



January 11, 2016

Mr. Chalmers  
Head of DFID China  
22 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2EG  
[c-chalmers@dfid.gov.uk](mailto:c-chalmers@dfid.gov.uk)

*Letter of concern from civil society organizations in Myanmar affected by Department for International Development (DFID) support that has led to closed door bilateral dialogue between Union of Myanmar and the China for an MOU to legalise the illicit cross-border timber trade between China and Myanmar.*

Dear Mr. Chalmers,

This letter is to complain about the support that DFID is providing to a bilateral dialogue on timber trade and industrial investment between the governments of China and Myanmar, which has not included the voices of those who would be most affected, contributing to conflict in these unstable border areas, and further instability.

We are a group of civil society organizations representing communities and areas affected by Chinese involvement in the cross-border timber trade between Myanmar and China, as well as Chinese investments on land which is under dispute between the Myanmar military-government and non-state armed groups, in particular the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO).

Over the past year, we have become aware of DFID's International Forest Investment and Trade (InFIT) programme that has been financing and supporting bilateral dialogue between the Government of China and the Government of Myanmar, which is said to have the objective to help define the legality of the Sino-Myanmar cross-border timber trade.

We are very concerned about the nature of these non-transparent bilateral dialogues, which have been facilitated by the Chinese NGO Global Environment Institute (GEI). We, as affected

and concerned civil society in Myanmar, have not been consulted, even though the discussions are of great importance for people living in and around forests and who rely on their resources in Myanmar. We have been informed their have been closed door meetings, however no one representing civil society has been invited as far as we are aware, which is counter to the spirit of political transition well underway in Myanmar. Political dialogue as part of the peace negotiations began today in Nay Pyi Taw with natural resource governance being designated as one of the thematic working areas for discussion (Framework for Political Dialogue, Chapter 5, Section E). Certain ethnic armed groups and civil society have called for a moratorium on infrastructure and development projects in conflict areas. These bilateral negotiations that DFID is supporting between the governments of Myanmar and China threaten to destabilise political dialogue, add to mistrust and perpetuate further conflict.

We understand now that there is a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), with provisions related to Chinese investment zones in timber processing and investment in “timber parks” (i.e., plantations). Both of these issues are of great concern to the citizens of Myanmar, especially those residing and working in northern Myanmar.

1. Chinese investment in processing on the Myanmar side of the border may help Chinese traders comply with Myanmar’s log export ban by converting the logs into semi-processed material. But there are still many aspects of legality that are being ignored, such as customary rights to resources and land, and contested authority over those resources between Union of Myanmar Government and ethnic armed groups.
2. Chinese investment in development projects has a history of land grabbing, and there is great concern that timber processing zones, and especially any “timber parks” or plantations, will further lead to land grabs and thus exacerbate problems leading to greater tenure insecurity.

We appeal to DFID and the Government of the United Kingdom to consider our concerns, and work to resolve a situation that may inadvertently contribute to the furthering of local communities’ grievances caused by the inequity of natural resource management in the conflict zones of Myanmar. Regional examples of multi-stakeholder deliberation and negotiation such as those that occurred during the development of the Indonesian SLVK timber legality assurance system as part of a Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) process serves as an effective example for achieving governance reforms in an inclusive manner.

Myanmar has recently started a FLEGT VPA process which in its nascent stages. DFID has pledged support to facilitate this multi-stakeholder process, yet its actions in China are contradictory and both undermine and jeopardise this national inclusive reform processes. The organisations that have endorsed this letter request that DFID:

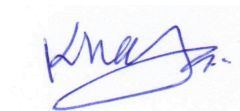
1. Opens up a channel of communication with civil society groups regarding proposals for an MOU between Myanmar and China
2. Supports inclusive multi-stakeholder governance reform processes such as FLEGT VPA process
3. Recognises that given ongoing political dialogue in the peace process and the current situation of forest governance in Myanmar, such discussions about a bilateral MOU are premature and pose many risks

Inequities over natural resources have driven conflict in the region and have the potential to undermine the peace agreement process in Myanmar. The investments intended in the proposed MOU risk setting us further back rather than moving forward.

We look forward to your positive response and future dialogue.

