ordering the detention, the identity of the detained person and the reason for detention, among other details. A medical officer could perform an examination and order hospitalization if necessary. Special procedures applied to the detention of minors.

23. **Ms. Lochbihler**, thanking the delegation for offering to provide statistics on trafficking in persons and sexual exploitation in writing, said that, in the meantime, she would like to know whether the State party had discerned any trends in the involvement of particular nationalities in such offences, and whether any one nationality stood out among the figures. If that was the case, what were the implications for government policy in those areas? She would be interested to know what specific measures the State party had put in place to prevent victims of trafficking in persons from subsequently becoming victims of enforced disappearance.

24. The State party was to be commended for its active cooperation with neighbouring States in combating international crime. She would like to know whether that cooperation extended to investigating the disappearance of political activists in the region, several cases of which had come to the Committee's attention. In that regard, she wished to know what measures the State party had taken or planned to take to restore respect for the rights of civil society and whether it intended to revise the Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations.

25. **Ms. Janina** said that the definition of "victim" given in article 24 of the Convention covered not only the disappeared person but anyone who had suffered harm as a result of enforced disappearance. The majority of those who were disappeared were men, who were usually the main breadwinners, and the majority of those who had to cope with the financial, legal and practical consequences of such disappearances were women. She would appreciate information on the position of women in Cambodian society in general and on the State party's approach to women affected by enforced disappearance in particular.

26. Bearing in mind the principle of non-refoulement, she would like to know whether, where extradition or return was contemplated, the State party assessed the overall situation of human rights in the country of destination. She wondered whether it accepted diplomatic assurances from receiving countries and how such assurances were evaluated.

27. She wished to know whether the national committee to combat torture was able to conduct unannounced visits to prisons and other places of detention, including transit centres, and how the right of detainees to have access to a lawyer was guaranteed in practice, including whether access to a lawyer was provided immediately upon detention, whether there were any limitations on that access and whether legal assistance was provided to persons who were otherwise unable to have access to a lawyer.

28. **Mr. Ravenna** said that he wished to learn more about the administrative committee responsible for examining applications for refugee status, including its membership, its place in the administrative hierarchy and its level of autonomy. It would also be useful to know how the civil society organizations that partnered with the national committee to combat trafficking in persons were selected and whether there was any rotation of the selected organizations.

29. **Ms. Villa Quintana**, noting that article 38 of the Law on Immigration stated that expulsion orders must be carried out immediately after the Minister of the Interior had given his or her approval, said that she would like to know how a person who had already been expelled from the State party would be able to exercise his or her right to file an appeal against his or her expulsion with the courts within the statutory deadline of two months. Could such an appeal be submitted from outside the State party?

30. The delegation might clarify whether the Cambodian authorities would apply the double criminality rule in cases where they received a request from another State to extradite a person suspected of having committed an act of enforced disappearance in that State's territory. If the double criminality rule was applicable in such cases, she wondered how the Cambodian authorities would handle extradition requests relating to enforced disappearance, given that the State party had not yet established it as an autonomous offence in its domestic criminal law. Information on the different forms of reparation available to victims of serious human rights violations would also be welcome, as would details of the measures taken to protect foreign victims of trafficking in persons from enforced disappearance.

31. It would be helpful to know whether the different registers of persons deprived of their liberty were interoperable, whether it was possible to obtain access to a full list of all persons deprived of their liberty in the State party, with details of their whereabouts and the grounds on which they had been detained, whether persons with a legitimate interest were also able to have access to that information and whether persons with a legitimate interest were specifically defined in Cambodian law. An explanation as to why the human rights training programme for trainee judges and prosecutors had been suspended would be appreciated, as would details of how that training was provided and how its impact was assessed. It would also be useful to know how the State party ensured the transparency of judicial decisions rendered in connection with corruption cases involving judges, particularly when those judges had participated in investigations into serious human rights violations.

32. **Mr. Diop** said that he would appreciate information on the measures taken by the State party to establish the whereabouts or to locate the remains of persons who had been disappeared during the genocide committed by the Khmer Rouge regime, and on the steps taken to provide victims with comprehensive reparation.

33. **Mr. Kanyongolo** said that he wished to know whether the Cambodian authorities produced disaggregated data on the victims of the different offences related to enforced disappearance provided for in the Criminal Code and other laws. He also wondered whether the human rights training programmes for judicial officials included a separate module on enforced disappearance.

34. **The Chair** said that he wished to know how the State party approached cases of enforced disappearance from the past in view of its contemporary obligations under the Convention. He would like to hear more about how the State party guaranteed the right of genocide victims to know the truth regarding the circumstances of acts of enforced

disappearance committed by the Khmer Rouge regime and about the procedures through which victims could obtain the reparations awarded by the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia. He would be curious to know how the State party went about implementing article 15 of the Convention, which required it to cooperate with and provide mutual assistance to other States with a view to assisting victims of enforced disappearance, in the context of illegal intercountry adoptions and what measures it had taken to shed light on past cases of illegal intercountry adoptions involving Italy.

