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By Sam Rith

During the fifth Asia-Europe roundtable meeting on sustaining the peace through post conflict reconstruction on May 23-25 in Singapore, Cambodia was addressed as a lesson learned for other post conflict countries.

Some participants in the three days period meeting complimented Cambodia on having a successful reconciliation process after the conflict that would be taken as the examples by other post conflict countries, while others criticized Cambodia still has a serious problem of corruption—the meeting was co-organized by Asia Europe Foundation and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung that had 50 participants of different backgrounds including policy makers, academics, practitioners and civil society activists and donor organizations.

Munawar Liza Zainal, the major of Sabang City in Aceh and deputy Spokesperson of the former Free Aceh Movement, said he would like to take Cambodia as the example on reconciliation in Aceh.

"Cambodia has a very successful in the reconciliation, but not yet in Aceh," Munawar said. "We hope that in the near future, we will have a success reconciliation like Cambodia."

Helen Jarvis, chief of public affairs at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia [ECCC] who is representative of Cambodia, said at the roundtable discussion that Cambodia has a valuable experience for other post conflict countries to take as the lesson.

"We had integration of the former fighting component and element of reconciliation," Helen said.

She said even though Cambodia has already had three mandates of the government, for almost 15 years, it still has some aspects of post conflict situation, and she thought that the forthcoming trial would end the post conflict in Cambodia.

But Lee Chong San, board member of the international board of director of Transparency International, said Cambodia was placed 151 as corrupt country while East Timor placed 111 and Sierra Leone 142—Chong San said basing on Transparency International Corruption Perception Index in 2006.
Chong San said Cambodia has low corruption comparing to Iraq that placed 160 and the Democratic Republic of Congo that placed 156 out of 163 countries.

"Of course [Cambodia] still has [corruption] issue," said Chong San. "As long as the government and [donor] remains working together and keep moving forward, I think in the future, Cambodia will be bright and much better than other countries."

Strict monitoring standards imposed by many international donors and implementing agencies can contribute towards mitigating corruption, but he said the concern is that a number of the donors are reluctant to denounce corruption.

"To contribute in eradicating the corruption, the donor should publicize after they audited and found out the corruption," Chong San said. "And make sure the person who committed corruption get penalized."

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