

Most Honorable Jose Chaves Alvarez, Governor of Palawan
Honorable Dennis Socrates, Vice-Governor of Palawan
Palawan
The Phillipines

30 October 2014

Dear Governor and Vice Governor of Palawan,

We are writing to express our concern about recent plans to convert an area between 15,000 to 20,000 hectares within the Palawan Man and Biosphere Reserve into oil palm monocultures. We understand that 6,000 hectares have already been cleared for this purpose, endangering biodiversity, and the quality of the water and soils that support the livelihoods of Palawan's local inhabitants. If oil palm expansion is allowed to continue, the environmental and ecological sustainability of the province and people's food security will be severely compromised.

We are aware that on 29 September, Hon. Dennis Socrates met with a delegation of members from the Coalition against Land Grabbing (CALG)- an organization representing Palawan's farmers and indigenous peoples- and Bishop Pedro Arrigo from the Apostolic Vicariate of Palawan. During this meeting the authorities were handed a petition signed by almost 4,300 individuals affected by oil palm plantations asking for a moratorium.

We see the implementation of this moratorium as consistent with the Philippine's government legal and moral commitment to safeguard indigenous people's ancestral domains, the ecological integrity of Palawan's protected areas and watersheds and the food security and livelihood of the region's inhabitants. We would also like to extend a plea to the authorities to ensure that any corporate wrong-doing, such as the alleged infringement committed by Agumil Phillipines, Inc. and other companies against the Strategic Environmental Plan (R.A. 7611), the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (Republic Act No. 8371) and Executive Order No. 23 be appropriately addressed, and that appropriate steps be taken to ensure that such violations do not recur.

We especially support the clause in the recent petition handed to the authorities of Palawan to stop oil palm expansion in areas of customary land use, including ancestral domains, and that any existing plantations in these areas be removed. Finally, we urge you to demand that LandBank put in place an effective and transparent mechanism to assess and monitor the social, environmental and economic impact of those oil palm projects which it supports.

Respectfully,



Miguel Alexiades
Director

cc./

H.E. Benigno C. Aquino III
President of the Republic

Dr. Marlea Pinor Munez, Executive Director, National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP)

Mr. Ruben S. Bastero, Regional Director RIV (NCIP)

Dionisia Banua, Commissioner (NCIP)

Hon. Ramon Jesus Paje
Secretary Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Hon. Proceso J. Alcala
Secretary Department of Agriculture (DA)

Hon. Euclides G. Forbes and Mr. Carlos B. Carpio (Philippine Coconut Authority - PCA)

Executive Director: Mr. Nelson P. Devanadera
Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD)

Mrs. Mearl Hilario, PCSD Committee on Tribal Affairs

Mrs. Gilda E. Pico, President and CEO, Land Bank of the Philippines