



Media Release

For Immediate Release

Response to Media Reports on Blockade Set Up in Long Pakan

11 October 2021, Miri Sarawak - Over the last week, several publications carried reports on the setting up of a blockade by the Ketua Kampung or Village Head of Long Pakan together with a handful of villagers, in an attempt to disrupt our operations in the area.

While many accusations were levelled against Samling, we were most dismayed that the publications chose to run their reports based solely on the version of events provided by one party without allowing us the opportunity to provide our side of the story.

It is true that Samling was awarded a Permit to Enter Coupe or PEC for Coupe 01A, T0405 Layun on 27 August 2021, for the purpose of timber extraction. However, Samling has yet to begin any work in the area, and thus far has only begun to transport logs from outside of the area for the purpose of building a bridge over Sungai Patah.

Samling also held two meetings with the villagers of Long Pakan including over 60 Ketua Bilik of the village in August and September. These sessions were for the purpose of informing the villagers of the company's intended activities in the area and to obtain their consent for our work to proceed.

We have thus far obtained the consent of 56 Ketua Bilik of Long Pakan. Unfortunately, the Ketua Kampung, Pada Jutang, was not one of the 56 who gave their consent. As a result, Pada Jutang together with a few of the villagers, had set up a blockade in the area on 23 August. They had also proceeded to cut up the logs that had been brought in to build the bridge over Sungai Patah.

In response, the villagers who had consented to Samling operating in the area and led by Joshua Geng, had lodged a police report on 14 September. In his [report](#), Joshua said majority of the Ketua Bilik had consented to Samling operating in the area, and called on the police to dismantle the blockade.

However, before the police could intervene, some villagers proceeded to dismantle the blockade on 21 September. We are given to understand that this group of villagers was led by Sakaria Pada, who is the son of the Ketua Kampung Pada Jutang.

At no point did Samling issue any threats against the Ketua Kampung or any of the villagers, nor was Samling involved in the dismantling of the blockade.

Samling has been operating for a long time in the Baram area and we are acutely aware that matters between the villagers need resolution among the villagers themselves without outside interference. As such, in this matter, Samling did not lodge any police report nor make any attempt to dismantle the blockade that was set up.



To say that Samling is facing a standoff with the villagers is patently untrue because we believe that this matter is an issue that has arisen among the villagers, and needs to be resolved between the villagers themselves.

Some of the reports also stated that Samling had entered native customary rights or NCR lands in the area and had extracted timber from these lands.

This is an accusation that is malicious and without any truth or basis. Firstly, Samling has not begun any extraction works in the area as we are still in discussions with the villagers to explain to them the scope of our works.

Secondly, under the licence granted, Samling is not allowed to enter any lands deemed as NCR lands that may lie within the coupe. It is important to understand that the classification of NCR lands is a complex matter and several key conditions have to be met before any land can be classified as NCR land.

We note with dismay that the media reports were based overwhelmingly on an article carried in the Bruno Manser Fonds website. We also note that most of the reports were done “remotely” whereby the media had failed to send any representative to the area in order to determine the truth and legitimacy of the various claims that were made in the BMF article.

In the same vein, we must express our disappointment that the media had not reached out to Samling in order to provide us the opportunity to answer the many accusations that were levelled against us.

We hope that as part of its journalistic responsibility, the media will allow Samling the right of response and publish our position on the issue.

The media reports have cast Samling in a most negative light and have given the impression of a boorish company trampling over the rights of native communities. While this may fit the romantic notion perpetuated by certain NGOs, it is unfortunately a disservice not only to Samling, but also to the native communities concerned.

Throughout the years in which we have operated in the Baram area, Samling has always sought the involvement of native communities in our activities, not only in terms of obtaining their consent, but also in the provision of employment and basic infrastructure amenities such as roads and bridges.

The issue of native community development is a complex and emotional one which requires a very delicate balance to ensure that communities have options available to them to participate in economic and social development, without taking away from them the right to continue their traditional ways of living.

It is not through confrontation that Samling approaches this issue, but through negotiation, education, awareness and empowerment. We are fully supportive of native communities determining for themselves how they would like to move forward, without any coercion or force. Our operations will continue to reflect this stance.