

**KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
NATION RELIGION KING**

Phnom Penh, 26 May 2015

**JOINT STATEMENT
ALARMING TOWARDS THE DISASTER OF PREY LANG**

We, monks; Prey Lang Community Networks; students; youth networks; Indigenous Peoples and Forestry Network (IPFN); and civil society organizations (CSOs), are gravely concerned over the status of intense destruction of the Prey Lang forest during the last few years, which will lead to the disaster of Prey Lang forest in the near future.

Although the Royal Government of the Kingdom of Cambodia has adopted the Forestry Law, the Law on Environmental Protection and Natural Resource Management and other important regulations to protect forestry, natural resources and the environment. However, illegal logging activities have continued along with logging under the name of granting of economic land concessions, mining concessions, social concessions, and forestry concessions. These concessions have been seriously threatening Cambodia's forestry, in particular Prey Lang, the last largest lowland forest in Cambodia as well as in Indochina subcontinent.

For the past 10 years, Prey Lang has been destructed and cleared by concession companies and exploration activities of mining companies in the area. Hundred thousand hectares of dense forest have been cleared and replaced with rubber trees, cassava, and Iron mining and other metals. According to a quantitative study by Prey Lang Community Networks at commune level published in April 2015 suggests that in 33 communes within Prey Lang and its adjacent communes there are 53 concession companies in total, which have been operating in the area as of the end 2013. The concessions include 234,784.08 ha of economic land concessions, 264,693.23 ha of mining concessions, 884.20 ha of forestry concessions, and 4,000.00 ha of social land concessions.

At present, besides land concession projects, we have found that loggings of forest for business and clearance of forested land for private ownership are significantly increase. In this regard, communities claim that some government officials and local authorities have been involved. To date, tens of thousands of cubic meters of logs have been transported out of Prey Lang, hundreds of thousands of community resin trees have been felled, and hundreds of thousands of hectares of forested land have been cleared into deserts in a rampant manner without any or little control by technical officials and relevant authorities. Seeing such disaster occurring to Prey Lang, communities have been trying to protect it and prevent forestry offences and illegal encroachment, but in return they have been threatened to kill and/or intimidation from perpetrators, technical officials, and local authorities.

For years, the Prey Lang Community Networks, youths, and CSO networks have submitted petitions, complaints, and request for intervention to the Royal Government and competence institutions to establishment legal mechanism to protect Prey Lang, promote collaboration and co-manage for sustainable forest management. Obviously, on 27 April 2015, 34 Prey Lang representatives submitted a petition to seek interventions from the National Assembly, Government agencies, and the two major political parties with seats at the National Assembly, but as of now, there has been no any response yet.

We, monks; Prey Lang Community Networks; students; youth networks; Indigenous Peoples and Forestry Network (IPFN); and civil society organizations (CSOs), are seriously worried about the losses of

forestry, forested land, biodiversity and aquatic resources in the near future since no timely interventions are made. This would affect the forest cover restoration program, the carbon credit program, and in particular, hydrological source and water supply to the Tonle Sap, leading to imbalance of underground water. If the forest in Prey Lang disappeared, what would happen to the Tonle Sap, The heart of Cambodia? Moreover, this would affect or cause losses of wildlife habitats, fish spawning grounds, and livelihood of tens of thousands of communities and households who depend on forestry particularly non-timber forest products, fisheries, and, water source for agriculture and daily consumption for the people around the area. The loss of Prey Lang forest, in particular, would affect 1.5 million of fishing people who are benefitting directly from the Tonle Sap.¹

We do not object to development, but we would like to request to follow proper legal procedures, ensure fair benefit sharing from development, and minimize environmental and social impacts..

