

Joint Press Release

On

Call for Acceleration and Opportunity for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to Continue Joining in the Process of Amendment to the Law on Associations and Non-Governmental Organizations (LANGO)

We, 75 CSOs attending the National Workshop on the Proposed Amendments to LANGO at the Sunway Hotel on August 25, 2020, the CSOs attending the previous provincial workshops and the representatives of associations and organizations attending the previous consultation meetings with the Royal Government Working Group led by the Ministry of Interior (MOI) would like to express congratulations to participants in the past consultation meetings between MOI and CSOs. The meeting has provided an opportunity for CSOs to explain, report as well as to come up with recommendations to promote the sense of partnerships in a non-confrontational manner.

The 06 consultation meetings with MOI have allowed CSOs to submit official proposed amendments, to raise their concerns and challenges with 14 articles of the law. The CSOs requested changes in the language in 12 of these articles and elimination of 02 articles (Article 24 and Article 32). Although six meetings have been conducted so far, there is no final agreement between MOI and CSOs yet on the contents of any of these articles.

After joining the 06 meetings with MOI, submitting CSOs' official proposed amendments, and conducting the consultation workshops at national and provincial levels, we summarize our concerns as follows:

- Pre-assumption that CSOs harm national security, stability, public order, culture and good traditions of Cambodian society can form the basis for the denial of registration of associations and organizations.
- Requiring bank account information violates the rights and privacy rights of legal entities.
- Requiring legal entities to register when they jointly create ad hoc working groups without organizational structures or timeframes activities is not reasonable.
- The requirement maintain neutrality with regard to political parties causes deep concern for CSOs because the current language allows a governmental official to interpret the term "neutrality" accordingly to particular circumstance or political tension.
- Requirements from sub-national administrations for CSOs to submit additional reports exceed legal obligations.
- Requirement by local authorities for CSOs to notify or to ask for approval for activities do not align with MoI 's Notification 2006, which says that CSOs do not need to ask for approval in advance.
- Setting more severe conditions for foreign associations and non-governmental organizations to obtain and renew Memos of Understanding (MoUs), based on the origin of funding and the approach/type of their activities, etc... causes concern.

The provisions of the LANGO itself and implementation of the authority seriously undermine the rights and freedoms of associations and non-governmental organizations, as well as their activities and cooperation to promote democracy, human rights and economic and social development in Cambodia. Based on the challenges and recommendations submitted and discussed with the MOI, CSOs once again strongly urge the Royal Government working group led by the MOI as follows:

1. To amend 14 articles of LANGO of concern to CSOs, including Article 1, Article 7, Article 8, Article 9, Article 10, Article 11, Article 20, Article 24, Article 25, Article 26, Article 30, Article 31, Article 32 and Article 35.

2. To expedite the process with clear a roadmap to finish the draft amendments to LANGO as soon as possible.
3. To provide CSOs an opportunity to further review the draft amendments.
4. To continue to cooperate and discuss the draft amendments in a transparent and inclusive process until the amendments are signed into law.

For further information, please contact:

Names :

Tel:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. Mr. Seng Rithy (PDP-Center) | 017 681 880 |
| 2. Mr. Korn Savang (COMFREL) | 011 884 840 |
| 3. Mr. Ry Sovanna (CCC) | 096 369 4800 |
| 4. Mr. You Phoeun (NGO Forum) | 017 575 808 |
| 5. Mrs. Hun Sinoun (CRC-Cambodia) | 077 584 008 |
| 6. Mr. Theng Savoeun (CCFC) | 078 225 088 |