



## Save Sarawak's Rivers Network (SAVE Rivers)

*Jaringan Selamatkan Sungai-Sungai Sarawak*

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Richard Taylor  
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### **The IHA Congress 2013 in Sarawak**

Miri/Basel, 25 April 2013

Dear Mr Taylor,

We are writing to you to express our deep concern over the upcoming IHA Congress in Kuching, Sarawak, in May 2013 as well as the IHA's general role supporting Sarawak's dam-building initiative.

You have already been informed about the scale and the social and environmental impacts of Sarawak's planned dam projects as well as their questionable economic necessity. In this letter, we would like to directly address our demands concerning the participation of Sarawakian civil society at your congress and to raise questions about your involvement with the Sarawak government and Sarawak Energy.

#### **Involving Affected Communities**

IHA has stressed the importance of integrating affected communities into dam planning and implementation. Yet, the voices of communities affected by the dams in Sarawak have been excluded from your congress because they would be forced to pay the outrageous delegate fee. By pricing low-income communities out of your conference, you are complicit in denying affected communities a voice. While the IHA touts Sarawak

Energy's treatment of affected communities, the very people affected by dam building in Sarawak will not be present to represent their reality.

The congress will also provide Sarawak Energy and the Sarawak government with an international platform to present their dam building plans to financial and government institutions. Yet, Sarawak Energy will give a one-sided perspective on their dams initiative. If the congress is to enter into any balanced and meaningful discussion on the Sarawak dams initiative, then it must extend an invitation for affected communities to participate. Indeed, it is in the interest of IHA delegates that a balanced view is presented. Only when the full risks have been made clear can they make an informed decision as to whether or not to their companies should invest in Sarawak dams.

### Supporting A Corrupt Regime

In addition, we are sure that you have been following recent events in Sarawak and that you are aware of the allegations of corruption against Sarawak's long-serving Chief Minister Taib Mahmud. We would also like to highlight the recent film expose by Global Witness entitled "Inside Malaysia's Shadow State" which explains how members of the Taib family are abusing their family connections to illegally make profits. This chain of corruption reaches Sarawak Energy and calls into question the company's performance.

### Our Demands:

We, the affected communities and the undersigning supporting NGOs therefore demand that IHA give free access to the congress to at least 20 affected people and an opportunity to talk at the opening session as well as any session that promotes the Sarawak dams. Other sessions will also be appropriate; for example, session 5B on "Consent: can we agree?".

We also are demanding answers to a few questions:

- 1) How does IHA ensure that Sarawak Energy, a dam builder linked with corruption, doesn't abuse the IHA and its Hydropower Sustainability Assessment Protocol (HSAP) by presenting itself to an international audience as "sustainable," and hiding poor practice and corruption?
- 2) Why hasn't the Murum Dam's HSAP assessment been made publicly available?
- 3) How can you state that applying the HSAP to the Murum Dam has actually improved external stakeholder relations, when affected communities so clearly reject the dam?
- 4) What is IHA's comment on the Global Witness video, which uncovered systematic corruption by the Taib family?
- 5) What is IHA's comment on Taib's statement that the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), currently investigating the accumulation of his wealth, is "naughty and dishonest"?
- 6) The state-owned Borneo Convention Centre, the venue of the congress, was built by CMS, a company owned by the Taib family, and is being managed by the Taib family. Why is IHA renting this congress centre and thereby supporting the family of Sarawak's corrupt Chief Minister?

We request a reply to our questions as well as our demand for participation of affected communities no later than the 10th of May, in order to allow reasonable time to facilitate community participation in the congress.

Yours sincerely,



Peter Kallang  
Chairman  
SAVE Rivers  
Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia



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**The Borneo Project**

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- WWF International
- Transparency International
- Hydro Tasmania
- Bob Brown, Hobart
- IFC
- Norwegian Ministry of Petroleum and Energy
- Norad