



**08/04/2019 – Regional Forum on Forests and People - Nyaung Daw, Kamoethway, Dawei District, Tanintharyi Region**

**Statement released by indigenous and forest dependent communities demanding recognition of indigenous and local community conserved territories and areas (ICCAs – Territories of Life)**

On 8<sup>th</sup> April 2019, for the Regional Forum on People and Forests, indigenous and forest dependent peoples from Tanintharyi Region released the following statement:

- Today, 227 indigenous and forest dependent people from Paw Klo, Kamoethway, Tanintharyi Township, Katan PPF, Palaw Reserved Forest, Htin Mae PPF, Lenya, Monorone and Heinzel Kalay Aung Reserved Forest gathered in Nyaung Daw village, Kamoethway, Dawei District in Tanintharyi Region for a public forum on people and forests. The event brought together indigenous and forest dependent communities, CSOs, INGOs, EAOs and other stakeholders to discuss forest governance and the relationship between indigenous people and the forest.
- Through the event, participants shared, discussed and debated different approaches to forest governance, contrasting indigenous forest management practices with government rules and regulations. Participants talked about how indigenous people live harmoniously with the forest and how the forest is the lifeblood of indigenous people, providing them with food, water, and shelter. They also spoke about the importance of customary management systems underpinned by the wisdom, knowledge and values of their forefathers in conserving the forest and biodiversity. Despite the importance of indigenous people in sustaining healthy forests and ecosystems in Tanintharyi Region, indigenous territories and forest management systems are under threat from government laws and policies, which prioritize business and profit over the lives of local communities and sustenance of the forest.
- During the discussion, participants also learnt that international experience has shown that recognizing indigenous territories is the most effective way of protecting forests, wildlife and biodiversity. These areas are now globally recognised and referred to as Indigenous and local

community conserved territories and areas (ICCAs). ICCAs – Territories of Life, as they are widely referred to cover vast expanses of the world's most important remaining natural landscapes and biodiversity. It was also learned that without the recognition of community territories of life it would simply not be possible for the Myanmar government to meet its conservation targets.

- With respect to this, participants call on the government, the KNU, businesses and international and national civil society organisations and the international community to recognise their efforts in conserving and managing their forests in their ancestral territories. Through recognizing ICCAs and the vital role that indigenous communities play in protecting landscapes of natural importance, Myanmar can achieve a win-win situation, one that will both protect the livelihoods of local communities and effectively conserve Myanmar's vast forests and biodiversity.

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