

OilWatch Southeast Asia Statement

OilWatch Southeast Asia Statement to Call for ASEAN Governments Support
to Stop Oil and Gas Exploitation and Burmese Human Right Violation

July 28th, 2009

Realizing the ASEAN Energy Ministers Meeting in Burma which is being held in Mandalay in this week that ultimately would set out the ambitious directions for the future development in Burma, the OilWatch Southeast Asia has a great concern on the overall situation, economically, politically, socially and environmentally, considering the already over exploitation of the natural resources within the country.

Besides the meeting, it has marked the ASEAN Plus 6 which recognizes the official involvement of Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand in Burma's energy development. A number of papers relating to a range of energy issues in Global and regional level will be read out at the meeting.

Oil Watch SEA is a network of Southeast Asian environmental NGOs, with our missions to encourage sustainable use of energy resources under the sustainable development goal in all economic, environmental and social dimensions.

We call for and urging governments to keep fossil fuels, particularly, oil and gas underground, realizing the current and increasing threats of climate change and its significant evidenced impacts on ecological systems and all lives on earth.

Since Burma is opened to foreign investment in late 1988, oil companies from Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, South Korea and China have been engaged in oil and gas exploration in the country. Official statistics reveal that foreign investment in Burma's oil and gas sector had reached 3.357 billions U.S. dollars in 88 projects as of the end of 2008, standing the second in the country's foreign investment sector after electric power. Burma's current investment plan of which so far four oil and gas development projects are actively promoted have significantly led to the loss of livelihood of which villagers, who have traditionally relied on fishing, have lost their livelihoods as a result of fishing restrictions. Violence has been obvious against communities entering the exclusion zones where exact parameters of the restrictions have not been adequately informed. These communities have been forced to find other means of survival. Additionally, these development projects have introduced high risk of complicit in human rights abuses where increasing number of soldiers has safeguarded the construction sites. These have included forced labors, forced relocation, torture, rape and murder. Further development under international cooperation, be it governments or private developers actively involved in oil and gas projects, would even introduce the continuation of the already worsening political situation in Burma and posses further risks on its communities and natural resources.

Since ASEAN has a closer relationship with Burma than any other political and economic associations, with this important occasion of the ASEAN Energy Ministers Meeting in Burma, during July 27 to 30, 2009 it would be a great opportunity for all governments to significantly realise the development patterns under the Burma specific contexts prior to further decisions on development collaboration.

OilWatch SEA is, therefore, calling upon all ASEAN governments, to, the following:

- Signify and prioritizing the development of democracy in Burma, to ensure people's active involvement and participation in the decision making process;
- Actively support alternative and renewable sources of energy while keeping oil and gas underground. We urge major Chinese and South Korean investors to terminate oil and gas projects and remain oil and gas as the last resource to be invested, until the democracy and active people's participation in decision making process is well in place in Burma;
- Pay the Government of Burma and its citizen equal respects, dignity and equalities, through applying the same international standards in development processes and activities;
- Urge active Burma people's participation process in energy development related projects and activities; and
- Realize the increasing global evidence of impacts of climate change and foster any development projects and activities under the long term sustainable development goals while promoting the livelihood of Burma citizen and natural resources as well as ecological and climate balance based pattern on the respect of community rights.

In solidarity,

OILWATCH SOUTHEAST ASIA

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