

**Statement on Consultation on Indigenous Peoples’ Conserved Territory in Taw Oo District**

*December 20, 2019*

The consultation workshop on the revitalization and protection of Taw Oo Indigenous Peoples’ Conserved Territory was held from December 18 to 20, 2019 in Taw Oo District, Kawthoolei. A total of 70 participants, representing KNU Taw Oo District, townships, relevant departments, Karen and Karenni local ethnic communities, CBOs/CSOs, and religious leaders attended the workshop.

The goal of the consultation workshop was to revitalize and strengthen Indigenous Peoples’ Conserved Territories and areas for biocultural preservation in Taw Oo. Key topics discussed throughout the workshop included the establishment of a steering committee and an advisory board, as well as the development and implementation of future plans. These plans include research and documentation of local history, different sub-tribes of Karen and non-Karen peoples residing in Kawthoolei, village and Kaw boundaries, livelihood lands, cultural heritage sites and other protected areas.

The Burma Government and Burma Army (Tatmadaw) continue to threaten and undermine Indigenous Peoples’ governance and management of their ancestral territories. They do this in a number of ways such as using oppressive land, forest and natural resource policies and laws; designation of new protected public forests (PPF); large-scale development projects, such as road and hydroelectric dam construction; allowing illegal encroachment by outsiders; large-scale land confiscation for military bases, domestic and multinational investment; and the continued expansion of centralized governmental administration.

Regarding these actions, leaders and representatives participating in the consultation workshop reached a consensus to revitalize and strengthen existing local indigenous knowledge and practices by integrating scientific knowledge and sound environmental management to ensure that local Indigenous Peoples have peaceful and prosperous lives. This consensus includes a vision of local people living harmoniously with nature, enjoying secure livelihoods, freedom to practice their traditions and culture, the full realization of their customary land and natural resources governance rights, and community-driven sustainable development.

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