



## Media Release

For Immediate Release

### **Response to Article Titled “Save Rivers Comes To Zurich To Highlight The Global SLAPP Suit Crisis” by Sarawak Report**

**10 May 2022, Miri Sarawak** - Once again, Save Rivers with the collaboration of Sarawak Report has chosen to disparage and misreport Samling’s legal suit against the former. This time, their chosen venue was Switzerland at a conference regarding Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation or SLAPP.

As is their wont, the two bodies chose to present a very skewed and incomplete, and therefore incorrect version of events that led to the filing of the legal suit by the Samling Group against Save Rivers.

The fact that the words “alleged” and “allegedly” are used in the sub-headline and the opening paragraph of the Sarawak Report Article titled “Save Rivers Comes To Zurich To Highlight The Global SLAPP Suit Crisis” gives an indication that the accusations hurled against Samling do not hold water.

*“Experts at Swiss Anti-SLAPP Conference Identify Samling’s Lawsuit Against SAVE Rivers as an **alleged** SLAPP Suit”* reads the sub-headline while, *“As companies increasingly rely on legal intimidation around the world, Samling is identified as one company in Malaysia **allegedly** using legal action to silence public participation,”* reads the opening paragraph.

As usual, the two groups make the claim that the legal suit was in response to press releases issued by Save Rivers which supposedly exposed a failure to consult communities in the certification process for our logging concessions.

Allow us to put the record straight. In response to Save Rivers’ first press release on 23 June 2020, the Malaysian Timber Certification Council had issued a statement titled **“Commentary: Processes involved in Granting Certification Under the MTCS”** dated 13 August 2020, which clarified that Samling had indeed satisfactorily fulfilled the requisite certification requirements.

It needs to be made abundantly clear that the certification audit process is not carried out by Samling but by an independent third party.

It is very clear that accusing Samling of “failure to properly consult communities in their logging concessions” was incorrect and untrue, a fact supported very clearly and explicitly by the MTCC article.

As we have made clear in previous press releases on this same issue, Samling had provided Save Rivers every opportunity and leeway to retract its incorrect and untrue allegations to the extent of reaching out personally to their director Peter Kallang to find a conciliatory solution to the issue.



All of our goodwill measures were either rebuffed or ignored. In fact, far from admitting that their allegations were untrue and incorrect and retracting the releases, Save Rivers issued further statements repeating these allegations.

With all efforts for an amicable resolution having failed, Samling was left with little choice but to institute a legal suit against Save Rivers in order to defend and safeguard its reputation and business interests, as well as to preserve the integrity of the certification body.

As the matter is now with the courts in Sarawak, we feel that this issue is best settled by legal means. Unfortunately, this has not stopped Save Rivers or Sarawak Report from continuing to distort the facts of the case.

Instead of continuously labelling the Samling suit as an “alleged SLAPP suit”, the two bodies should present their case to the Court and allow the Court to decide the rights and wrongs of the case.

Let us be very clear – the suit that we have instituted against Save Rivers is about the defamatory nature of the articles and the accusations contained therein. This is NOT a suit to stifle public participation of local communities in the certification process.

We believe that it is only through this suit will the truth be made abundantly clear so that we can put an end to the slander and untruths.