

## Statement of the Network of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand [NIPT] on Forestry Policy and Laws Development

We, the representatives of Indigenous People from the different regions of Thailand, have come together in a meeting of the 6<sup>th</sup> CSO Forum Advancing Social Forestry in ASEAN during 9-10 June 2017, and the AWG-SF Conference during 12-14 June 2017.

We are concerned about the Thai government's forestry policy to increase forest cover up to 40% throughout the country, by using the NCPO (National Council for Peace and Order) order number 64/2557 to reclaim forest lands from encroachers. This should not impact the poor who reside in forest areas (NCPO Order No. 66/2557). In fact, on implementation, the poor have still suffered impacts from this policy. For example, some Karen persons who live in the Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex have been arrested and have been legally charged with encroachment on state-owned forests. In fact, this is land that the affected people has traditionally used for a considerable time. In addition, some communities are at risk of eviction from the national park, such as Pamak Village in Kuiburi National Park. Further, the current revision of forestry laws, e.g. the National Park Act, Wildlife Sanctuary Act, and the development of a Community Forestry Act are without any true participation of indigenous communities and civil society organizations. There has been insufficient information sharing and public hearings, despite the fact that these reviews have significant impact on the lives of indigenous and local communities.

These efforts show that government organizations have no real understanding of efforts directed at social forestry and no interest in the development of forested areas for societies which recognize the importance and respect the rights of local indigenous communities living in and dependent on these forests for their traditional customs and livelihoods. This is also counter to the commitment of the Thai government which has ratified instruments such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples [UNDRIP].

NIPT and its allies request that the Thai government:

1. Follow the principles of social forestry, which engages communities living in and near forests in sustainable forest management, participation in policy decision making affecting them and, recognition of indigenous traditional forest-related knowledge in instituting forest policy revision and development of new forestry laws.
2. Provide opportunities for civil society organizations [CSOs] and indigenous people to participate in giving input into drafting a revision of the National Parks Law, Wildlife Sanctuary Law, Draft Community Forestry Law through extending the time frame to allow sufficient time for understanding and fully contributing their ideas to this draft. 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 . . . ”*

We are confident that this request will be favorably responded to by the Department of Forestry, the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plants Conservation, the National Legislative Assembly, and concerned agencies. This will reduce social disparity and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which Thailand has already accepted.

## Signatories

1. Network of Indigenous People in Thailand [NIPT]
2. Karen Network for Culture and Environment, Ta-naosri branch
3. Network of Indigenous Women in Thailand
4. Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand Association [IMPECT]
5. Foundation of Indigenous Peoples Education and Environment [IPF]
6. Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact [AIPP]
7. Highland Environmental Network