



Media Release

(FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE)

Sarawak Timber Industry Demands Proof, Not Baseless Accusations

The Sarawak Timber Association (STA) is outraged by the recent unfounded allegations made in a report issued by Human Rights Watch and several Sarawak-based non-governmental organisations (NGOs) against the Sarawak timber industry.

They had alleged that Sarawak's millions of hectares of ancient rainforests are at risk of being razed for timber and oil palm plantations supplying international markets leading to deforestation and violations of Indigenous peoples' rights.

STA maintains that these claims are a blatant attempt to tarnish the reputation of an industry that has made significant strides in sustainable forest management (SFM).

Sarawak's commitment to SFM is evident through the State's stringent sustainable policies, conservation efforts, and community engagement initiatives, in collaboration with international bodies including the ITTO. Guided by these policies, the industry actively adopts certified practices, implements responsible harvesting methods, and invests in sustainable technologies, resulting in numerous certified Forest Management Units and adherence to international standards. We have also worked tirelessly to ensure free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) from affected communities.

STA has always welcomed and consistently supported the NGOs as third-party observers to monitor the well-being of the industry. So why the sudden call for this damaging classification? Why should Sarawak be labelled as "high risk" due to one isolated incident? Have the NGOs engaged in dialogue with the Sarawak government and STA to make any effort to verify their claims before making sweeping allegations and demanding for Sarawak to be labelled as high risk

over the whole industry? Is it not an unjust and vicious act to label the whole industry as high risk over one allegedly unjust act? If indeed proven to be so on the one specific incident, then punish that act accordingly not genocidally put everyone in the same cage.

STA urges the EU to at least conduct a full investigation into these allegations, involving all relevant stakeholders and determine whether the concerns raised are genuinely reflective of the industry at large. The future of Sarawak's timber industry, and the livelihoods of the thousands of people it supports, depends on a balanced and just decision, not one driven by isolated cases.

The Sarawak timber industry is a vital contributor to the nation's economy and the livelihoods of thousands of people. A hasty decision to label Sarawak as "high risk" based solely on unfounded allegations would be a grave injustice that could bring tremendous harm to Sarawak and the people's livelihood. Is this the modus operandi of the NGOs or is this what the NGOs want to see?

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28 October 2024