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**NETWORK CALLS FOR MYANMAR AND THAILAND GOVERNMENTS TO
ACKNOWLEDGE RESPONSIBILITY AND ADDRESS SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS IN
DAWEI SEZ BEFORE NEW CONCESSIONS ARE GRANTED**

Ahead of the 25th ASEAN Summit, the Dawei Development Association (DDA) and affected communities call on the Myanmar and Thailand governments to acknowledge their responsibilities to address the significant problems caused by the Dawei Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and related projects; to guarantee transparency, disclosing any information relating to the project and to Italian-Thai Development Plc. involvement in the future of this project; and to ensure accountability for negative impacts already incurred as a result of the project. ASEAN and other world leaders will gather in Nay Pyi Taw on November 12-13, 2014 for the twice-yearly ASEAN Summit, providing an opportunity for the leaders of Myanmar and Thailand to jointly address these issues.

The Dawei SEZ project, which is the subject of an ongoing National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT) inquiry, was initiated in 2008 under a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding between the national governments of Thailand and Myanmar.

During the ASEAN Summit, the Myanmar government is expected to announce a new joint venture with two Thai companies – Italian-Thai Development Plc (ITD) and Rojana Industrial Park Plc – to develop the initial phase of the project, including industrial estate and basic infrastructure such as small port, power plant, two lane road, reservoir and telecommunication system. In November 2013, the Myanmar and Thailand governments took control of the project and concession rights were transferred to a new specially formed company, the Dawei SEZ Development Co. Ltd, owned in equal shares by the two governments.

During the time in which ITD was developing the project, various environmental and social problems occurred including land grabs, inadequate and unfair resettlement and compensation, uncompensated loss of productive farmlands and forests, as well as various impacts to local communities' social and economic wellbeing. None of the parties involved in the project have taken responsibility for these problems and local groups are extremely concerned following reports that the same company, ITD, will be granted a new concession for 75 years without addressing problems that have already occurred.



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Last month, DDA and communities affected by the Dawei SEZ testified at a public hearing at the NHRCT about the human rights and environmental impacts of the project. At the hearing, the NHRCT was presented with a report, entitled “[Voices From the Ground: Concerns Over the Dawei Special Economic Zone and Related Projects](#)”, which highlights the human rights and environmental problems connected to the SEZ project. According to the report, an estimated 20 to 36 villages (comprising approximately 4,384 to 7,807 households or 22,000 to 43,000 people) would be directly affected by the construction of the Dawei SEZ and related projects, including industrial estate, ports, road links, reservoirs and resettlement areas.

A representative from the Thai National Economics and Social Development Board **claimed** that the concession for the Dawei SEZ has not yet been granted, and therefore the Thai government bears no responsibility for negative impacts incurred. Thai officials told the NHRCT that the Myanmar government and ITD, rather than the Thai government, should take responsibility for any repercussions the SEZ project may have on locals. However, DDA believes that, as the governments of Myanmar and Thailand jointly own the new company and according to the New Framework Agreement, both governments are directly responsible for the Dawei SEZ project and any negative impacts that might arise from the development of the project.

"We are not opposing the project, but we are demanding responsibility and accountability of damages occurred in Dawei SEZ project the last 3 years. ITD replied that this is not their responsibility. But ITD announced that they have won their new bid for the initial phase of Dawei SEZ. How did this happen?" said Thant Zin, Coordinator of DDA.

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