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## **Decentralization In Cambodia Stuttgart's Governing Mayor Advises Cambodia**

Cambodia has always had a centralist government system: as a divine kingdom at the time of the Angkor Empire, as a French protectorate, during the communist regime of the radical Maoist Khmer Rouge from 1975 to 1979 and during Vietnamese occupation under the aegis of the Warsaw Pact. The country went through war, civil war and state terror from the end of the 1960s until 1998.

Since 1994 the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation has provided policy consultancy and capacity building on democratic decentralization to the Royal Cambodian Government. First successes were achieved quickly: the first local council elections were held in 2002, marking the beginning of "local self-administration".

Since then efforts have been made to introduce democratic structures at district and province levels as well. The political debate has been controversial and progress slow. In August 2007 the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation invited Dr. Schuster, the Mayor of the City of Stuttgart, to assist in this endeavor. He was the main speaker at workshops addressing the National Committee for the Management of Decentralization and Deconcentration (NCDD) and the Members of the Cambodian Parliament. The NCDD is the equivalent to the German Commission on Federalism.

Dr. Schuster and the foundation's country representative, Wolfgang Meyer, held extensive meetings with leading politicians of the Kingdom: Prime Minister Hun Sen, the Ministers of Interior and Finance, of the Office of the Council of Ministers and others. Also the leader of the opposition, Sam Rainsy and the President of the Association of Local Authorities were informed about the recommendations that the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation made.

The decentralization state reform should be implemented in consecutive steps rather than in one single grand design: an amendment of the constitution, a framework law and lastly stipulations in detail by law or ordinance. These recommendations were discussed in the cabinet and have largely been adopted. An amendment to the constitution is under way and a draft framework law has been made public early December. The Prime Minister has announced that the legislation shall be introduced into parliament in the first quarter of 2008.

Wolfgang Meyer  
Country Representative of Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation Cambodia