

**“The Responsibility to Protect at 10:
Progress, Challenges and Opportunities in the Asia Pacific”
Sofitel, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
26-27 February 2015**

**“Promoting and Advancing the Responsibility to Protect in Cambodia:
What Role for Academia”
Remarks by Pou Sovachana,
Deputy Director of the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace**

- **Mr. Chair,**
- **Excellencies,**
- **Ambassadors, Diplomats,**
- **Distinguished Scholars, Advocates and Participants,**

Today, I am very pleased to participate in this important conference to assess the progress, challenges, and opportunities in implementing R2P in the Asia Pacific and to discuss future direction with senior leaders, diplomats, academics and advocates. First, I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the organizing committee for the warm hospitality extended to me and all the guests. It is an honor for me to share with you my view on “The Role of Academia to Promoting and Advancing the Responsibility to Protect in Cambodia.”

We are here today because we share common values and a common goal. The Responsibility to Protect is a global issue and together we need a strong commitment as well as innovative strategies and fresh thinking for the promotion and implementation of the norm in order to completely put an end to genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crime against humanity. I believe that it is through multi-stakeholder dialogues such as this one that we can foster public building awareness about translating R2P from ‘words to deeds’, as stated in the objective of the conference.

Introduction

“The suffering of Cambodia has been deep,” reflected Preah Moha Ghosananda. Perhaps no other country on earth has suffered as much from as many forms of human insecurity as Cambodia has. The list from the 1970s is staggering: massive bombardments, civil wars, interstate wars, and the ‘killing fields’ with mass atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge regime from April 1975-January 1979 claiming two million lives and displaced nearly the entire population. Given this reality and many other cases where state it failed to adequately ensure the security and the safety of its citizens, protection against mass atrocities is an urgent priority and concern for all of international society. The “Responsibility to Protect” is about the issues of

sovereignty and humanitarian intervention as well. International communities and actors also have a responsibility to do what states were supposed to do when they are either unable or unwilling to do so: to protect human lives from mass atrocities. These norms of human protection have been included in the Security Council resolution, in treaties and conventions, and in international practice.

As a victim of horrific crimes, but also inaction in the face of them by the international community, Cambodia has a unique role to play in promoting R2P and mass atrocity prevention. Considering this, attention should be paid the role of academia to promoting and advancing R2P in Cambodia.

1- The Role of Academia in Promoting and Advancing R2P

The goal of academia is to assist the state with building institutions, which are weak in Cambodia. Without solid institutions in place, wars may continue to happen because of the concentration of personal power. Strong civil society can serve as contributors to improve resilience, create coping and mitigation mechanisms from multiple threats and support the state to uphold its responsibility. Academics are crucial players in advancing the R2P, in terms of research, teaching, building awareness of mass atrocity prevention and lobbying governments. They can cooperate with different actors in civil society as well as engage the state and inter-governmental organizations at the regional and global level. Furthermore, academics can develop curricula and educational materials on R2P, organize workshops and conduct teacher trainings on how to inculcate the principles of R2P.

The R2P toolkit has been translated into Khmer in partnership with CICP. A large number of academics participate in the International Coalition for the Right to Protect (ICRP), which seeks to raise global awareness and endorsement of R2P while aiming to stop or prevent genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing. Academics form a core of the epistemic community of international civil society within the international community and transnational movements. As such, academics are crucial to the second pillar of R2P in terms of international assistance and capacity building. Through workshops, social media, publication of literature and lectures, academics can connect with both members of civil society and state officials in order to build coalitions to translate R2P from 'words into deeds' with respect to prevention of mass atrocity.

In addition, academia has played an important role in: initially conceptualizing and establishing specific norms; drawing up guidelines for early warning and early response to R2P crimes; cultivating a cooperative culture and supporting political culture; providing action-oriented policy recommendations for cooperation; becoming a networking force; and,

incorporating the norm into regional community building process itself.

Now let me give you two examples of research and academic institutions - the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP) and Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL) - to mention how they work together to promote and advance R2P in Cambodia with the support of the cooperation of Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect. CICP and IFL are grateful to Dr. Noel Morada, Director of the Centre's Regional Diplomacy and Capacity Building Program, for delivering a public lecture and a workshop on promoting R2P in ASEAN on 6-8 August 2014 to government officials, diplomats, academics, students and CSOs. During the presentation, he stressed that "R2P should be viewed as a friend - rather than an enemy - of sovereignty because it is first and foremost about helping states to fulfill their responsibilities and strengthen their legitimacy." (Spotlight on R2P, September 2014, Issue 13)

- Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP)

As one of leading research and academic institutes in Cambodia, CICP has thus far played many crucial roles in promoting and advancing the principles and norms of R2P, particularly in ASEAN countries, of which Cambodia is a member. With its experience of past atrocities and national reconciliation after the cold war, Cambodia and its researchers are especially suited to taking a leading role in promoting R2P.

Seminars: CICP has organized a variety of seminars which are attended by representatives of ASEAN, Australia and European Diplomatic Missions, government officials, think tanks researchers, especially academia and university students. These events help promote public awareness of the principles and norms of R2P, which are a relative new concept for Cambodians. Two of our most recent seminars to build public awareness of the concept of R2P were conducted by CICP in cooperation with Dr. Noel Morada, and they took place at the CICP conference hall and auditorium of Royal University of Phnom Penh's Institute of Foreign Languages. In addition, CICP will begin a series of biannual workshops on R2P and human security with Pannasastra students and faculty, and is currently in the process of developing joint promotional and research events involving PUC and ZAMAN university.

