



**Statement on International Action for Rivers Day
Monday, March 14, 2016**

The Save the Salween Network is holding an event to mark the International Action for Rivers Day on the Salween River at Wan Sala village, Mong Ton township, at the border of Southern Shan State and Eastern Shan State, in collaboration with local communities, including children, youth, women, elders, religious leaders, leaders of the Shan Culture and Literature Association, Shan political party representatives and Community Based Organizations from across Burma, including from Shan, Karenni, Karen and Mon areas.

Representing the diverse ethnic communities that live along the Salween River, we are strongly opposed to the government's plans to build six dams on this vital artery, which has nourished the culture, traditions and livelihoods of our peoples for generations, and where decades-long conflict is ongoing.

We are gravely concerned at the recent MoU for 18 hydropower projects signed on 2 February 2016 between Burma's Ministry of Electric Power and Chinese investment companies, reported on in the state media. We are also concerned at recent efforts to push ahead with the giant Mong Ton dam on the Salween River in southern Shan State, which will be the largest hydropower project in Southeast Asia. At the request of the Burmese government, the Mong Ton dam project design has been modified, and a new agreement made with China and Thailand to proceed with the dam.

We deplore the Burmese government's attempts to push ahead with mega dams in ethnic conflict zones, against the wishes of local ethnic communities. This shows bad faith towards the peace process, and will destroy the trust of ethnic stakeholders and exacerbate conflict.

The mighty Salween River must be left in its natural free flowing state, supporting the rich biodiversity of ecosystems along its entire length, which provide food security for ethnic communities throughout the river basin. The incalculable environmental and social costs of damming the river far outweigh any of the supposed economic benefits.

Thus, we urge governments, companies and investors not to build any hydropower dams on the Salween, as they will threaten the livelihoods and existence of countless ethnic communities living along the river.

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