

**OPEN LETTER TO THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA ON THE INFLUX OF CHINESE DAM  
BUILDING COMPANIES TO BURMA/MYANMAR**

December 3, 2007

His Excellency President Hu Jintao  
Zhongnanhai, Xichengqu, Beijing  
People's Republic of China

Dear President Hu,

We, the Burma Rivers Network and organizations and individuals listed below, are writing to express grave concerns about the many large hydropower projects that have recently been agreed upon between Chinese corporations and Burma/Myanmar's military regime in ethnic lands where ceasefires are tenuous or there is active conflict. We commend the Chinese government's 'peaceful development' policy guiding foreign relations and we respectfully request the Chinese government to consider the repercussions of these transnational development projects, to review the procedures and laws regulating such investments, and to release information regarding the dam plans to affected communities.

In recent years the number of Chinese businesses involved in hydropower projects in Burma/Myanmar has increased dramatically. At least ten Chinese corporations have been named in connection with these dams on the Irrawaddy, Salween (Nu), Shweli and Paunglaung rivers, including Gezhouba Group Co. (CGGC), Sinohydro Corporation, Yunnan Machinery and Equipment Import and Export Co., and China Power Investment Corporation. The dams would represent over US\$30 billion in investment. This would be by far the biggest inflow of money to a military regime that Transparency International rates as the world's second most corrupt. Revenues would be used to pay for the regime's arms acquisitions and its military operations that oppress the people.

The current unrest in Burma and the junta's brutal handling of the recent highlights the enormous political, financial, and technical risks associated with these hydropower investments in Burma. All of the planned sites of the dams in Burma/Myanmar are in ethnic areas that have experienced devastation from decades of civil war. Burning and looting of villages, forced relocation, systematic sexual violence, and extra-judicial killing by the regime's troops are commonplace. Any dam construction will therefore compound the suffering of ethnic people living in both ceasefire and non-ceasefire areas, many of whom have already become internally displaced people or refugees. Furthermore, the impacts of the proposed dams in border areas will lead to instability and increased refugees flows into China creating further opportunities for the spread of HIV/AIDS and drug trafficking into China.

The entire decision-making process for the planning and implementation of the hydropower development projects has been conducted in secrecy, with the barest minimum of information revealed. There has been a total absence of public participation among the dam-affected communities in Burma. So far there has been no evidence that any social impact assessments (SIA) or adequate and timely environmental impact assessments (EIA) have been carried out for the dams, despite agreements having been concluded and in some cases construction having already begun. The vast majority of the communities who will bear the negative impacts of dam construction will get no benefit or compensation.

There are many international standards applicable to the construction, operation and financing of hydroelectric projects. The World Commission on Dams' guidelines are the most comprehensive, requiring EIAs as well as public participation and disclosure. The need for EIAs and consideration of the rights of indigenous peoples are widely recognized in international law. The international community has increasingly recognized the need for corporate responsibility, as laid out in the draft *UN Norms on the Responsibility of Transnational Corporations*, the *UN Global Compact*, and the *OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises*.

In recent years, China has included environmental assessment, public participation, environmental reporting, and resettlement benefits in its own laws and policies. Since 2003, the *Environmental Impact Assessment Law* has required EIAs for all major development projects; the process also includes public participation and the release of the EIA. The State Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) issued a *Bulletin on Information Disclosure for Corporate Environmental Performance* in 2003 which recognizes the need for corporations to report on the environmental impacts of their projects and release them to the public. Furthermore, in 2006 the State Council implemented Order No. 471 *Regulations on Land Requisition Compensation and Residents Resettlement in Construction of Large and Medium-sized Water Conservancy and Hydroelectric Projects*. While it is understood that these laws and regulations govern Chinese businesses within China, they present an opportunity for China to extend its same commendable domestic standards to its projects in other countries.

Again, we commend the Chinese government's 'peaceful development' policy guiding foreign relations. However, this official position is being undermined by the unregulated actions of Chinese corporations investing in countries such as Burma/Myanmar. By constructing, operating, and/or financing hydroelectric projects in volatile areas without EIAs or SIAs, participation and acceptance of the affected people, or transparency as to the dam and resettlement plans, the Chinese corporations involved in Burma/Myanmar are not contributing to development for peace. Concerns have been expressed that China's moves to increasingly regulate companies domestically are leading to a rush of companies relocating to countries where there are much lower standards. Given the likelihood of increased political tensions and violence in the areas surrounding the dam sites, we urge the Chinese government to also consider the safety and security of Chinese citizens and companies working in these areas.

