



Statement of the Network of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand [NIPT] at the 7th AWG-SF Conference held in Chiang Mai, Thailand

ASEAN Working Group on Social Forestry (AWG-SF) Chairperson, distinguished delegates from the ASEAN Member States, distinguished guests, participants, CSOs and indigenous brothers and sisters,

I bring greetings on behalf of indigenous representatives, forest dependent communities and civil society organizations (CSOs) from Thailand who were part of the 6th CSO Forum on Social Forestry in ASEAN (9-10 June 2017) held here in Chiang Mai.

We also appreciate the presence and support of Mdme. Wilawan Wichienopparat, AWG-SF Focal Point for Thailand, who opened the Forum and delivered key remarks. We also had an open dialogue with her that we found highly encouraging to discuss more openly in this conference.

Thus, it is a great privilege to share with you our experiences and challenges in social forestry and advancing our vision about community forestry in Thailand and ASEAN at this 7th AWG-SF Conference with the theme on **“Social Forestry in Forest Landscape Restoration: Enabling Partnerships and Investments for Sustainable Development Goals.”**

The social forestry principles are encompassing and highly relevant for communities living in and around forests areas. We appreciate that it takes into account our sustainable forest management practices and our participation in decision making regarding policies affecting our lives; and it also recognizes our traditional knowledge related to forest.

As you are aware, our indigenous communities living in forest areas depend on it for their survival. We have taken care of and used our forests in a sustainable manner for a long time. For instance, villagers in Hin Laad Nai in Chiang Rai province restored their forests that were destroyed by a logging company. Today, their forests have become a model for sustainable resource use and forest management benefiting the villagers and the surrounding communities. Similarly, there are several examples of good practices initiated and managed by communities in different parts of the country. It may also be mentioned that the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) presented the “Forest Hero” award to a village leader of Hin Lad Nai in 2012.

We are in agreement that there should be strong measures to protect forestlands from illegal encroachers, extractive industries, large-scale plantations and big infrastructure development projects. At the same time, communities must be guaranteed protection from any harm or any negative impacts while implementing such measures.

We as dependents of the forests are equally concerned about the rapid decrease in forest cover in Thailand. However, it is regretful that the Thai government has applied National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) order number 64/2557 in the name of reclaiming forestlands from encroachers. The application of the above order run the risk of endangering peoples lives in several parts of the country while it may result to contributing to an increase in





forest cover from 33% to 40%. For example, some Karen villagers living in the Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex have been arrested and charged with encroachment on state-owned forests. Further, several communities are facing threat of eviction, such as in Pamak Village in Kuiburi National Park.

We have been occupying and using our traditional forestlands as caretakers blessed by our ancestors. We are not encroachers or destroyers of forests. It is not by coincidence that most of the remaining forestlands in the country are home to indigenous peoples and local communities.

We strongly believe that mobilizing citizens and democratizing governance and management of forestlands can help achieve the target set by the Thai Government. However, the revision processes of the forestry laws, such as the National Park Act and Wildlife Sanctuary Act, including the development of the draft Community Forestry Act have had limited participation of communities and CSOs. In this regard, information sharing has been insufficient and public hearings too are lacking substantive participation of indigenous peoples and local communities even though they are being affected directly.

We believe this is an important part of the context of social forestry and of FLR in Thailand. As a way forward in the spirit of cooperation and mutual contribution towards a successful social forestry and FLR, and in light of the challenges such as what I've shared, we recommend to:

1. Develop a policy and law that supports community innovations and mainstreaming of good practice in both protected and non-protected forest areas.
2. Involve communities living in and around protected areas, at all stages, in the current community land survey activities and in redefining the forest areas and boundaries under the one map policy.
3. Provide sufficient time to CSOs, indigenous peoples and local communities to participate and give inputs in the revision of National Park Law, Wildlife Sanctuary Law and Draft Community Forestry Law. This is consistent with Article 77 of the 2017 Thai Constitution, which states:
“ prior to the formulation of any law, the state will ensure that all concerned persons can submit their ideas, analyze the potential impact of said law in a comprehensive and systematic manner, and disclose these ideas and analysis to the populations concerned, and consider these in the process of formulating the law at every step”
4. Establish a multi-stakeholder platform at the national level for further deliberation on social forestry, FLR and other related issues.

The above recommendations are not only for resolving the stated challenges, but to also harness the community-centred principles of social forestry. In doing so, social forestry practice can contribute meaningfully towards achieving the goals and targets of the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) especially in Goal 15, as we together aspire to and work together under an inclusive ASEAN cooperation on social forestry to promote and protect for this region's peoples a healthy and peaceful life on land.

On this note, I invite my sister Ms. Mai Thin Yu Mon, from Chin state in Myanmar to speak further on behalf of the CSO Forum on Social Forestry in ASEAN.





Delivered by Mr. Kittisak Rattanakrajangri
Chairperson of Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)
Member of the Network of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand (NIPT)

