



Press Release

12 July 2010

Sarawak Timber Association (STA) views with great concern of the recent independent fact-finding mission report released by “Penan Support Group, FORUM-ASIA and Asian Indigenous Women’s Network (AIWN)” (AIWN Report) of the alleged sexual abuse of Penan women and girls. STA had previously stated its stance on the matter through a press release on 16 September 2009 when a report was first released by the National Task Force relating to the alleged sexual abuse to Penan women and girls. The Association hereby reiterates that any form of sexual abuse cannot be tolerated and the STA is committed to assisting any sexually abused victims to the best of its ability. In this regard, the STA is willing to provide such resources as may be necessary to enable a transparent and vigorous investigation into the allegations of sexual abuse of any Penan women and girls or indeed of any other ethnic communities.

STA notes that the AIWN Report raises several issues which are seen as obstacles to the investigation of claims of sexual abuse. Two of the issues relate to language difficulties and costs of transportation. In this regard, the STA stand ready to provide the resources necessary to retain interpreters and provide transportation, accommodation and subsistence to bring any victim to lodge police reports to facilitate investigations.

In addition, the STA will also provide such funds as may be necessary for medical services and counselling of any victims of sexual abuse.

One of the main objectives of the STA is to promote, ascertain and protect the continuous well-being of the timber trade and industry in the State of Sarawak. It is an essential part of such objective that a safe atmosphere should be maintained for all communities associated with the timber industry. To this end, the STA will provide all necessary practical and financial support to ensure that a full and transparent investigation of claims of sexual abuse are pursued.

Therefore, STA calls upon the police to promptly and thoroughly investigate the alleged rape and sexual abuses of Penan women and girls as a matter of priority to ensure justice prevails.

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