

Monday April 17th, 2023

To: Lawrence Chia, CEO Samling Group of Companies  
[lawchia@samling.com.my](mailto:lawchia@samling.com.my)

CC:

Datuk Patinggi (DR) Abang Johari, Premier and Minister of Urban Development Natural Resources  
[premier@sarawak.gov.my](mailto:premier@sarawak.gov.my)

James Ho, COO Samling Group  
[hojk@samling.com.my](mailto:hojk@samling.com.my)

Datuk Hamden Haji Mohammad, Director, Forest Department Sarawak  
[hamden@sarawak.gov.my](mailto:hamden@sarawak.gov.my),

Dato Sri Haji Fadillah bin Haji Yusof, Minister of Plantation and Commodities  
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Michael Berger, Secretary General/CEO, PEFC, Geneva  
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Sabrina Mawasi, Acting Chief Executive Office, Malaysian Timber Certification Council  
[ceo@mtcc.com.my](mailto:ceo@mtcc.com.my)

**Subject: Concern about lawsuit against SAVE Rivers**

Dear Mr Chia,

The undersigned organizations ask that Samling withdraw its legal suit against SAVE Rivers and its board members — which is scheduled to go to trial May 15th 2023 at the Miri High Court.

**The 160 below organizations urge Samling to respect Indigenous rights in Sarawak and the right of civil society organizations to publish community concerns as a matter of public interest.**

The suit claims SAVE Rivers made defamatory statements about the company in several press releases throughout 2020 and 2021. SAVE Rivers published legitimate concerns voiced by Indigenous communities subject to logging, including encroachment into conservation areas and a failure to obtain free, prior and informed consent on multiple counts. Samling is seeking an apology, an injunction stopping SAVE Rivers from reporting community claims, and damages in the sum of RM5,000,000.

The [Business and Human Rights Resource Centre](#), the [United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), among others have recognised that this suit may be classified as strategic litigation against public participation (SLAPP). SLAPP suits are a growing international trend used by corporate players to silence and bankrupt human rights and environmental defenders.

**The following signatories fully support SAVE Rivers and the Indigenous communities expressing concerns over certification, and demand that Samling refrain from legal action against civil society organizations and local communities. These organizations come from every continent around the world and hold a great deal of expertise in the fields of environmental justice, law and human rights.**

We urge Samling to immediately drop the SLAPP suit against SAVE Rivers and its directors, to pay costs, provide all relevant documents in a transparent manner and to engage in meaningful consultations with local communities about their lands.

Signed,

1. AbibiNsroma Foundation
2. All Burma Indigenous Peoples' Alliance (ABIPA)
3. African Law Foundation (AFRILAW)
4. Agora Society Malaysia
5. Agrarian Resource Center (ARC)
6. Aliran
7. Alliance of River Three
8. ANGOC

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9. Ara Sati Hakiki
10. Arbeitsgruppe Schweiz Kolumbien ask!
11. Asia Indigenous People's Network on Extractive Industries and Energy (AIPNEE)
12. Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP)
13. Asociación SAVIA
14. Australian Forests and Climate Alliance
15. Badan Registrasi Wilayah Adat (BRWA)
16. Baramkini
17. Baranusa
18. Biodiversity Conservation Center
19. Biofuelwatch
20. Blue Dalian
21. Bob Brown Foundation
22. Borneo Bengkel
23. Both ENDS
24. Bruno Manser Fonds
25. Campax
26. Canopée
27. Catama
28. The Centre for Environmental and Minority Policy Studies (CEMiPoS)
29. Centre for Human Rights Research and Advocacy (CENTHRA)
30. Centre for Independent Journalism (CIJ)
31. Centre for Indigenous Research & Community-Led Engagement (CIRCLE)
32. Center for Orang Asli Concerns (COAC)
33. CISBAY
34. Climate Tracker
35. Community Legal Education Center (CLEC)
36. CUT (Clean Up the Tropical Timber Trade)
37. Développement du peuple Pygmée (PIDP)
38. Dogwood Alliance

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39. Earth Island Institute
40. Endorois Welfare Council
41. Environmental Paper Network
42. Fern
43. Feyerabend Foundation
44. Forest Peoples Programme
45. ForestCom
46. Free Svydovets Group
47. Freedom Film Network
48. Friends of Bukit Dinding
49. Friends of the Earth Australia
50. Friends of the Earth England, Wales & Northern Ireland
51. Friends of the Earth Japan
52. Gana youths club
53. GCRAC (Gerenai Community Representative Action Committee)
54. Global Atlas of Environmental Justice (EJAtlas.org)
55. Global Human Rights Foundation Malaysia
56. Global Soil Biodiversity Initiative (GSBI)
57. Green Development Advocates
58. Greenpeace Malaysia
59. Greenpeace Southeast Asia Indonesia
60. Greenpeace Switzerland
61. Greenpeace USA
62. Heartwood
63. Swiss Church Aid HEKS/EPER
64. HUTAN Group
65. ICCA Consortium
66. ICCA Consortium Southeast Asia
67. Indigenous Peoples Rights International
68. International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Netherlands

