

# RESILIENCE EXHIBITION Phnom Penh

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## Soth Plai Ngarm: Visionary of Cambodia Peace Museum

*Introduction by Emma Leslie, CPCS Executive Director:*

It is an incredible space to us to be able to start a journey on the peace museum that was envisioned by a man who has been a Khmer Rouge survivor, had served as a soldier commander of the Khmer National Liberation Front for 12 years. And then after being an UNTAC translator for a couple years, he decided that peacebuilding was the way to go. Also my partner in crime for some years and the founder of Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, but also the visionary behind the idea of having this kind of exhibit permanently display for his children and his grandchildren, so that Cambodians know that there is something positive about their history beyond the horizon of their experience. So I want to welcome now Soth Plai Ngarm to share with you a little bit about the vision beyond tonight's theme.

*Soth Plai Ngarm:*

Thank you very much Excellences, ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guest and friends. I decide to that this opportunity to support our project. Everyone has been helping for peace education happening. I try to share with you a little bit the vision behind the peace museum. As a Cambodian, I am not representing all the victims, but I talk for myself which is my story I also shared with many Cambodians in my generation.

I think we all have encountered what happened in our lives. However, when we manage to turn our trauma into energy and determination to contribute something to the society, it is very important for Cambodians to look at justice where it is beyond the death but for the living and the unborn.

For me, it is very important when I get out from the secure sense and have the ability to reflect on my personal story. I start to see that there is something that did not work. And I put the question for myself. I am going to study hard and look for ways how we can prevent something like that from happening again. I don't claim that I found the answer, but the thing that I found myself satisfied is education. The thing that I found also if we learn from the past, I will not repeat that again. And I am sure about that.

The Peace Museum, the idea of exhibit the resilience is something profound in the way that we do it because for me after years of suffering, there are a lot of stories to tell. *We can tell about the time we were falling, but also we can choose to tell the time that we are getting up.* For us it is very important that we choose to tell the time that we are getting up. It is not because of the ideologies, but it is peace and justice. It is the belief on the science of positivity. I think we every day encounter a lot of negativity and there is a little room that everyone can contribute to the positivity. That is what we want this peace museum as an educational place and the place that people can reflect, urge and motivate to think at least contribute a little bit to the positivity if there is nothing at all that we can do.

Thank you very much.