

Open Letter from Civil Society Organizations in Kachin State to the President of the People's Republic of China

Date: January 17, 2020

To

President Xi Jinping
The People's Republic of China

Respectfully presented,

1. The year 2020 marks the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the People's Republic of China, sharing a 'pauk-phaw' [fraternal] relationship. The local people of Kachin State cordially welcome the visit of the President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, to Myanmar soil as a mark of 70 years of diplomatic relations. Kachin State and China share a border, and an amicable relationship has long existed, including through the trade of Kachin jade. Today, China is among Myanmar's largest investors, with many projects slated to be carried out under the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, as well as a range of other economic activity currently operating.
2. The people of Kachin State strongly believe that foreign investment is a critical factor in the state's development. To date, there have been a number of China-backed projects in Kachin State, including the suspended Myitsone Dam and other hydropower projects, the Kanpiketee border trade zone and the Myitkyina economic zone project. China-based businessmen are also engaging in jade mining, tissue-culture bananas, sugar cane plantations, and rare earth mining in Kachin.
3. Despite the expectation of the various above-mentioned projects to support peace, stability and economic development in Kachin and promote the interests of local people, the present business operations have resulted in broad social and environmental impact including land problems and threats to nature and historical sites. Further, Chinese investment and projects in Kachin have disrespected local traditions and values and failed to consult local people. China has engaged with the central government and established bilateral trade agreements while neglecting to disclose their investment contracts to the public. We find China's border trade policies to be unjust.
4. In order to successfully carry out projects under the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor and engage in cross-border trade and investment projects and businesses in a way which supports peace, stability and development in Kachin, we recommend the following actions:
 - A. To respect international standards regarding all Chinese investment and projects in Myanmar;
 - B. To respect local historical sites, traditions and values;

- C. To publicly and transparently disclose project-related contracts and provisions agreed upon between the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the People's Republic of China;
 - D. To regularly facilitate assessments of social and environmental impacts of Chinese projects and investments in Myanmar; assessments should be conducted with full transparency, by third-party experts trusted by the local people;
 - E. To consult with local people from the outset, so as to understand their perspective regarding the implementation of projects and mega-businesses;
 - F. To ensure that local people do not suffer loss of housing, land or property on account of Chinese projects and investment, and that financial compensation for any losses be transparently provided, at an amount no less than the prevailing market price. In addition, local livelihoods should be sustained and guaranteed;
 - G. To ensure public access to information regarding Chinese investment and projects; to establish conflict resolution mechanisms and public relations offices which ensure the public's right to voice their concerns; and to carry out, at its own expense, job-oriented capacity building projects which promote sustainable livelihoods;
 - H. To avoid any investment or activity that exacerbates Kachin's armed conflict or frustrates ethnic armed groups' efforts to resolve political problems;
 - I. To establish and abide by fair cross-border trade policies
5. The Myitsone hydropower dam project, located at the confluence of the Mai and Mali Rivers, fails to comply with the above-mentioned requests, and threatens the prosperity and well-being of the people of Kachin State and Myanmar as a whole. If resumed, the Myitsone hydropower project will affect the 'pauk-phaw' relationship between China and Myanmar.
6. To ensure the successful implementation of China's projects and investment in Myanmar, including under the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, it is essential to continuously support Myanmar's peace process, and to provide aid which promotes safe and dignified return, resettlement and rehabilitation of internally displaced persons.

Endorsing Organizations
Presented on a separate sheet

Copies to:

- Office of the President
- State Counselor's Office
- Kachin State Government Office
- The Embassy of The People's Republic of China

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