BUSINESS SECTION

Welcome and Introduction
Ms Chamroeun Mudita (CIDSE), Co-Chairperson of NGO Forum on Cambodia

Ms Chamroeun Mudita extended a cordial welcome to all attending the Annual General Meeting of the NGO Forum on Cambodia. She explained that the meeting was late starting because several of the speakers had not arrived. The agenda was changed and Mr Russell Peterson gave his Representative's Address as the first item.

"The role of NGO Forum in dealing with issues of women's rights, civil society, environment, landmines and prople-centred development."
Mr Russell Peterson, Representative, NGO Forum

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for attending this Annual General Meeting of the *NGO Forum on Cambodia* today. The focus of NGO Forum's life is in its working groups. Many of you are active in at least one of these workings groups, campaigns or projects, which operate more or less independently of each other. Today, we join together to hear about and discuss the full range of activities which NGO Forum supports.

In your folders you will find three important documents. They are the Strategic Plan, the Annual Report for 1998, and the revised 1998-1999 Action Plan. These documents are available in both English and Khmer. However, apologies that the revised Action Plan is not yet ready in Khmer, as we were having trouble with our printer yesterday. We will send it out to member organisations by the end of the week.

The role of NGO Forum

Most of you, I think, are already aware of the role of NGO Forum. The Mission Statement of NGO Forum is on the form organisations sign to renew their membership.
"The mission of NGO Forum is to advocate on issues of concern to the Cambodian people. As a partnership of local and international NGOs, we are working to enhance:

- Economic and social justice;
- Respect for human rights and democracy;
- Peace and non-violence;
- Sustainable use of resources;
- Respect for cultural diversity; and
- Development with equity."

Over the past years, member organisations have identified the following issues as important: environment, women's rights, civil society, landmines, and people-centred development. Working Groups exist for each of these subject areas. Currently two groups focus on aspects of the latter issue: the Discussion Group on Development Issues and the Working Group on Development Banks. In addition, there are two projects, began just last year, which provide extra support to our advocacy efforts. They are the Information Project and the Advocacy Skills Training project.

The Information Project provides up-to-date information about Cambodia to people around the world, and provides an important advocacy tool available to the working groups. Today, research done and issues raised by the Landmines Campaign, the Environment Working Group, and the Civil Society Working Group are reaching people around the world through the efforts of the Information Project.

The Advocacy Skills Training project seeks to improve the ability of our working groups and other NGO networks to advocate on issues of concern. Participants of the Women Working Group are among those who have already received extensive training through this project.

The Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan has already been extensively discussed at members meetings over the last year. Unless anyone wishes to raise objections, we intend that this Strategic Plan be formally adopted today. The Strategic Plan states the vision and mission of NGO Forum, and the goals and strategies for the next five years.

The goals of the NGO Forum for the next five years are to become:

- An effective forum for advocacy on issues of importance to Cambodians and NGOs in Cambodia;
- A centre for facilitating activities on issues and strategies for advocacy;
- Integrated into an international network of like-minded organisations with an interest in advocacy on Cambodian issues;
- Managed by Cambodians in partnership with international supporters; and
- Financed with significant support from inside the country.

The Action Plan for 1998-1999

As you know, NGO Forum is a membership organisation. Staff, such as myself, are employed by the NGO Forum to help carry out the decisions of the member organisations. But it is the member organisations that are mandated to set the directions and make the plans for the NGO Forum.

The current Action Plan was devised by the working groups in 1997. For those of you who are not so familiar with the Action Plan document, you may be surprised to find how closely your working group has been following the plan. Throughout 1998, working groups made additions and changes to the plan in response to circumstances. These revisions have been added to the document.

The Action Plan not only provides a guide for our activities; it is also provides the means by which donors can approve and fund working group plans.

It is important that each working group evaluate their achievements over this year and last year. We need to ask: Did we meet our objectives? Who were our beneficiaries? What worthwhile changes have we achieved? And what lessons have we learnt from our mistakes?

For the moment, however, I wish to simply congratulate each and every working group, campaign and project for the good work they have done over the past year. Much work is done voluntarily, and in addition to other full-time jobs.

The 1998 Annual Report

The Annual Report provides a glimpse of the achievements of the working groups in 1998.

1998 was a challenging year. In a year of political tensions and national elections, the NGO Forum faced the challenge of contributing to a more peaceful and just society in Cambodia and better international understanding abroad.

The NGO Forum began the year with few resources. But the Forum did have an Action Plan - An Action Plan created by the Forum's working groups in a participatory process over the course of the previous year.