On behalf of endorsed organisations and networks,

Sincerely,



Khon Ja

Kachin Peace Network

kachinpeacenetwork@gmail.com

[khonja2014@gmail.com](mailto:khonja2014@gmail.com)

+95 9 425288899

CC:

- Minister of Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry, Union of Myanmar
- Director General, Department of Forestry, Union of Myanmar
- British Ambassador to Burma
- British Ambassador to China
- EU Delegation Myanmar

### Endorsed Organisations and Networks

1. Kachin Development Networking Group (KDNG)
2. Women's League of Burma (WLB)
3. Transparency and Accountability Network Kachin State (TANKS) (25 member organizations)
4. SHINGNIP Legal Aid Network
5. Burma Partnership
6. DEMO
7. All Shan St Shin Thantate Students Union (ရှမ်းပြည်နယ်လုံးဆိုင်ရာ ကျောင်းသားသမဂ္ဂ)
8. Shan Youth Organization Pin Laung
9. Shan Youth Organization Taunggyi
10. Southern Shan State youth network (ရှမ်းပြည်နယ်တောင်ပိုင်းလူငယ်ကွန်ယက်)
11. Shan youth Yangon.
12. NCERD , N' Centre for Education and Research Development
13. Genuine People's Servants - GPS
14. Civil Authorize Negotiate Organization (C.A.N-Org),
15. Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays - Myanmar (PFLAG-MYANMAR)
16. Youth Circle
17. Land and Environment Conservation Group- Kutkai (မြေယာနှင့် ပတ်ဝန်းကျင် ထိန်းသိမ်းရေးအဖွဲ့ - ကွတ်ခိုင်)
18. Kachin Youth Organisation (KYO)
19. Another Development
20. 8888 Generation Peace and Open Society-Myeik (၈၈ မျိုးဆက်ငြိမ်းချမ်းရေး နှင့်ပွင့်လင်းလူ့အဖွဲ့စည်း- မြိတ်)
21. Labour Right Defenders and Promoters (အလုပ်သမားအခွင့်ရေးကာကွယ်မြှင့်တင်သူများ အဖွဲ့)
22. Pyo Khin Thit (Ma-U-Bin)
23. The Seagull: Human Rights, Peace & Development
24. Wunpawng Ninghtoi
25. Green Rights Organisation
26. Mong Pan Youth Association
27. CKYY - Catholic Kachin Youth, Yangon
28. Union of Karenni State Youth
29. Shan Human Rights Foundation
30. Action Based Community Development (လူထုအခြေပြု ဖွံ့ဖြိုးတိုးတက်ရေး လုပ်ငန်းများအဖွဲ့)
31. 88-Rakhine Generation for Social Development (၈၈-ရခိုင်မျိုးဆက်များ လူမှုဖွံ့ဖြိုးရေးအဖွဲ့)
32. Myanmar Lawyers Network,
33. Upper Myanmar Lawyers Network
34. Mandalay Peacekeeping Committee
35. Association of Human Rights Defenders and Promoters- HRDP
36. Ta'ang students and Youth Union-TSYU
37. Kachin Peace Network
38. Twantay Network
39. Peace & Open Society (Kyaukse Township)

40. Myanmar China Pipeline Watch Committee
41. MATA (Mdy Working Group)
42. Youth pace maker organization
43. Forum for Democracy in Burma
44. Action Committee for Democracy Development
45. Colors Rainbow
46. Tampadipa
47. CWK ( Community Work for Kachin )
48. MATA (Ayeyarwaddy Working Group)
49. Green Network Sustainable Environment Group -Magway
50. Hands of Unity Group - Magway
51. ME - Community Development Center - Magway
52. Ayar West Development Organization - Min Bu
53. Social Care Volunteer Group - Magway
54. Organic Agro and Farmer Affair Development Group - Pwint Phyu
55. Natural Sever Community - Pwint Phyu
56. Myaing Youth Development Organization - Myaing
57. Farmer Right & Development Organization - Magway
58. Farmers Union - Magway
59. Kyauk Htap Community Library - Min Hla
60. Social Care Volunteer Group - Magway
61. Magway EITI Watch Group
62. Lan Pya Kyel : Seik Phyu (လမ်းပြကြယ်အဖွဲ့ - ဆိပ်ဖြူ)
63. Green Future - Ye Nan Chaung
64. Shwe Ye Nanthar Workers Group: Ye Nan Chaung (ရွှေရေနံ့သာအလုပ်သမားအဖွဲ့ - ရေနံ့ချောင်း)
65. Guardian Network -Pakkukku
66. ပညာပါရမီစာကြည့်တိုက် - Magway
67. Mintae Village Development Group - Pwint Phyu
68. Mount Pone Taung/ Pone Myar Watch Group - Htee Lin (ပုံတောင်/ပုံညာ စောင့်ကြည့်အဖွဲ့ - ထီးလင်း)
69. Youth Gardner Group -Taung Twin တောင်တွင်း
70. Karen River Watch
71. Northern Shan State Reginal Civill Society Network
72. KGG Network
73. Green and Clean Project, Mandalay
74. လူထုအခြေပြုပဒေကူညီမှုကွန်ရက် The PLAN: Public Legal Aid Network
75. Dawei Lawyer Group (DLG)
76. Dawei Lawyer Network
77. Dawei Probono Lawyer Network (DPLN)
78. Myanmar People Alliance (MPA) မြန်မာလူထုမဟာမိတ်
79. Metta Development Foundation
80. Thuriya Sandra Environmentalists
81. BadeiDha Moe Civil Society Organization