Many of the dam plans involving Chinese hydropower corporations in Burma/Myanmar are still in the initial stages, although some of them are rapidly progressing. This presents an opportunity for the Chinese government to put its policy of 'peaceful development' into practice in relation to transboundary development projects, incorporating relevant international standards.

In this spirit, we respectfully request the Chinese government to monitor and regulate Chinese corporations operating and financing hydropower development and other natural resource extraction projects abroad. Businesses should be made to comply with Chinese national and international standards ensuring people's informed participation in decision-making and accountability. Specifically, this includes:

1. Carrying out comprehensive environmental and social impact assessments (EIAs and SIAs) on projects abroad and make those publicly available, in order to adequately determine the feasibility of projects before concluding any agreements.
2. Keeping affected communities informed from the outset of all plans regarding hydropower development projects and involved in decision-making regarding those projects. This includes publicly releasing dam feasibility studies, investment and financial agreements, MOUs, MOAs, and clear information regarding responsible parties.

We look forward to a positive response.

Respectfully,

Burma Rivers Network

*Burma Rivers Network is comprised of representatives of different ethnic organizations from potential dam affected communities in Burma. Our mission is to protect the health of river ecosystems and sustain biodiversity, rights and livelihoods of communities.*

Endorsed by the following civil society organizations and 50,000 individual

## Burmese Civil Society Organizations

1. All Burma Muslim Union (ABMU)
2. Amnesty International (Australia)
3. Anti Tamanthi Dam Campaign Committee (ATDCC)
4. Arakan National Council
5. Assistance Association for Political Prisoners-Burma
6. All Arakan Student Youth Congress (AASYC)
7. All Burma Federation of Student Unions
8. All Kachin Students and Youth Union (AKSYU)
9. Arakan Oil Watch
10. Back Pack Health Worker Team (BPHWT)
11. Beyond Bars
12. Burma Campaign India (BCI)
13. Burma Issue (BI)
14. Burma Women Union (BWU)
15. Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO)
16. Chin Students Union (CSU)
17. Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People (CIDKP)
18. Community Learning Centre
19. Democratic Party for a New Society
20. Earthrights Students Union
21. Ethnic Committee Development Forum (E.C.D.F) comprised of
  - a. Kachin Relief and Development Committee
  - b. Kachin Development Network Group
  - c. Karen Office for Relief and Development (KORD)
  - d. Karenni Social Welfare and Development Center
  - e. Network for Chin Community Development
  - f. Mon Relief and Development Committee
  - g. All Arakan Student Youth Congress
  - h. Shan Relief and Development Committee
22. Federation of Trade Union Kawthoolei (FTUK)
23. Gisspa Media Group
24. Human Right Foundation of Monland (HRFM)
25. Images Asia Environment Desk
26. Kachin Development Network Group (KDNG)
27. Kachin Environment Organization (KEO)
28. Kachin National Organization
29. Kachin Relief and Development Committee (KRDC)
30. Kachin State National Congress for Democracy
31. Kachin Women Association Thailand
32. Kachinland Foundation
33. Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KESAN)
34. Karen Education Working Union (KEWU)
35. Karen Human Right Group (KHRG) (call Saw Shar Day Htoo 085- 729 7790)
36. Karen Information Center (KIC)
37. Karen National Union (KNU)
38. Karen Office of Relief and Development (KORD)
39. Karen River Watch (KRW)

