



Media release from the Salween Peace Park Governing Committee on World Environment Day

June 5, 2024

This year on World Environment Day, the Indigenous Karen communities of the Salween Peace Park in Mutraw District, Kawthoolei, reaffirm our commitment to protecting the environment, which is fundamental to all forms of life on Earth. Since 1973, World Environment Day (WED) has been observed and celebrated around the world. The United Nations designated WED as a global platform that inspires positive changes for the well-being of humanity and the sustainability of our planet's ecosystems. The WED theme for this year is: "Our Land, Our Future, We are Generation Restoration," with a focus on land restoration, desertification, and drought resilience.

Despite the ongoing attacks and aerial intimidation by the military regime of the State Administration Council (SAC), we have been able to organize and celebrate World Environment Day in three different locations in the Salween Peace Park. As Indigenous Peoples who have an intrinsic relationship with the natural world, every day is Environment Day. Today especially, we celebrate the significant role that nature plays in our lives, survival, and well-being. Our environment, which supports all life, has faced unprecedented interconnected ecological disasters, including climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, which require our collective and immediate actions. The celebration of WED shouldn't be taken for granted; it is an opportunity for us to raise our collective voices and call for decisive actions to address these ecological crises at local, national, regional, and international levels.

Though we have lived in precarious conditions in the midst of political crisis, conflict, war, and displacement, the Indigenous Karen communities in the Salween Peace Park continue to safeguard and preserve their ancestral land and biodiverse natural resources. Communities have established 43 Community Forests, 6 Wildlife Sanctuaries, and 9 Reserved Forests, and 288 Kaw customary lands have been demarcated, established, and revitalized in the SPP. These ecological and cultural conserved areas are crucial to minimizing the stacked ecological crises in an effective and sustainable way.

As we confront the urgent challenges of climate change, deforestation, and environmental degradation, it is crucial to recognize and support the leadership and rights of Indigenous peoples. Their wisdom and practices are invaluable resources in our collective efforts to heal and safeguard the environment for future generations. The Salween Peace Park is an assertion of self-determination rights and a means to protect our ancestral land, environment, and cultural heritage for the current and future generations to come.

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