35. **A representative of Cambodia** said that the legal framework to address the wrongful removal of children who themselves or whose parents or guardians had been subjected to enforced disappearance, which comprised different provisions of the Criminal Code, was considered adequate to hold the perpetrators of that offence to account. Under those provisions, the removal of a minor from the care of his or her legal guardian was punishable by imprisonment. The Law on Suppression of Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation likewise prescribed imprisonment for the removal of a person for the purposes of profit-making, sexual exploitation or forced marriage or adoption, and considered the removal of a person who was a minor to be an aggravating circumstance.

36. **A representative of Cambodia** said that the national legal framework on intercountry adoption had been established following the ratification by Cambodia of the Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption in 2007. No infrastructure for intercountry adoption had existed prior to that time, owing to the country's difficult history. In the past, intercountry adoptions had usually involved States in Europe and North America. The Government was committed to stopping illegal intercountry adoptions and to preventing and combating trafficking in persons, including children.

37. **A representative of Cambodia** said that the child protection bill was being drafted by the Ministry of Social Affairs in cooperation with partners such as the United Nations Children's Fund and Plan International.

38. **A representative of Cambodia** said that her Government was committed to ending all forms of violence against children and was a leader in that field in Asia. That commitment extended to efforts to improve child protection online. The National Council for Children, which, along with the national committees responsible for addressing child protection and child labour, was part of the national machinery for the protection of children, was carrying out a study on the online sexual exploitation of children and had issued guidance on child protection online. A raft of policy, legislative and institutional measures had also been developed to address child protection issues, including the challenges faced by children online. Several government ministries, including the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, worked to promote children's rights and to protect children, including through subnational mechanisms.

39. The child protection bill, which was due to be reviewed by the Council of Jurists of the Office of the Council of Ministers later in 2024, was expected to be submitted to the National Assembly for endorsement by the end of the year. The bill focused on protecting children from a range of phenomena, including violence, online exploitation and child labour. The rights of children in conflict with the law were enshrined in the Juvenile Justice Law, which had been adopted in 2016.

40. **A representative of Cambodia** said that the provisions of article 333 of the Criminal Code were considered to adequately address the scenarios set out in article 25 (1) of the Convention.

41. **A representative of Cambodia** said that civil society organizations contributed to efforts to combat trafficking in persons on a voluntary basis and that all relevant organizations could take part. A total of 18 memorandums of understanding had been signed with civil society organizations. Trafficking in persons was also addressed through regional instruments, including the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

42. The five-year national strategic plan to counter trafficking in persons, the first iteration of which had been adopted in 2019, was currently being updated for the 2024–2029 period. The Government had adopted specific laws on human trafficking, and mechanisms for the implementation of those laws had been established at the national and subnational levels. Policies on related matters, such as women’s rights and domestic violence, had been implemented at the local level. Cases of human trafficking could be reported through a dedicated hotline and social media page. The authorities would then follow up on those reports and arrest offenders. Victims were offered social support, education and/or training and legal assistance. The Government worked with the relevant authorities at the national, regional and international levels to prevent and combat cross-border trafficking and to identify perpetrators. That cooperation had produced positive results and would continue in the future.

43. **A representative of Cambodia** said that the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia had been established as part of an agreement concluded between the Government of Cambodia and the United Nations. While between 3,000 and 4,000 victims had applied to become civil parties to the court proceedings, he was of the view that all Cambodians had been and continued to be victims of the Khmer Rouge regime. The Extraordinary Chambers had set up a scheme to provide collective and symbolic reparations to victims across the country; pecuniary reparations could not, however, be provided owing to the defendants’ lack of funds. The some 20 reparations projects carried out to date included the construction of stupas across the country, the designation of a public holiday to commemorate the victims of the regime, the creation of documentaries, awareness-raising programmes and exhibitions, the inclusion of content on the genocidal regime in the high school curriculum and the training of teachers on how to teach that period of history.

44. In Case No. 002/02, the Supreme Court Chamber of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia had affirmed the convictions of Khieu Samphân and Nuon Chea for crimes against humanity and other inhuman acts, including enforced disappearance. Although the exact number of victims was unknown, the Extraordinary Chambers, the Government and civil society organizations had worked together to compile information on those victims and on the acts of enforced disappearance and other criminal acts committed by the Khmer Rouge regime. That information had been stored in the archives of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, which had since become a residual mechanism focused on managing those archives, carrying out projects to support and commemorate victims and raising awareness of the legacy of the trials conducted by the Extraordinary Chambers.

