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MEDIA RELEASE, BRUNO MANSER FONDS, BASEL / SWITZERLAND

“Give us your forest – and we’ll give you a water pipe.”

Logging giant, Samling Global, justifies the use of force against indigenous communities in Sarawak’s last primeval rainforests.

Samling Global Ltd., the Malaysian multinational logging corporation, for the first time acknowledges that it is having recourse to force against indigenous Penan communities in order to get hold of timber resources in a forest concession certified for “sustainable” logging by the Malaysian Timber Certification Council (MTCC).

“Unfortunately, despite positive negotiations, a few members of the Long Benali community continued erecting blockades to assert their claims over land and forest areas. These blockades were subsequently dismantled by the authorities,” Samling writes in a media statement released on 13 September 2007. According to the company, it has been appointed by the Sarawak state government to lead a task force “to attain cooperation of Long Benali”.

The land occupied by the Long Benali community in Borneo’s Upper Baram region is a key access point to one of the last tracts of primeval rainforest in the East Malaysian state of Sarawak. For more than twenty years, the Penan have resorted to peaceful blockades of logging roads to prevent the logging companies from depleting their source of livelihood. Since 1998, the Penan have been waiting for the local courts to hear a case they filed against Samling and the State of Sarawak, in which they claim native customary rights over their traditional lands deep in the jungles of Borneo.

It came as a shock to the Penan when they learned in January 2005 that the MTCC had awarded Samling a certificate for “sustainable” logging of their last remaining virgin jungles. More than 600 Penan immediately sent a protest letter to the MTCC, saying that the certification had been issued without their informed consent, and the elected headmen of eight Penan communities launched a formal appeal against the certification.

In spite of all this opposition, Samling has continued with its encroachments into

the Penan rainforests with the blessing of the MTCC and asked the security forces to clear a blockade of a logging road near Long Benali on 7 February 2007 – five days before the Malaysian Government signed the “Heart of Borneo Declaration”, in which it has committed itself to conserving the biodiversity of the Bornean jungles, together with neighbouring Brunei and Indonesia.

In its recent media release, Samling states that Long Benali was given water pipes “to trunk clean water to the village”. However, the company fails to mention that the village declined to accept this “gift” from Samling, whose logging activities are the main reason for the pollution of drinking-water supplies in the Upper Baram region.

There may be “voluntary gifts” to the Penan from the company, but when it comes to the question of rights, Samling makes its standpoint unmistakably clear. “The Penan have no rights to the forest,” said Samling executive James Ho in an interview recently broadcast on Swiss television. Moreover, Samling’s army of lawyers are actively working to prevent them from obtaining any rights to the forests they have lived in for centuries.

What you can do:

- PLEASE NOTE THAT PERSONAL LETTERS AND FAXES ARE MORE EFFECTIVE THAN E-MAILS IN SUCH A CAMPAIGN -

1) Write a polite personal letter to the CEO of the Malaysian Timber Certification Council, asking him to revoke the certification of Samling’s Sela’an-Linau Forest Management Unit:

Malaysian Timber Certification Council,
Mr. Chew Lye Teng,
Chief Executive Officer,
19F, Level 19, Tower 1 Menara PGM
No. 8, Jalan Pudu Ulu, Cheras,
56100 Kuala Lumpur
MALAYSIA

FAX: +60 3 9200 6008

E-mail: chewlt@mtcc.com.my

2) Write a polite personal letter to the international banks which sponsored Samling’s public listing in March 2007, asking them to stop supporting Samling

and to pay back the profits of the Samling public listing to the indigenous communities whose forest is being destroyed by Samling:

Credit Suisse Group
Mr. Walter Kielholz, Chairman
Paradeplatz 8
8070 Zurich
Switzerland

FAX: +41 44 333 56 79
E-Mail: walter.kielholz@credit-suisse.com

HSBC Holdings plc
Mr. Michael F Geoghegan
Group Chief Executive
Level 41, 8 Canada Square
London E14 5HQ
United Kingdom

FAX: +44 20 7992 4623
E-Mail: michaelgeoghegan@hsbc.com

Macquarie Group
Mr. Allan E. Moss
Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer
No. 1 Martin Place
Sydney NSW 2000
AUSTRALIA

Fax: +61 28232 3350
E-mail: allanemoss@macquarie.com

3) Write a polite personal letter to the Malaysian Prime Minister, Abdullah Badawi, congratulating him on his recent statement that Malaysia's remaining rainforests ought to be protected and asking him to ensure the recognition of the Penan's rights to their forests in Sarawak.

Dato' Seri Abdullah bin Haji Ahmad Badawi,
Prime Minister of Malaysia
Perdana Putra Building
62505 Putrayaja

MALAYSIA

FAX: +60 3 8888 3444

E-mail: ppm@pmo.gov.my

4) Write a polite personal letter to the Samling management, asking the company to recognise the Penan's rights to the forests and to stop logging Sarawak's last remaining primeval forests.

Wisma Samling Head Office

Mr. Yaw Chee Ming

Chief Executive Officer

Lot 296, Jalan Temenggong Datuk Oyong Lawai Jau

98000 Miri, Sarawak

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