



## **Karen Peace Support Network**

September 3, 2020

### **KPSN welcomes China's statement on Shwe Kokko casino city, urges investigation into Burma Army involvement in the project**

KPSN welcomes China's official statement from its Embassy in Burma on August 25, 2020, that the "Shwe Kokko New City" is not part of its Belt and Road Initiative, as claimed by Yatai International Holding Group, the Hong Kong-registered developers of the project.

We also welcome China's strong stand against "illegal gambling," which is a clear reprimand to the Yatai developers for their promotion of Shwe Kokko as a casino resort and online gambling haven.

We appreciate China's expression of support for the Burmese government's investigation into the Shwe Kokko project, but wish to make clear that the investigation will be futile unless the Burma Army's backing of the illicit project is uncovered.

As exposed in our March 2020 report "[Gambling Away Our Lands](#)," the project could never have proceeded without the authorization of the Burma Army, which fully controls the Shwe Kokko area. Top-level Burma Army backing has enabled the project to flout all investment and immigration laws, letting building continue despite official suspension of the project a year ago.

Even now, despite the recent setting up of a government investigation body, and the ongoing strict border lockdown due to Covid-19, full-scale construction is continuing and casinos remain in operation.

If the government is sincere about investigating the project, it must immediately enforce a suspension of all further construction, and stop all gambling and other illegal activities taking place on the project site.

We urge that the investigation is fully transparent, and that it examines Burma Army involvement at all levels, including the military-run Border Affairs Ministry, to uncover how the Shwe Kokko project has been able to proceed outside Burma's national laws.

KPSN reiterates our call for a moratorium on all large-scale investment projects in ethnic areas until there is lasting peace, and power is devolved under a new federal constitution granting local communities the right to decide over their own land and resources.

#### **Contact Persons:**

Naw WahKu Shee - (+66) 086 118 2261 ( Karen, English, Burmese)

Saw Ka Paw - (+66) 065 409 2280 (English, Burmese)