

OPINION: The International Will

Phnom Penh, March 31, 2011 AKP –

Preventing future bloodshed, future damages to the Temple of Preah Vihear, a World Heritage inscribed on the World Heritage List since 7 July 2008, future destruction of the properties of Cambodian and Thai people living in the area of the border between Cambodia and Thailand, and future displacement of people for fear of being hit by the exchanges of shelling and firing between the two armies are among the first urgent orders of the days in the mind of the International Community, after witnessing the bloodshed and destruction caused by armed clashes from 4 through 7 February 2011. Who was firing first is irrelevant. But bloodshed, destruction and hardship must be stopped.

The international response was swift with the meeting of the States Members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on 14 February recommending that Indonesia, the Chair of ASEAN to end tensions between and to bring peace to the two neighbors, both members of ASEAN. The 22 February meeting of ASEAN Foreign Ministers under the chairmanship of the Indonesian Foreign Minister, including the Cambodian and Thai Foreign Ministers have agreed in principle to have ASEAN's chair mediate the ceasefire with the agreements of Cambodia and Thailand. Naturally, communications between ASEAN's chair and Cambodia, between ASEAN's chair and Thailand are fully documented and as it had been already known to the International Community, report(s) on this matter would reach members of UNSC.

Cambodia, the victim of Thai repeated armed aggressions, has been conforming herself to the reasonable and appropriate calls of Indonesia to have the meetings at Bogor following the proposed Terms of Reference (TOR), which have been agreed by Cambodia (with minor modifications). Cambodia has agreed on the timetable of the meetings, which had initially been scheduled for 24-25 March, and then postponed to 7-8 April. Cambodia was not hesitant, and readily and happily accepted the help and the protection of the International Community. It was a clear demonstration to the entire world that being a victim of aggression, Cambodia deserves to have international witnesses monitor her activities and prove beyond any doubt that she is not the aggressor, the warmonger, and the land robber as she has been accused wrongly by Thailand.

On the other side of the Cambodia western border, people in the positions of power are dancing around the Indonesian efforts in defiance of the good auspices of Indonesia and the recommendations of the UNSC. Whether or not the Thai local squabbling is a mere play exceptionally well choreographed to discredit Indonesia, the UNSC and the International Community remain to be seen. Will Thailand's scheme of closing the door and windows of the room to avoid the eyes and the ears of witnesses, and beating Cambodia that is many, many times militarily and economically weaker than Thailand succeed?

More than a political and a diplomatic success or failure of the International Community, the "law of the jungle" must be eradicated as the ASEAN, whether Thailand likes it or not, will become more integrated from 2015 onwards.

(31 March 2011)

Prof. Pen Ngoeun

Senior advisor and member of the Academic Committee
Puthisastra University, Phnom Penh, Cambodia,
Former Dean and Professor of the Faculty of Business and Economics
Pannasastra University of Cambodia,
Former Assistant Controller at Phibro Inc.,
A subsidiary of Citigroup Inc., New York City, USA, until 2000

(The comments are solely the opinion of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Royal Government of Cambodia.)