



Statement of the Salween Peace Park

**World Environment Day
5 June 2026**

Protecting the Salween, Protecting Life: Salween River Communities Call for Environmental Justice and Indigenous Rights in the Face of the Transboundary Pollution Crisis

On the occasion of World Environment Day 2026, the Salween Peace Park stands in solidarity with the Dhamma Pilgrimage for the Protection of the Kok, Sai, Ruak, Mekong, and Salween Rivers. We join communities, faith leaders, civil society organizations, and environmental defenders who are raising their voices against the growing threat of transboundary pollution and ecological degradation affecting river systems across the region.

The concerns being expressed today by communities along the Kok River resonate deeply with the experiences of Karen Indigenous peoples and local communities throughout the Salween River Basin. Although these rivers flow through different landscapes and political boundaries, they are connected by shared ecosystems, livelihoods, cultures, and the well-being of millions of people who depend on healthy rivers for survival.

For generations, the Salween River has sustained Indigenous communities by serving as a system of transportation, a source of traditional livelihoods, an integral part of cultural practices, and a basis for spiritual relationships with the natural world. The river is not merely a waterway; it is the living foundation of identity, knowledge, and community life. The future of river-dependent communities is inseparable from the health of the river itself.

Recent environmental monitoring conducted by Thailand's Pollution Control Department has identified elevated concentrations of arsenic in multiple monitoring locations along the Salween River, with recorded levels exceeding national surface water quality standards during successive

monitoring periods between November 2025 and March 2026. The findings highlight the need for further monitoring and research, increased transparency, urgent support for riverside communities, and regional cooperation to safeguard the river and the communities that depend upon it.

These findings reinforce concerns that environmental impacts originating in upstream areas can affect downstream communities across great distances. Pollution, ecological degradation, and unsustainable resource extraction do not recognize political borders. Their consequences can extend throughout entire river basins, affecting ecosystems, fisheries, agriculture, food security, public health, and local economies.

For many years, communities within the Salween Peace Park have documented environmental changes through community-based monitoring, traditional ecological knowledge, and direct observation of river conditions. Indigenous knowledge systems represent generations of experience and stewardship and provide valuable insights into environmental change. Such knowledge should be respected alongside scientific research and incorporated into environmental decision-making and governance processes.

The Salween Peace Park believes that environmental protection cannot be separated from Indigenous rights, community rights, and sustainable peace. Communities must have the ability to participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their lands, waters, and natural resources. Environmental governance is strongest when local communities are empowered to protect and manage the ecosystems upon which they depend.

We are particularly concerned about the expansion of extractive activities and large-scale infrastructure projects occurring in where areas conflict, weak governance, and limited public accountability create heightened risks for ecosystems and local communities. Addressing these challenges requires greater transparency, the implementation of independent environmental assessments for development projects, community participation, and the establishment of effective mechanisms for business accountability.

On this World Environment Day, the Salween Peace Park calls upon governments, regional institutions, international organizations, civil society actors, and responsible businesses to:

1. Recognize transboundary pollution as a shared regional challenge requiring coordinated action.
2. Support independent, transparent, and community-based environmental monitoring throughout river basins.
3. Ensure meaningful participation of affected communities in environmental decision-making processes.
4. Respect and uphold the rights of Indigenous peoples, including the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).
5. Strengthen environmental governance, accountability, and access to information regarding activities that may affect river systems and local livelihoods.
6. Integrate environmental protection, Indigenous rights, and natural resource governance into peacebuilding and political dialogue processes in Myanmar.

World Environment Day reminds us that environmental protection is inseparable from human dignity, public health, cultural survival, and social justice. The challenges facing the Kok River and the Salween River demonstrate that the future of our communities is interconnected across borders and across generations.

The Salween Peace Park stands with all communities working to protect rivers, forests, Indigenous territories, and the rights of future generations.

**Protecting the Salween is Protecting Life.
Protecting Rights is Protecting the Future.**

**Salween Peace Park
5 June 2026**