In 1998, as the Action Plan was put into effect, the NGO Forum became more active and more visible. Efforts to encourage Cambodian leadership began to bare fruit. The NGO Forum took stances on more issues, and was quoted in the media more frequently. Additional activities were added to the Action Plan as events unfolded. A number of new staff joined the NGO Forum secretariat, providing better capacity to coordinate activities and implement decisions of the member organisations.

Through the activities of different working groups, and actions of the members and Management Committee, NGO Forum was able to launch a multi-faceted response to the situation surrounding the elections:

The Information Project, launched two months before the elections, kept international partners, academics, aid agencies, diplomats and media informed of the evolving situation in Cambodia.

The Civil Society Working Group provided a forum for local NGOs involved in election education, monitoring and human rights to discuss and analyse the situation on the ground.

The Women Working Group and Environment Working Group together organised a one-day panel discussion with Cambodia's political parties. The parties answered questions about their policies toward women in the morning session, and questions about their environmental policies in the afternoon. The full programme was filmed in front of an audience of 220 people and broadcast on national television and national radio in the week before the election. In doing so, the NGO Forum raised the profile of these two policy areas, and generally contributed to a more open and policy-oriented election environment.

The NGO Forum, represented by the Secretariat staff and Co-Chairpersons, also joined with other NGO coalitions, monks and peace activists in a "Cooperation for Peace and Non-Violence."

While the elections became a focus for some working groups, others continued to build awareness of other development-related concerns.

A SAPRI group, formed by local NGOs interested in examining World Bank structural adjustment policies, postponed its activities during the election and post-election period.

However, the Study Group on the ADB continued to build awareness of the work of the Asia Development Bank and the need for public participation in the decisions of the Bank. The group produced two small Khmer-language newsletters and conducted two seminars involving NGOs, government officials and ADB staff and consultants.

In 1998, a Discussion Group on Development Issues was formed to provide a venue for NGOs to take a critical look at models and concepts of "development" and to examine the roles that NGOs play in the "development process."

The Landmines Campaign continued its work under the able convenorship of Jesuit Service Cambodia and with participation of organisations from both inside and outside the NGO Forum. They advocated that Cambodia ratify the Ban Mines Treaty without delay, and they began the process of collecting information for the Landmines Monitor.

Towards the end of 1998, the Advocacy Skills Training project also got under way. Through structured training programmes, the project aims to strengthen the ability of NGO Forum working groups, local NGO networks, and other organisations to advocate on issues of concern to the Cambodian people. Ana will be saying more about this programme later.

These are just a sample of the activities supported by NGO Forum in 1998. In 1999, the working groups have continued the good work they started in 1998. Some of the highlights are shown on the sheet in your folders entitled ***NGO Forum News***.

The Action Plan for Years 2000-2001

Over the past year, NGO Forum members meetings have discussed the "strategies" of NGO Forum in some detail. I suggest it is now time to plan some "ACTION."

All the achievements of NGO Forum over the last two years would not have been possible without the Action Plan which has guided our working groups activities, and to which our donors have contributed financial support. It is now time to start thinking about our Action Plan for the Years 2000-2001. The small groups which will meet today can begin to solicit ideas for the future Action Plan. The working groups will need to further develop these plans at their regular meetings. Some working groups may decide that there is no need to continue their activities. You need to ask, are your objectives already achieved? Are these objectives better left to other organisations? Or is there a real interest in joining together in the NGO Forum in order to work on these issues together?

There may also be some of you who feel that there are other issues that NGO Forum is not yet working on, but should be. If so, please raise those issues either today, or contact me at the NGO Forum office, or contact any of the Management Committee. NGO Forum belongs to the member organisations, and all members have a right to raise new issues and suggest appropriate actions.

I suggest that working groups should complete their draft work plans in time for a full Members Meeting in September. The Management Committee should review the work plans in October, and the Secretariat should send a consolidated plan to donors by the end of the November.

Each plan should contain the following elements:

- Overall Objectives
  - What will be the main objective(s) of the working group, campaign or project?

- Specific Objectives
  - What changes in Cambodia or abroad do you hope to help bring about? (e.g. in government policy, legislation, practices of development organisations, public awareness, NGO staff awareness, etc)

- List of Activities
  - What activities can be done to meet these objectives or help these changes come about?

- Outputs
  - What measurable outcomes do you expect from each of these activities?

- Budget
  - What will it cost? (Budgets should not exceed 1999 levels without good reason).

