



**PRESS STATEMENT
(FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE)**

STA Supports Formation of Task Force to Address Floating Wood Debris Incident

STA is grateful to the Forest Department Sarawak (FDS) and other agencies for carrying out speedy preliminary ground verification and aerial surveillance in connection with the reported 'logjam', and confirming that the 'logjam' was caused by the wood debris being pushed into the river by the heavy and prolonged downpour of rain and accumulating at the Baleh Hydroelectric dam site.

This has created an outcry by various parties and blame has been put solely on the timber companies carrying timber harvesting operation in the Forest Timber Licences within the Baleh Catchment upstream of the Baleh dam site. STA wishes to clarify that the timber harvesting operation within the Baleh Catchment is carried out only after approval has been given by FDS and permits issued.

In addition, STA finds it necessary to highlight the difference between salvage logging and selective logging. Salvage logging is approved to minimize the loss of commercial timber in the area which will be submerged. STA emphasizes that salvage logging is only carried out for Government approved projects such as development of hydroelectric dams. It is NOT a common practice under normal harvesting where selective logging is carried out, and STA wishes to highlight that STA members are using their best endeavours to manage the forests in their concessions in accordance with international standards.

Therefore, STA is deeply concerned on the negative portrayal of the forest industry in this incident and the impact it could have on the reputation of the forest industry. More so on its ripple effects resulting in loss of jobs which will affect the livelihood of the people of Sarawak.

In this regard, STA urges all stakeholders to engage and contribute collectively to overcome such challenges. STA also fully supports the Sarawak Government's decision to form a special task force committee to conduct thorough investigation on the incident and find solutions to minimise the risks of it happening again in the future. STA will give its best to assist the Sarawak Government to mitigate the issues by being part of the task force.

Sarawak Timber Association (STA)
27 August 2021