82. Ledo Network (Shing Bwi Yang)
83. Kachin Relief Fund
84. Kachin Community- UK
85. Kachin Women Peace Network
86. Patkai Network - Pangsau
87. Shwechinthae Social Service Group (shwebo)
88. Humanity Institute (HI)
89. Sha-it Social Development Organisation
90. Banmaw CSOs Network
91. Uak Thon Social Development
92. Mingalar Foundation(Wai maw)
93. CHAD
94. Loi Yang Bum Community Development
95. Htoi San Local Development Organization
96. Myusha Social Development Society
97. Kachin State Farmers' Network (KSFN)
98. Justice and Peace Commission (Catholic Bishop Conference Myanmar)
99. Yangon Kachin Baptist Youth
100. Tavoyan Women's Union
101. Myanmar Youth Social and Education Local Focus (MYSELF)
102. Pan Pyo Let Youth Centre ပန်းပျိုလက်လူငယ်စင်တာ
103. Poet Lovers Association ကဗျာချစ်သူများ အသင်း
104. Peace Machine
105. Independent Youth For Change
106. MasterPeace Myanmar Club
107. Cry for Peace ငြိမ်းချမ်းရေးရှိတ်သံ
108. Karuna Spectrum ဂရုဏာရောင်စဉ်တန်းများ
109. Golden Generations
110. Renovator Youth Network
111. Land Core Group
112. Arakan Rivers Network(ARN) and
113. All Arakan Students' & Youths' Congress(AASYC)
114. Rhododendron Integrated Development(RID)
115. Rhododendron Famers Association(RFA)
116. K'cho Indigenous Association (KIA)
117. Farmers And Landworkers Union (Myanmar)
118. သဘာဝပတ်ဝန်းကျင်ထိမ်းသိမ်း ကာကွယ်စောင့်ရှောက်ရေးနှင့် တောင်သူလယ်သမားရေးရာ ကော်မတီ (ရှမ်းပြည်)
119. Legal Equality In Myanmar Organization (LEIMO)
120. Peace and Justice Law Firm and Legal Aid Center
121. Resource Rights for the Indigenous People ( RRTiP ) (Naga)
122. Karen Human Rights Group
123. EcoDev
124. Kachin Women Union

125. BRIDGE
126. Kachin Lawyer Group(KLG)
127. Namkyie Parahita Foundation
128. Organic Farming Group - Pantanaw (သဘာဝ လယ်သမားများအဖွဲ့ ပန်းတနော်)
129. Human Rights Foundation of Monland (HURFOM)
130. Network for Human Rights Documentation-Burma (ND-Burma) လူ့အခွင့်အရေး မှတ်တမ်းကွန်ရက် (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ)
131. Network for Democracy and Development (NDD)
132. Yang Chi Oo Workers Association (YCOWA) ရောင်ခြည်ဦးအလုပ်သမားများအဖွဲ့
133. Mae Tao Clinic (MTC)
134. Burma Medical Association (BMA)
135. Back Pack Health Workers Team (BPHWT)
136. Free Thinkers
137. Kachin State Conservation Working Group - KCWG
138. Wimutti Volunteer Group (WVG)
139. Educational Initiatives Burma
140. Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT)
141. Ngahpe Youth Network