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Statement by Adama Dieng, United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, on the conviction of NUON Chea and KHIEU Samphan for the crime of genocide, crimes against humanity and grave breaches of the 1949 Geneva Conventions by the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia

(New York, 16 November 2018) The United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Adama Dieng, welcomed today's decision by the Trial Chamber of the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, holding accountable two former senior leaders of the Khmer Rouge for crimes committed in Cambodia from 17 April 1975 to 6 January 1979.

The two former Khmer Rouge leaders, NUON Chea, former Deputy Secretary of the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK) and KHIEU Samphan, former Head of State of Democratic Kampuchea, were sentenced to life imprisonment for the crime of genocide against the Vietnamese minority in Cambodia. NUON Chea was also convicted for the crime of genocide against the Cham ethnic and religious minority, based on his superior responsibility. Both men were convicted for grave breaches of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the crimes against humanity of murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, imprisonment, torture, persecution on political, religious and racial grounds and other inhumane acts against civilians in Cambodia during this period.

“This conviction is a good day for justice”. Special Adviser Adama Dieng said. “It demonstrates that justice will prevail, and that impunity should never be accepted for genocide and other atrocity crimes.”

Special Adviser Adama Dieng also expressed his support and solidarity with the victims. He said, “all the people who have suffered as a result of the heinous crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia during this period have waited a long time for justice, hopefully this decision will provide them with some measure of redress and solace.”

Special Adviser Adama Dieng further stressed the importance of this decision for prevention. “While criminal accountability is foremost a tool to provide justice and redress to victims, it also has an important preventative function as a deterrent as well as to help societies in reconciliation efforts and to deal with the past. At a time when we are witnessing a dangerous disregard for fundamental rights and international legal norms and standards in many parts of the world, this decision sends a strong message, in the region and globally, to those who commit, incite or condone atrocity crimes that sooner or later they will be held accountable.”

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