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**Disregard for Indigenous Peoples' Rights: 64 NGOs urge European Governments not to accept Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme**

In a statement published today, 64 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from 21 countries are urging the European Union, European governments and the European timber industry to reject the Malaysian Timber Certification Scheme MTCC. The NGOs signing the statement do not acknowledge MTCC as a guarantee for sustainable or legal timber forest management because the MTCC does not respect indigenous peoples' rights. The signatory organizations include 47 European, 10 Asian, 6 American and an Australian NGO. The NGO statement was endorsed by the most important Malaysian indigenous peoples' organizations.

A case in point is the MTCC certification of a Forest Management Unit in Sarawak, which openly disrespects the Penan peoples' rights. Samling Plywood (Baramas) Sdn. Bhd. - a Malaysian timber company belonging to the Miri based Samling group - was granted a Certificate for Forest Management in October 2004. Large parts of the certified Sela'an-Linau Forest Management Unit are in an area in which the Penan claim to have Native Customary Rights and had already submitted this to Court in 1998.

By certifying the contested NCR area, MTCC is in breach of its own certification standards according to which "long-term tenure and use rights of the land and forest resources shall be clearly defined, documented and legally established". Faced with continuous protests by the affected Penan communities, MTCC has chosen to ignore the Penan and refuses to withdraw the abusive certification.

In the last years, MTCC has drawn wide criticism for its deplorable performance and its disregard for indigenous peoples' rights. The certification scheme is widely considered as a marketing device for Malaysia's disreputable timber industry rather than a credible effort to achieve sustainability.

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Updated Link to NGO statement and signatory organisations:  
[http://www.bmf.ch/en/pdf/NGO\\_statement\\_MTCC.pdf](http://www.bmf.ch/en/pdf/NGO_statement_MTCC.pdf)