We, therefore, would like to submit the following requests to Government, MAFF, FA, Court and relevant competent institutions to:

1. Take measures and intervene immediately to prevent forestry offences in the Prey Lang area.
2. Intervene to have the draft Sub-Decree on Prey Lang Forestry Protected and Biodiversity Conservation Areas be disclosed for public consultations with the Prey Lang communities and other stakeholders.
3. Include the Prey Lang Community Networks in the four provinces as Prey Lang Joint Management areas by recognizing and legalizing through inserting the rights and roles of Prey Lang Community Networks in the Sub-Decree on Establishment of “Prey Lang” Forestry Protected and Biodiversity Conservation Areas.
4. Intervene to government officials at all levels to carry out investigation at the Prey Lang areas and ensure effective enforcement of laws related to the forestry sector, environmental impact assessment, granting of social land concessions, and illegal land grabbing by migrants.
5. Take legal actions against those officials and local authorities involved in timber business and illegal logging in Prey Lang areas.
6. Stop all forms of intimidation from the court and armed forces against Prey Lang forestry activists.
7. Preserve the Prey Lang areas as an academic and research zone for training of human resources in enhancing the environment, natural resources and eco-tourism.
8. Review the use of saw machines to ensure compliance with legal requirements as stipulated under Article 70, Chapter 13, Forestry Law, on Measures Governing Forestry Activities. If the governing is not effective, please suspend or stop imports of saw machines into Cambodia.
9. Allocate national budget for protecting Prey Lang.
10. Include Prey Lang into National REDD⁺ Program.

¹ New York Time, June 9th, 2014, “Of fish Monsoons, and the Future”.

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Network and CSOs endorsed Joint Statement:

1. Prey Lang Community Network (PLCN)
2. Community Peace-Building Network (CPN)
3. The NGO Forum on Cambodia (NGOF)
4. Community Development for Peace and Sustainability (CDPS)
5. Cambodian Youth Network (CYN)
6. OXFAM in Cambodia
7. DANMISSION
8. Peace Bridges Cambodia (PBO)
9. Community Economic Development (CED)
10. Indigenous Community Support Organization (ICSO)
11. Environment and Health Education Organization (EHEO)
12. Action for Development (AFD)
13. Organization to Promote Kuoy Culture (OPKC)
14. Build Community Voices (BCV)
15. Ponlork Khmer Organization (PKH)
16. Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee (CHRAC)
17. Cambodia Indigenous Youth Association (CIYA)
18. Community Legal Education Center (CLEC)
19. Development and Partnership in Action (DPA)
20. Environmental Protection and Development Organization (EPDO)
21. Khmer Farmer Cooperation of Agriculture Development Organization (KFCADO)
22. National Prosperity Association (NAPA)
23. Human Rights Vigilance of Cambodia (Vigilance)
24. Cambodian Rural Development Team (CRDT)
25. Human Rights Task Force (HRTF)
26. Mlup Prumvihearhor Center (MPC)
27. Krom Akphiwat Phum (KAWP)
28. Buddhist For Peace Organization (BPO)
29. Nak Aphiwat Sahokom (NAS)
30. Life with Dignity (LWD)
31. Northeastern Rural Development Organization (NRD)
32. Federation for Integrated-Development of Agriculture in Cambodia (FIDAC)

33. Association for Development Increase the Family Economics (ADIFE)
34. Urban Poor Woman Development (UPWD)
35. Mlup Baitong
36. Indigenous Rights Active Member (IRAM)
37. Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP)
38. Highlanders' Association of Cambodia (HA)
39. Our Objective Organization (OOO)
40. NGOs Environment and Climate Change Alliance (NECA)
41. Kumpuchea's Women Welfare Actions (KWWA)
42. Development Association Resource Economic (DARE)
43. Association for Development Increase the Family Economics (ADIFE)
44. Apivat Satrey (AS)
45. Rural Development Association (RDA)
46. Cambodian Indigenous Peoples Organization (CIPO)
47. Fisheries Action Coalition Team (FACT)
48. Culture and Environment Preservation Association (CEPA)
49. Pact in Cambodia (PACT)