45. **A representative of Cambodia** said that, while the details of investigations were, for the most part, kept confidential, the Ministry of Justice was able to provide limited information about each case. In cases involving human trafficking, for instance, records of persons deprived of their liberty were updated after three months, six months and one year of detention, and then once more thereafter. Information was also available regarding how many cases were under investigation, how many had gone to trial and how many had been closed. The Ministry of Justice worked with the Ministry of the Interior to monitor and gather data on all cases at the investigation, prosecution and trial stages to ensure that each one was properly registered.

46. Any individual who claimed to be a victim of an offence had the right to file a complaint. In order to receive compensation, a victim must have suffered injury, in the form of damage to property or physical or emotional harm, as a direct consequence of the offence. The provision of compensation to victims was provided for under the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Civil Code. Both codes had been developed with input from experts from the Governments of France and Japan, taking into account the specific social circumstances in Cambodia. Civil actions could be brought by victims themselves or on their behalf if they were a minor or an adult under guardianship. Furthermore, article 16 of the Code of Criminal Procedure established that civil actions could be initiated or continued by the victim’s successor in the event of the victim’s death. Associations, including one devoted to the elimination of all acts of kidnapping, trafficking and sexual exploitation, had been established to promote victims’ interests.

47. On 27 October 2008, the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia had issued amended guidance on the admissibility of victims as civil parties. For the purposes of the trials conducted by the Extraordinary Chambers, the term “victim” had been defined as a natural person or legal entity that had suffered physical, material or psychological harm as a direct consequence of the commission of any crime that fell within the jurisdiction of the Extraordinary Chambers.

48. **A representative of Cambodia** said that the Ministry of the Interior and the Cambodian Human Rights Committee could provide data on human trafficking on request.

49. **A representative of Cambodia** said that the human rights training programme for trainee judges and prosecutors had been suspended because of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Accordingly, there was a need to design a new curriculum to train judges and prosecutors in that area. His Government understood that mainstreaming and raising awareness of human rights and improving the implementation of the existing human rights legal framework, in line with international standards, was vital. His Government also recognized that greater public awareness of human rights could lead to a decrease in violations of such rights. Nonetheless, it was difficult to ensure that all relevant national and subnational authorities and the general public understood the concept of the protection and promotion of human rights and what exactly those rights were. The Government would seek to incorporate training on enforced disappearance, which was comprehensively addressed by the country’s legislative framework, into human rights training programmes.

50. **A representative of Cambodia** said that the Government had been working to address issues faced by associations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Cambodian law provided that local committees, associations and NGOs could carry out their activities in full freedom. A total of 2,770 associations and 3,359 NGOs had been registered in the country. The Government was committed to engaging in dialogue with NGOs at least twice a year and had established a working group to handle any requests and comments made by civil society. The Government had spent one year, from September 2020 to September 2021, reviewing and discussing the request made by civil society to amend multiple provisions of the Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations; the key concern had been to ensure that any amendments introduced would serve the country’s development and the public interest. Subsequently, in 2023, the Ministry of the Interior had held six rounds of discussions on the amendments with NGOs and other local stakeholders and had taken on board their feedback. An agreement had been reached on the content of nine provisions, seven of which had been subject to additional review at the request of civil society. The Government was still awaiting civil society’s final comments on the amended law. It was essential for the Government and civil society to work together to strengthen democracy in Cambodia.

51. **A representative of Cambodia** said that he wished to thank the Committee for convening the dialogue and sharing its insightful comments and expertise on enforced disappearance. The Government was aware that the promotion and protection of human rights was a long-term task for all States and that dialogues with the Committee played an essential role by helping States to ensure that their practices and legal framework were aligned with the Convention. All human rights violations in Cambodia would be investigated and prosecuted, and his delegation was confident that the competent authorities would take action to address impunity. The Government remained deeply committed to protecting, fulfilling and raising awareness of human rights to the greatest possible extent, taking into account the country’s specific circumstances and level of development. The Government looked forward to receiving considerate and constructive concluding observations from the Committee and remained steadfast in its commitment to strengthen cooperation with all United Nations human rights mechanisms. He hoped that such cooperation would be based on mutual respect and understanding and would take account of the serious challenges that his country had overcome.

52. **The Chair**, thanking the delegation for its participation in the interactive dialogue and the information that it had provided, said that the dialogue had been an important step forward in the State party’s cooperation with the Committee. The Committee was counting on Cambodia to promote the implementation of the Convention at the national and global levels and stood ready to support those efforts. The Committee would be available to answer any

questions that the State party might have regarding the implementation of the Committee's recommendations or other matters linked to enforced disappearance. While the Committee worked to support victims of enforced disappearance and civil society actors, its main function was to cooperate with States parties.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.