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69. Japan Tropical Forest Action Network (JATAN)
70. Jaringan Ekologi Dan Iklim
71. Jaringan Kampung Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia
72. Jaringan Kerja Pemetaan Partisipatif (Indonesian Community Mapping Network)
73. Jaringan Orang Asal (JOAS) Malaysia
74. Jaringan Orang Asal (JOAS) Sarawak
75. Karen Environmental and Social Action Network (KAREN)
76. KERUAN Organisation
77. Klscach CRC
78. Koalition für Konzernverantwortung
79. Komunitas Teras
80. KRuHA - people's coalition for the right to water
81. Land is Life
82. Leefmilieu
83. Liberty Victoria
84. MAJU
85. Manipur Nature Society
86. Milieudefensie / Friends of the Earth Netherlands
87. Movement for Change, Sarawak (MoCS)
88. National Economic Empowerment Coalition (NEEC)
89. Netherlands Centre for Indigenous Peoples
90. NGO Ecoclub
91. Non-Timber Forest Products Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP)
92. North South Initiative
93. NTFP EP Networking Forum India
94. NTFP EP Philippines
95. NTFP-EP Indonesia
96. Oil & Gas Network
97. Padi Indonesia
98. Pangrok Sulap



99. PanNature
100. Parti Sosialis Malaysia
101. Perkumpulan HuMa Indonesia
102. Persatuan Kesedaran dan Keadilan Iklim Malaysia (Klima Action Malaysia -KAMY)
103. Persatuan Masyarakat Tering Miri
104. Persatuan Pemeliharaan dan Pemuliharaan Alam Sekitar Sarawak (PELIHARA)
105. Persatuan Pewaris Bahagian Miri (PEWARIS)
106. Persatuan Sahabat Wanita
107. Pertubuhan Pelindung Khazanah Alam
108. Pro Natura / Friends of the Earth Switzerland
109. Protect Our Woods
110. Protection International (PI)
111. Public Eye
112. PUSAKA KAULA NTB
113. Pusat Kommas
114. Rainforest Action Network
115. Rainforest Information Centre
116. Rainforest Rescue/Rettet den Regenwald
117. Resguardo Indígena Cañamomo Lomapieta
118. RimbaWatch
119. Ruang Komuniti P320
120. Sajogyo Institute
121. Sarawak Campaign Committee
122. Sarawak Dayak Iban Association (SADIA)
123. Saya Anak Bangsa Malaysia (SABM)
124. Seacology
125. Shah Alam Community Forest (SACF) Society
126. Shaq Koyok Orang Asli Activist
127. Sierra Leone Land Alliance
128. Simpul Layanan Pemetaan Partisipatif (SLPP) Makassar

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129. Simpul Layanan Pemetaan Partisipatif (SLPP) Sultra
130. Simpul Layanan Pemetaan Partisipatif Sulawesi Tengah (SLPP-ST)
131. Society for the Rights of Indigenous People of Sarawak (SCRIPS)
132. Society for Threatened Peoples (STP) Switzerland
133. Solidar Suisse
134. Solifonds
135. Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM)
136. Sustainable Development Network Malaysia (SUSDEN Malaysia)
137. Teoh Beng Hock Trust for Democracy
138. Terabai Kenyalang Heritage Association of Sarawak
139. Terre des Hommes Schweiz
140. The 14% Project
141. The Altai Project
142. The Borneo Project
143. The Gaia Foundation
144. The Marginalised Mirror
145. The Oakland Institute
146. The Tuyang Initiative
147. The Wilderness Society (Australia)
148. Third World Network
149. TONIBUNG
150. Treat Every Environment Special
151. Trend Asia
152. Tropenbos Viet Nam
153. Tropical Rainforest Conservation & Research Center (TRCRC)
154. UCO SOLUTIONS
155. University of Malaya Association of New Youth (UMANY)
156. Voice of Youtharian
157. Wilderness Committee
158. Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF)

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159. Working Group ICCAs Indonesia
160. Yayasan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Hutan Indonesia (YaPSHI)