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# **Civil society speaks out on NGO legislation**

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Cambodian civil society organisations once again voiced opposition to the government's controversial draft NGO law during a meeting of hundreds of NGOs from around the world held in Siem Reap yesterday.

"We are accountable for a quarter of all aid in Cambodia. If this law comes into force, it will restrict our ability to help the poor and vulnerable. Cambodia stands to lose more if this law passes," Lun Borithy, executive director of the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia, told delegates to the Global Assembly on Development Effectiveness yesterday.

Caroline McCausland, country director of ActionAid, said NGOs "respect" the government's right to legislate.

"All we ask is that the government agrees to let us have voluntary registration. This law really isn't necessary," she said.

NGOs and associations have said that the proposed law – and its mandatory registration provision in particular – would cripple civil society by allowing the government to exert unchecked authority over it.

Hundreds of groups have signed a petition saying the most recent public draft of the law was "unacceptable".

Nouth Sa An, secretary of state at the Ministry of Interior, could not be reached yesterday. He told The Post last week, however, that a high-level meeting at the ministry had been convened to discuss mandatory registration.