40. Karen Student Network Group (KSNG)
41. Karen Teacher Working Group (KTWG)
42. Karen Women Organization (KWO)? (call Ta Mla Saw 081-026 6738)
43. Karen Youth Organization (KYO)
44. Karenni Computer Education Institute (KCEI)
45. Karenni Development and Research Group (KDRG)
46. Karenni Document Centre (KDC)
47. Karenni Ever Green (KEG)
48. Karenni Mobile Medical Team (KMMT)
49. Karenni National Women Organization (KnWO)
50. Karenni National Youth
51. Karenni Refugee Committee (KnRC)
52. Karenni Social welfare and Development Centre ( KSWDC)
53. Karenni Society in New Zeland
54. Karenni Student Union (KSU)
55. Karenni Youth Organization ( KnYO)
56. Kaw Tai (Waiting to Confirm)
57. Kayan Women Union ( KyWU)
58. Kuki National Organization (KNO)
59. Kuki Peoples Congress (KPC)
60. Kuki Students Democratic Front (KSDF)
61. Kuki Women Human Rights Organization
62. Lahu Nationality Development Organization (L.N.D.O)
63. Mae Tao Clinic (MTC)
64. Mon Relief and Development Committee (MRDC)
65. Mon Youth Progressive Organization (MYPO)
66. Nationalities Youth Forum (NYF) compile of
67. Nay Chi Labour Union (NCLU)
68. Network for Economic and Environment Development (NEED)
69. Network for Chin Community Development (NCCD)
70. NY Forum (India)
71. Opportunity for Poor Children (OPC)
72. Oversea Mon Women Organization
73. Palaung Youth Network Group (Taang)
74. Palaung Women's Organization (PWO)
75. Pa-O National Development Organization (PNDO)
76. Pa- O Women Union (PWU)
77. Pa-O Youth Democratic Organization (PYDO)
78. Pa- O Youth Organization (PYO)
79. People's Defense Force
80. People's Liberation Front (Burma)
81. Rakhaing Environment and Human Right Watch
82. Refugee Desk- The Other Media
83. Save Centre of Ethnic Women Border Area (SCOEWBA)
84. Shan Democratic Union (SDU)
85. Shan Health Committee (SHC)
86. Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF)
87. Shan Relief and Development Committee (SRDC)
88. Shan Sapawa Environmental Organization (Sapawa)
89. Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN)

90. Shan Youth Network Group (SYNG)
91. Shan Youth Power (SYP)
92. Shwe Gas Campaign Committee (SGCC)
93. Shew Gas Movement (Thailand)
94. Student and Youth Congress of Burma (SYCB) comprised of (waiting to confirm)
  - a. All Arakan Students and Youth Congress (AASYC)
  - b. All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF)
  - c. All Burma Students League (ABSL)
  - d. All Kachin Students and Youth Union (AKSYU)
  - e. Arakan League for Democracy-Youth (ALD-Youth)
  - f. Democratic Party for a New Society-Youth (DPNS-Youth)
  - g. Karen Youth Organization (KYO)
  - h. Kayan New Generation Youth (KNGY)
  - i. Kuki Students Democratic Front (KSDF)
  - j. Mon Youth Progressive Organization (MYPO)
  - k. National League for Democracy/Liberated Area-Youth (NLD-LA/Youth)
  - l. Naga Youth Organization (NYO)
  - m. Pa-O Youth Organization (PYO)
  - n. Tavoy Youth Organization (TYO)
  - o. Zomi Students and Youth Organization (ZSYO)
95. The Other Media (TOM)
96. Women's League of Burma (WLB) comprised of
  - a. Burmese Women's Union (BWU)
  - b. Kachin Women's Association – Thailand (KWAT)
  - c. Karen Women's Organization (KWO)
  - d. Karenni National Women's Organization (KNOW)
  - e. Kuki Women's Human Rights Organization (KWHRO)
  - f. Lahu Women's Organization (LWO)
  - g. Palaung Women's Organization (PWO)
  - h. Pa-O Women's Union (PWU)
  - i. Rakhing Women's Union (RWU)
  - j. Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN)
  - k. Tavoyan Women's Union (TWU)
  - l. Women's Rights & Welfare Association of Burma (WRWAB)
97. Yaung Chi Oo Workers Association
98. Zomi Students and Youth Organization (ZSYO)

## International Organization

- 1.AID/WATCH Australia
- 2.The Corner House, UK
- 3.Altsean-Burma ,Thailand
- 4.Wana Mandhira Foundation, Indonesia

- 5.Burma Global Action Network
- 6.Forest Peoples Programme, UK
- 7.Solidarity Committees of Galiza, Europe
- 8.Probe International , Canada
- 9.NGO FORUM ON ADB, Philippines
- 10.Water and Energy users's Federation, NepaL
- 11.Legal rights and Natural resources centers, Philippines
- 12.Focus on the Global South, Thailand
- 13.Pravila Igry organization, Kazakustan
- 14.Piankhi research group, Sudan/UK
- 15.Onggi River Movement, Mongolia
- 16.GGFDM, Mongolia
- 17.DPA, Cambodia
- 18.Global Environmental Forum,Japan
- 18.Globalization Monitor, Hong Kong
- 19.Japan Center for a sustainable Environment and society, Japan
- 20.Association of Saramaka Authority ,Suriname
- 21.International Rivers, USA
- 22.Mekong Watch, Japan
- 23.EarthRights International Southeast Asia, Thailand
- 24.International Accountability Project, USA