

## **CAMBODIAN ART EXHIBIT HIGHLIGHTS SUCCESS IN TACKLING ANTI-PERSONNEL MINES**

*CARTAGENA, December 1, 2009*—A Cambodian landmine art exhibit celebrating the country’s significant progress in addressing its landmine and explosive remnants of war challenge was launched in Cartagena this evening. *IMPACT : an art exhibit about landmines in Cambodia* consists of works by ten Cambodian artists and four young landmine survivors.

“Cambodia is happy to present these works of art as a symbol of the positive impact of landmine clearance. I hope that the message they bring will further validate our commitment to a world free from the impact of landmines and explosive remnants of war, where communities can safely use their land and children can play without fear,” remarked Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority Vice President H.E. Prak Sokhonn.

After field visits to two of Cambodia’s most mine-affected provinces, Battambang and Banteay Meanchey, the ten artists created works of art portraying the progress of Cambodian mine action. Four young landmine survivors also created works of art representing both their past experiences and their ambitions for the future. The artwork consists of sculptures, paintings and installations.

“While highlighting the destructive force of mines and explosive remnants of war and the challenges that remain, this through-provoking exhibit is a reminder that our joint efforts have a marked impact on the lives of Cambodia’s men, women, boys and girls,” said UNDP Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery’s Senior Deputy Director Miguel Bermeo on behalf of the United Nations Mine Action Team’s Miguel Bermeo.

The exhibit debuted in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, in September before traveling with support from the Australian Government to Colombia for the Cartagena Summit for a Mine-Free World.

“Australia has supported Cambodia’s mine clearance, survivor assistance, mine risk education and integrated development efforts since 1996. It is important that people from around the world are aware of the progress and remaining challenges of mines in Cambodia,” said Ms. Caroline Millar, Australia’s Ambassador for Disarmament and Permanent Representative to the United Nations at Geneva. “Cambodia is also now helping other countries to rid themselves of the scourge of landmines.”

The Royal Government of Cambodia ratified the Mine Ban Treaty in 1999. Due to the high level of contamination in Cambodia, the Government has requested a 10-year extension, which will be considered during this week’s Summit.

“I remember when I was a boy in the 1980s and knew nothing about the danger of landmines,” wrote artist Tor Vutha about his experience with the project. “Now I understand a lot more about the issues surrounding mine action and I am very happy to have the opportunity to show my paintings in this art exhibit.”

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