Intensive Capacity Building: CICP also nominates five researchers and academia from various research and academic institutions to attend a two-week intensive training through the Australian Awards Fellows on the topic of 'Toward a Culture of Prevention: Advancing Women, Peace and Security in ASEAN' at the University of Queensland. The purpose of this training is to build and develop the capacity of these academics so that they can continue advocacy to promote and advance the concept of

R2P in their institutions.

International Conference: Like other seminars, the first international conference on R2P at 10 will be hosted by CICP in partnership with the Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect of the University of Queensland. The ambition is to promote and advance the principles and norms of the R2P regionally and globally. This conference will provide an important opportunity for senior leaders, academics and advocates to exchange ideas and experiences and to develop a common agenda for action to end genocide and mass atrocities in the coming decade.

Research and Trainings: CICP has also given students from many universities in Phnom Penh the opportunities to build their capacity by learning to conduct a practical scientific research in both in Phnom Penh and in the provinces. These intensive experiences of training and research help them greatly to understand not only research methodologies but also how to advance the concept of human security and R2P.

- **Royal University of Phnom Penh: Institute of Foreign Languages (IFL)**

Interactive Seminar: The Institute of Foreign Languages' Department of International Studies hosted its first interactive seminar on 08 August 2014 with students from both IFL and Pannasastra University of Cambodia. The discussion points in the seminar covered (1) the relevance of R2P in the Cambodian context; (2) the contribution of Cambodia to promoting the R2P in ASEAN; (3) the prospect of any of the four R2P crimes happening in Cambodia and other ASEAN countries; (4) the roles of Cambodia's younger generations in promoting the principles of R2P; and (5) the roles of Cambodian government and civil society organizations in preventing the R2P crimes from (re) occurring. The seminar was designed to promote and advance the public awareness of the R2P in public academic institution.

Research Partnership/Cooperation: As an academic institution, the Institute of Foreign Languages has partnered with several international and regional universities and research institutes. This institutional cooperation helps create opportunities to conduct joint research projects that may advance the principles and norms of R2P at national, regional and international levels.

Staff Development: the Institute of Foreign Languages' Department of International Studies also encourages its staff to write at least two research papers annually. The topics covered are often relevant to the promotion and advancement of R2P norms.

Academic Curriculum: The norm and principles of R2P are also incorporated into the academic curricula (e.g. in Public International Law and other International Relations subjects) so as to enrich students understanding of R2P. There is a pressing need for universities throughout Cambodia to incorporate these ideas and teach students about mass atrocity and its prevention.

Future Direction: To increase public awareness and support for the norm, include the norm into the discourse of CSOs, acculturate government officials to the idea, and increase awareness of the compatibility of the norm with existing national law and policies, a broad based grassroots public information campaign would be extremely impactful. Combining the activities of curriculum development, training, and seminars, workshops or public lectures in rural areas is needed to move the norm out of the limited scope of certain epistemic and professional circles and into the mindset of the broader public. CICP, working with university and CSO partners, hopes to develop and implement this plan for bringing together a variety of stakeholders through linking shared issues or policies concerns which accord with R2P aims such as human rights, human security and sustainable development, and rule of law and good governance.

2- The Challenges

There are of course multiple challenges facing this work. Besides the issues of time and money, there is the perennial problem of suspicion. Academics are often suspected by state officials of potentially subversive behavior. Therefore gaining the trust of state officials so they can cooperate fruitfully with civil society (including academics) remains a major challenge. Facilitating cooperation between academics and other civil society actors as well as academics and representatives of international organizations also poses similar challenges.

Academics can reduce such suspicion by building bridges between state officials and civil society. This can be done by inviting both groups to workshops that focuses on the prevention of mass atrocities. Similarly, academics can spearhead the writing of reports by joint groups of civil society and state officials about the prevention of mass atrocities in national security strategies, defense white-papers, and so on. Academics can also work together actors with civil society and also state officials to campaign for the adoption of domestic legislation and for agreements in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the United Nations regarding R2P crimes as well as issues such as the rights for minorities, women, refugees and other vulnerable groups.

Recalling Cambodians suffering decade of civil war, interstate war and truly

suffering events under the Khmer Rouge, academia can do more research to assess the ability of civil society to aid future prevention of mass atrocity as well as to investigate to investigate the function of the international organizations in breaking the cycle of violence. Academics have often been at the forefront of efforts to lobby the government to encourage greater understanding of Cambodia's Khmer Rouge era of mass atrocities. Additionally, Cambodian academics have also been deeply involved in human rights, human security and support for the consolidation of democracy in Cambodia.

3- Conclusion

In sum, when it comes to moving forward the agenda of R2P, academics matter. Although those working in R2P often prioritize bureaucrats and politicians within states as well as diplomats within international bodies, I want to emphasize the essential role that academics can play. Not only are they responsible for educating the peoples of the world about the need to prevent mass atrocities but they are also key actors in building trust and cooperation between civil society and the state.

It is essential for Cambodian academics to join together in active networks and proactive projects to research and promote R2P, to increase dialogue on key obstacles and challenges to furthering the norm, and to catalyze harnessing the potential of the lessons learned in the Cambodian case. The key to advancing R2P in Cambodia is to educate the youth, develop local champions and build awareness among scholars, government officials and communities. If it took major steps describe above, Cambodia could lead the region toward greater recognition of R2P.