



**Karen National Union
Supreme Headquarters
Kawthoolei
www.knuhq.org**

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**Karen National Union Statement on the Building of a Two-Lane Highway
Connecting Dawei Special Economic Zone and the Thai Border**

The Union Government has announced their plans to resume the construction of a two-lane highway, connecting Dawei Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and Thai–Burma/Myanmar border, after reaching agreements with the Thai and Japanese Governments on the 2 December 2017. If resumed, the two-lane highway between Dawei and the Thai-Burma/Myanmar border, will cut through a pristine forest area in the Tenasserim Hills, and rural communities under the control of the Karen National Union (KNU).

This project is an opportunity for the country of Burma/Myanmar to demonstrate that socio-economic development projects in ethnic areas can provide significant benefits to local communities while protecting security, ethnic communities and culture, and the natural environment.

In accordance to the provisions on the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) signed on 15 October 2015, the Union Government must negotiate with the KNU regarding the implementation of such social-economic development. Therefore, the KNU calls governments of Burma/Myanmar, Thailand and Japan as well as the project developers, and financiers on the following.

1. In order to implement the project, comprehensive environmental and social impact assessments (ESIA) must be conducted in accordance with the laws of the Union of Burma/Myanmar, and the Land and Forestry Policy of the KNU, and international standards.
2. Negotiations with stakeholders, including the KNU, must be conducted in advance to ensure sustainable development for local communities, revenue sharing between the Union and State/Regional Governments, and the right for communities to participate.
3. In the implementation of the project, the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) must be used. As per international standards, fair compensation and land provision for the loss of land and livelihoods must be finalized before any further steps. In addition, access for local communities to markets, and plans for environmental conservation programs developments must be conducted.
4. Design and construct the highway in a way that avoids or minimizes and mitigates impacts on the environment, including the area's important forests, rivers and biodiversity, as well as, the Karen and other ethnic communities living in the area.

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