



## **Media Release**

For Immediate Release

### **Samling to raise awareness on Timber Certification Scheme for the Communities**

**5 October 2020, Miri, Sarawak** –The Samling Group (Samling) of Companies recently organised a seminar to create awareness and understanding among local communities on the importance of the Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme (MTCS) and its positive impacts and benefits for local communities. It is the first such initiative of several others that are planned for the next few months.

The seminar, titled “Communities and Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme” was held with the support of the Forest Department Sarawak and Gerenai Communities Rights Action Committee (GCRAC), and was attended by representatives from 15 villages within the Gerenai Forest Management Unit (FMU).

Abang Ahmad Abang Morni, Deputy Director II (Policy & Planning) on behalf of the Director of Forest Department Sarawak in his opening remarks thanked Samling for organising this seminar as it would promote a better understanding of the importance of Sustainable Forest Management as well as Forest Management Certification among local communities.

Speakers from Forest Department Sarawak, Malaysian Timber Certification Council (MTCC), SIRIM QAS International Sdn Bhd (SIRIM), World Wide Fund For Nature Malaysia (WWF Malaysia), and Universiti Putra Malaysia Bintulu Sarawak Campus presented a paper in their respective field of expertise.

The Forest Department Sarawak focused on the environment, economic and social benefits of sustainable forest management. The paper discussed mitigation measures that are taken to protect and minimize adverse impact to the forest, soil, river and other living things, including the conservation of biodiversity. Additionally, there were discussions on the ability of a forest to supply sustainably whilst giving equitable importance to support the food-security, cultural and livelihood needs of forest-dependent communities and empower local communities in forest management.

The MTCC presented the reviewed MTCS standards which was approved on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2020. The speaker drove down the fact that although the MTCS is a voluntary scheme, businesses and organisations should not discount their responsibility in protecting the environment and community. When a FMU is not certified, it means the FMU operates without assessments by independent third party, and no consultations with the indigenous people and the local community. This was followed by a presentation from SIRIM, discussing auditing and certification processes.

Additionally, there were discussions around HCV assessments and its relation to the MTCS, as well as the local communities’ roles and benefits for having HCV assessments carried out. This was presented by WWF Malaysia.



The final presentation was on social impact assessment (SIA) in the context of forestry, which is an integral part of the MTCS. The paper by University Putra Malaysia, Bintulu, Sarawak outlined how SIA is conducted, its benefits, and potential outcomes. The objective of the SIA is to promote transparency in forest management. Findings and mitigation measures will be eventually included in the Forest Management Plan as part of improvement process.

Peter Kalang, Chairman of Save Rivers also gave a talk to the audience. Also in attendance were representatives from the Regional Forest Department Miri, Miri Resident Office, Beluru District Office, Telang Usan District Office, Land and Survey Department, Ibu Pejabat Polis Daerah Miri, Natural Resource and Environment Board, Sarawak Timber Association as well as community leaders and committee representatives of the social societies from various local ethnic communities.

Acknowledging the importance of engagements with rural communities, a Samling spokesperson said, "We hope to bring together all stakeholders to continuously engage with each other. This seminar is a continuation of the frequent consultations that Samling engages with the many different external stakeholders "