

## Cambodian ambassador lauds Church

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LAIE, Hawaii — An optimistic Cambodian ambassador to the United States has congratulated BYU-Hawaii for the service it is providing for the higher education of students from Southeast Asia.



Cambodian Ambassador Roland Eng retains optimism despite losing his family to the Khmer Rouge.

Photo by Leilani Bascom

"I pay homage to your church not only from Cambodia but for others around the world for what you are providing for our students," Roland Eng said in Laie. "Our Cambodian students are blessed to have your school. So are others from other countries."

A former freedom fighter in the civil wars that racked his peninsular country for 23 years before he went into elective and appointive public service, Ambassador Eng made the comments Nov. 22 in a speech to about 80 students and faculty after he participated in the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Honolulu the previous week.

Noting the emphasis that BYU-Hawaii places on unity and peace, the ambassador said he believed that a strong influence by the Church and other religions in Cambodia under the new constitution will help advance global peace.

"I am inspired by what your school teaches," he said following remarks from students from Cambodia, Malaysia and Thailand at a luncheon meeting. They said they each planned to return to their homelands to contribute to the growth of the economy, culture and harmonious relations among diverse cultures.

Two of the students referred to the personal responsibility they felt as being partners in a prophecy made by President [David O. McKay](#) in 1955. The then-Church president said that students from the school returning to Asia would contribute to international peacemaking.

"What you need to do is try to educate more people about the mission of peace of your Church by sending them around the world. There are no people better equipped with this message," Ambassador Eng said.

Described by BYU-Hawaii President Eric B. Shumway as "an incurable optimist," the ambassador described the steps being taken by the 13.5 million Cambodians to catch up in the global economy after more than two decades of civil war and the deaths of more than 2 million people through disease, starvation and the butchery of the Khmer Rouge "killing fields."

His parents and sisters and two brothers were killed by the Khmer Rouge while he was a student studying in Paris. But he refuses to dwell on the tragedies of the past, according to President Shumway who introduced him. Instead, he always looks into the future.