

Joint Statement by Civil Society Organizations and Communities on Concerns over Illegal Logging in Cambodia

Phnom Penh, 22 October 2014

We, the Indigenous Peoples and Forestry Rights Network comprised of 42 member organizations, would like to compliment the efforts made by the Royal Government in supporting the forestry sector by passing various laws and policies such as the National Forestry Policy 2010-2029, the Law on Forestry, the Law on Protected Areas, Order No. 01 and the Inter-Ministerial Prakas on Management of Economic Land Concessions.

At the same time, we wish to express our great concerns over the dramatic decline of forest resources in Cambodia in the last two years. This is a national tragedy. From 2012-2013, 535¹ cases of illegal logging and wood smuggling have been recorded by the NGO Forum on Cambodia. In the last 9 months of 2014, MAFF reported 1891 cases², which indicates the massive extend deforestation operations have in Cambodia.

For the greater area of Prey Lang, research³ from 2013 drew attention to the threats to it posed by mining concessions, economic land concessions and an increase in illegal logging. This research is indicative for other forested areas in Cambodia.

In this regard, logging and the trafficking of luxury timber have mostly occurred in the northeastern, northern parts and Cardamom mountains of Cambodia, including the provinces of Monduliri, Rattanakiri, Stung Treng, Kratie, Preah Vihear, Uddor Meanchey, Koh Kong, Pursat and Kampong Speu province. In addition, media reports that from January to September 2014 Cambodia exported 55000 tons⁴ of luxury wood to China alone.⁵ Further, 2013 development data shows that the forest cover in Cambodia declined to 46%. However, the decline is even bigger as these 46% also include areas covered by plantations and not only primary forest.

¹ Information Monitoring System of the Research and Information Program, NGO Forum on Cambodia.

² Progress report of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery in the last 9 months of 2014 and future actions site from MAFF website:

http://www.maff.gov.kh/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1214:monthlyreport092014&catid=67:monthlyreport&Itemid=192

³ "Prey Lang Development Case: Do People Benefit From its Development?", published in 2013 by the NGO Forum on Cambodia.

⁴ Quoted from media, Thmey Thmey website released in October 15, 2014 sited from report of the export of Cambodia agriculture productions in the last 9 months:

http://thmeythmey.com/index.php?page=detail&ctype=article&id=19260&lg=kh&#detail_block_read

We are concerned about the Royal Government's Decision No. 854 issued by the Office of the Council of Ministers dated 12 June 2014, in which the Royal Government of Cambodia allowed the **Try Pheaph Import Export** and **MDS THMODAR S.E.Z Co.,Ltd** to collect all kinds of timber from the storage of the Forestry Administration as well as the Ministry of Environment without specifying a clear timeframe, the quantity and the locations of timber collection and reports on revenues obtained from this collection.

Therefore, as CSOs and communities, we appeal to the Royal Government of Cambodia to:

1. Strengthen the enforcement of laws and policies protecting the forests in a more effective and transparent manner;
2. Strengthen the management and supervision of licensed private companies to export timber and specify locations, prices, quantity, and dates of timber collection in order to ensure transparency and accountability;
3. Hold public bidding of confiscated timber with participation of civil society, and disclose revenues from bids;
4. Expedite the adoption of the Sub-Decree on Management of Prey Lang Area; include Prey Lang in REDD+ areas for conservation, study of genetic resources and for people's sustainable use to enhance their livelihoods.
5. Speed up process of registration and reconigned community forestry, community protected area, indigenous community, community fishery and community ecotourism and allocate some national budget to them for management and development of those communities.
6. Effectively protect the Cardamom mountains, the last forestry areas for breeding and development of genetic resources.

This statement is supported by the following civil society organisations:

1. NGO Forum on Cambodia (NGO Forum)
2. Community Legal Education Center (CLEC)
3. Development and Partnership in Action (DPA)
4. Building Community Voices (BCV)
5. Cambodia Indigenous Youth Association (CIYA)