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to say that the NGO Forum provides a venue in which NGOs, both local and international, can join together to advocate on issues of common concern. The NGO Forum staff are here to provide support to the plans of member organisations.

I believe that, by working together in the NGO Forum, we have a real chance to build the capacity of NGOs to advocate for the rights of the poor and marginalised in Cambodia. The efforts of all of us, both Cambodian and foreigner, are needed to make this happen.

Thank you for listening.

Questions and Comments

- As no comments were immediately forthcoming, Mr Peterson made some additional comments. The future Action Plan will be discussed further in small groups later. Apologies for not having the Khmer translation for the revised Action Plan ready, though please note that it is the same plan as presented at the AGM last year, but revised to take into account any changes in the working group plans.

- *Question:* My organisation is involved in SAPRI, but so far this group is not active. Are there any strategies to help other member NGOs get involved in SAPRI ?

  Answer: The SAPRI project was proposed by a group of local NGOs interested in examining the social effects of the World Bank's structural adjustment programme, which gives countries loans in exchange for enacting certain macro-economic policies. The idea has been discussed for some time, but so far there has been no action. In 1998, not a lot could happen because the interested NGOs were busy monitoring the election or involved in election-related peace activities. The postponement last year was quite deliberate. This year, donors and institutions such as the World Bank and Asia Development Bank are renewing

their assistance plans in Cambodia, so now is the right time for NGOs to become active. The NGOs involved in SAPRI and Study Group on the ADB are now joining together in one working group called the Working Group on Development Banks. One problem is that in order to get something really going there would need to be someone hired to keep up on the issues and gather information between meetings. Once that person starts to work, then we expect that the action of the group will increase. You mention "member organisations" getting involved in the working group; this group is also open to other NGOs not only members of NGO Forum. Last year there was a committee established that was comprised of many local NGOs. It is the responsibility of those NGOs (some of whom are NGO Forum members, and some not) to form a plan and get the action going. The NGO Forum secretariat can provide resources and staff support, but it is up to the working group to make plans and become active.

· *Question:* I have a question about the organisation of the working groups. Are there strategies and policies to organise the groups so that they can work more effectively? In the Strategic Plan there are 27 strengths and 22 weaknesses written down about NGO Forum. Is there a plan to deal with the weaknesses?

Answer: All members need to be aware of the Strategic Plan which has been formulated by the members and the Management Committee. The strengths and weaknesses section are from a brainstorming session done at last year's AGM and represent people's perceptions of NGO Forum. The strategies were developed by reflecting on this list of strengths and weaknesses. The strategies were worked out in the Management Committee and then taken back to Members Meetings for further development. Also in your packet you will find a listing of roles and responsibilities of various groups in NGO Forum. I suggest that working groups, especially the convenors, look carefully at the section on rights and responsibilities of the working groups.

Mr Peterson invited other Management Committee members if they wanted to add anything. As their were no more comments or questions, Mr Peterson then said that he would give the financial report later in the day because the first speaker had arrived. (See "Presentations" section later in the report).

Advocacy Skills Training Program

Ms Ana Maria Clamor, NGO Forum Advocacy Skills Trainer

The overall aim of the project is to strengthen the ability of the NGO Forum and other networks of Cambodian NGOs to advocate on issues of concern to the Cambodian people.

The goals of the project were stated as follows:

1. Help the NGO Forum assess and improve its overall approach and strategies for advocacy work. (Ms Ana conducted an initial survey and had discussions with a variety of people in NGO Forum which led to capacity building activities.)
2. Help improve the advocacy skills and strategies of the NGO Forum working groups. (The Women's Working Group has utilised Ms Ana the most frequently with a series of workshops and the Environment Working Group had a two day workshop. Other working groups have not yet availed themselves of the opportunity, although most have plans to do so. Ms Ana urged the working groups to let it be known if and when they want advocacy skills training and gave a reminder that the project ends in September.

What is advocacy?

Elements of advocacy

Social and Political analysis

Political mapping

Formulating an advocacy agenda

Strategies and plan of action

Setting indicators of success

Networking and coalition building

Writing for media

Monitoring and evaluation

Facilitation and running effective meetings

All training is custom made to fit to the organisation requesting the training. The workshops are never exactly the same. Even though the general topics may be similar in all workshops, each one is tailor made to address the needs of the organisation and staff. Thank you for your attention.

After thanking Ms. Ana for her presentation and encouraging more groups to participate in the training all were invited to break for lunch. Lunch was provided in the room adjacent to the meeting hall. Delicious!!!

