**Statement of Karenni civil society organizations on International Rivers Day**

**Date: March 14, 2016**

In January 2010, Burma’s previous military government signed an MOU with China’s Datangcompany to build three hydropower dams in Karenni state. This included the Ywathit dam on the Salween River, 14 kilometers from Bawlake town, to produce 600 MW of power (later increased to 4,000 MW), a 130 MW dam on the Pawn River and a 110 MW dam on the ThabetChaung River in Karenni state. Surveying for these projects has proceeded without transparency and without consultation with local people, and will have negative impacts on the peace process between the ethnic armed organizations and the government.

Regarding the implementation of these hydropower projects, Karenni civil society organizations have the following concerns:

1. The site of the planned dam on the Pawn River is in Bawlake, which is a historical place and the location of old palaces built by the former Sawpyas (ruling chiefs of Karenni).
2. Bawlake is the homeland of the ethnic Yintalai people, who are very few in number. They will lose their culture and heritage if the dam is built.
3. There will be militarization for the security of the dams, increased military tension and human rights violations that will harm the peace process
4. According to earthquake experts, it is very dangerous to build dams on the Salween River as it is located on fault lines.
5. The Salween, Pawn and Thatbet Chaung Rivers are major arteries of Karenni State, nourishing its biodiverse ecosystem and the forests, farmlands and fisheries upon which countless local communities depend. Blocking these waterways will inflict irreversible damage on this ecosystem and the lives of those depending on it.
6. The implementation of mega hydroelectric projects without transparency by the Naypyidaw government is violating its ceasefire agreement with the Karenni National Progressive Party, according to which any large development projects carried outduring the peace process must be transparentand accountable, ensuring that the local people suffer no losses.
7. All mega development projects, including dam projects, that will have negative impacts on local people must be suspended until there is a political settlement to the ethnic conflict, guaranteeing ethnic self-determination under a federal democratic system.

Local Karenni people and civil society organizations:

1. Future Salween
2. Karenni State Farmers’ Union (KSFU)
3. Karenni National Women Organization (KNWO)
4. Community Youth Center (CYC)
5. Kayah State Youth Network (KSYN)
6. Kayah State Peace Monitoring Network (KSPMN)
7. Law Home
8. Women Safe House
9. KayahEarthrights Action Network (KEAN)
10. Union of Karenni State Youth (UKSY)
11. Kayan New Generation Youth (KNGY)
12. Karenni National Youth Organization (KNYO)
13. Kayan Women Oganization (KyW0)
14. Karenni Civil Society Network (KCSN)
15. Karenni Evergreen (KEG)
16. Karenni Social Welfare and Development Centre (KSWDC)
17. Karenni Teachers’ Union (KTU)

Contact:

1. Sitt Mone Mobile ၊ 09 4580 0302 / 09 7911 12688 ( Myanmar and English)

2. Ko Reh Mobile ၊ 09 7895 194 58 ( Myanmar and Shan)

3. Ninn Ye Mobile၊ 09 451 956 642 ( Myanmar, Karenni and English)