



Media Release

For Immediate Release

Samling's Response to Article Titled "Logging Company sues Environmental Defenders for RM5,000,000" Published In The Bruno Manser Fonds Website

13 August 2021, Miri Sarawak - We refer to the report titled ***"Logging company sues environmental defenders for RM5,000,000"*** that appeared on the Bruno Manser Fonds website on 9th August 2021, regarding the legal suit filed by Samling Plywood (Samling) against the SAVE Rivers organisation.

Samling contends that the allegations made by SAVE Rivers, published on the website known as *saverivers.org* ('the SAVE Rivers website') in respect of Samling in several articles are baseless and defamatory ('the SAVE Rivers allegations').

Amongst others, SAVE Rivers alleged that the certification issued by SIRIM QAS International in favour of Samling was allegedly done without compliance with due processes and thereby allegedly in violation of the rights of the indigenous communities.

Such allegations not only seriously damaged – and continue to damage – Samling's reputation and jeopardized its business dealings with third parties, but also undermined the integrity and adequacy of the processes undertaken by MTCC and SIRIM QAS International.

When the first article published on 23rd June 2020 appeared on the SAVE Rivers website, the MTCC in a clarification dated 13th August 2020 and titled **"Commentary: Processes involved in Granting Certification Under the MTCS"**, had clarified that Samling had indeed satisfactorily fulfilled the requisite certification requirements.

Notwithstanding MTCC's clarification, SAVE Rivers persistently repeated their allegations and made no effort to correct such allegations.

On its part, Samling had endeavoured to find an amicable solution to the issue by reaching out personally to SAVE Rivers' director Mr. Peter Kallang long before the commencement of legal action. However, our efforts were not reciprocated.

Instead, SAVE Rivers continued to repeat the defamatory allegations.

Under these circumstances, Samling then issued a Letter of Demand (LoD) to SAVE Rivers and its team for a retraction of the allegations in order to safeguard Samling's interests as well as preserve the integrity of MTCC's certification processes.

When SAVE Rivers and its team requested an extension of time to respond to the demand, Samling remained conciliatory and acceded to their request. It was at this time that a complaint was supposedly lodged by Bruno Manser Fonds regarding the SAVE Rivers allegation. SAVE Rivers



and its team did nothing to correct or remove the SAVE Rivers allegations despite the LoD, hence the action by Samling.

The statement from Bruno Manser Fonds that Samling instituted legal action against SAVE Rivers despite the initiation of a dispute resolution case by the MTCC is inaccurate, to say the least.

SAVE Rivers has ample time and opportunity to respond to overtures by Samling and subsequently to the LoD.

Furthermore, Samling exercised great restraint in this matter by waiting until the one year statutory limitation period applicable in Sarawak for defamation was about to expire, before filing our defamation suit against SAVE Rivers and its team. Our suit was filed on 21 June 2021, a mere 2 days before the deadline of 23 June 2021.

The allegation by Bruno Manser Fonds that our suit was filed in bad faith in order to disrupt the dispute resolution case is patently untrue. The date for the filing of the suit was a result of a one-year process undertaken by Samling to find an amicable solution to the issue. It was a culmination of our continuous efforts to reach out to SAVE Rivers – efforts that were rebuffed by Mr. Peter Kallang.

As a major player in the timber industry of Sarawak, Samling Group takes its responsibilities of ensuring sustainable timber production most seriously. Despite the many obstacles placed in our path by various western-based NGOs, Samling Group remains true to its commitment of sustainable timber production and has instituted rigorous measures to ensure that all our Forest Management Units obtain the international endorsed Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme issued by the MTCC.

By working together with State authorities as well as international bodies, Samling Group is confident that its sustainability efforts will not only ensure the future of the Sarawak timber industry, but more importantly, lead to the mutual benefit and well-being of the communities living in Sarawak.

Having operated in Miri for the last 50 years, Samling is committed to the growth of our communities. We have contributed immeasurably to community development and empowerment through the building of roads, bridges, classrooms and health clinics.

We have also provided employment to a large number of men and women from the local communities, who make up 80 percent of our total workforce in our Baram operations.

Samling is a firm believer in local empowerment. Through the Group's education endowment programme, Samling is providing educational opportunities for native communities in the Baram region. It is our hope that the communities there will be empowered through education and will be able to engage directly with the Group as we work towards a better future for all parties.