

11 September 2026

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Does international cyber law matter for Cambodia? Definitely so, in particular right now!

Alexander Seger, 11 September 2026

Consider the context in which we just spent a week in Phnom Penh training Cambodian government officials on international law in cyberspace:

- Online scam compounds along the Cambodia–Thailand border
- The recent Thai–Cambodian conflict
- A new Cambodian law on combating online scams, adopted in April 2026
- Cambodia's signature of the UN (Hanoi) Convention against cybercrime in October 2025

Hard to imagine a more concrete setting for the question of how international law regulates cyber operations between states and facilitates the fight against cybercrime.



Marko Milanovic and Liis Vihul led the sessions on the law governing State conduct: sovereignty in cyberspace and the prohibition of intervention, use of cyber force, attribution and State responsibility, due diligence, countermeasures, necessity and self-defence, human rights online, international humanitarian law (including AI-enabled weapon systems), and the peaceful settlement of cyber disputes. It remains a privilege to keep learning from both of them.

Cambodia would benefit from formulating its own national positions on how international law applies in cyberspace, as a growing number of States have done.

My own sessions covered cybercrime: the Budapest and Hanoi Conventions, criminalisation, procedural powers and electronic evidence, human rights and rule-of-law safeguards, and international cooperation.

The timing matters here as well. Having signed the Hanoi Convention, Cambodia will need to reform its domestic legislation before it can ratify. A cybercrime law has been in the making since 2010, when I first discussed it with Cambodian authorities. Earlier drafts were criticised, for right and for wrong reasons.

My recommendation: engage civil society and industry on the current draft before it is finalised. That is the surest way to clear up misunderstandings and to address legitimate concerns about privacy and freedom of expression, and it makes for a stronger law.

The course was delivered by Cyber Law International through the National Institute of Diplomacy and International Relations of Cambodia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, with the support of the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, DFAT.

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