Plans for Small Group Discussions

Mr Russell Peterson, Representative

We have heard many very interesting presentations today, but unfortunately we are rapidly running out of time for the small group discussions which had planned. We have, however, achieved our main objective, which is to avoid letting the AGM be a boring business affair divorced from the issues most important to the organisation. Today, we have heard from important speakers chosen by each of the working groups, speaking on topics important to the working groups. This has helped us all

be better informed about the issues which their staff are dealing with, and have a better understanding of the role of NGO Forum as a whole, as they start to form their new Action Plans.

3. Help improve the ability of NGO staff to organize and conduct advocacy work. (Most of the workshops/training will be held in the coming month.)

4. Provide training for staff in Cambodian NGO networks involved in advocacy skills training. (Management committee members will be invited to participate in the workshops.)

5. Produce materials which will assist ongoing training after the project has completed. (The production of materials is ongoing.)

We will now have a short break for tea and coffee. When we resume, we will look at organizations which have announced their training plans, and also look at the planned training groups and their activities. Some of these discussions will take place in the regular working group meetings later in the month. All are welcome to join the working groups.

Financial Report
Mr. Russell Peterson, Representative

Mr Peterson presented the budget on the overhead projector, and made comments as follows. He noted that normally the Treasurer for the past year would give the financial report, but he is not with us today as he has gone back to Australia.

Training modules include:

BUDGET FOR 1999:

	Expend. 1998	Budget 1999
Core costs	60,465	66,000
Environment	15,524	27,699
Landmines	9,560	10,000
Civil Society	5,243	5,000
Development Issues	3,134	20,300
Advocacy Training	14,948	48,492
Women	7,910	5,000
Information	27,817	50,000
Other	515	0
	145,116	*232,491*

The budget for 1999 is an estimate of what we think will be spent, based on current working group plans. It is not intended to impose a limit on the working groups' plans. The budget this year is bigger than last year, mainly because a number of projects got started in the middle of last year and will continue the whole of this year, including the Information Project and the Advocacy Skills Training Project. The Environment Working Group activities increased after the recruitment of the Environment Network Coordinator in August 1998. In 1999, we hope to really get started on the Development Bank Working Group - if anyone was concerned about the issues raised by Nicola in her presentation, please get involved in that working group. The Women's Issues Project has a reduced budget in 1999 for two reasons: 1) because in 1998 the major activity was the panel discussion with political parties and there is nothing comparable scheduled for this year, and 2) the major activity for 1999 is the advocacy skills training which is shown under a different budget line.

As there were no questions, Russell then showed an overhead projection of the projected income for 1999:

INCOME FOR 1999:

Pledges Received for:	
whole Action Plan	45,029
Environment	27,400
Development	8,400
Advocacy Training	33,000

Information	600	114,429
Pledges Under Request for:		
whole Action Plan	20,000	
Dev. Issues Project	7,000	
Info. Project	40,000	
Membership fees	7,000	74,000
TOTAL INCOME SOUGHT:		*188,429*

Balance at 1 Jan. 99	*137,257*
Plus Expected Income	188,429
Less Expenditure	(232,491)
Balance at 31 Dec. 99	*93,195*
(= 4 mths operating costs)	

Roughly $114,000 has been assured in pledges. An additional $74,000 is being sought. This would allow us to end the year with approximately $93,000 in the bank, which is equal to four months operating costs. This balance is needed, because new grants for next year are not likely to be received until sometime after the beginning of the year.

INCOME & EXPENDITURE:

	1997	1998	1999 (Budget)
INCOME	62,350	214,154	180,429
EXPENDITURE	79,704	145,116	232,491
Surplus (Deficit)	*(17,354)*	*69,038*	*(52,062)*

The Income and Expenditure table shows that we have a surplus in 1998 and planned deficit in 1999, but this is because many grants received in 1998 were for the entire two-year Action Plan.

Discussion

- *Question:* Is the $114,429 already received, and is there any assurance of receiving the additional $74,000?

  Answer: The $114,429 is not all received yet, but it is pledged. We are just beginning to search for the additional $74,000, and have no replies as yet.

- *Question:* What happens if we don't receive the $74,000?

  Answer: In that case, we would have only $19,000 left in the bank at the end of the year, which will put us in a difficult situation, as new funds for the Year 2000 may not arrive soon enough.

  Please note that the expected contribution from membership fees ($7000) is quite low compared to the overall budget. We have kept membership fees low because our main goal is to encourage you to give your time to work together on important issues.