



LIOH's Statement regarding the State visit of the President of the People's Republic of China to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

17 January 2020

Land in Our Hands (LIOH) is a multiethnic national network of civil society organizations working for land issues, peasants' unions and allies.

We, LIOH, heard that the President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China, is having a State visit to Myanmar during January 2020 and investment agreements will also be made during the visit; thus release the statement regarding them as follows.

1. Land conflicts and forcible land grabbing in Myanmar remains unsolved and complicated till the present day. Existing land related regulatory & legislative frameworks and conflict settlement mechanisms do not have ability for solving those problems effectively and even legitimizing unjust land grabbing therefore creating more complications. It is threatening and making landlessness to internally displaced persons (IDPs) and ethnic peoples who are practicing customary land management systems.
2. Investment projects (especially under China-Myanmar Economic Corridor – CMEC) are directly related with land problems; many of them remains unsolved till now. Local communities are rising their concerns upon upcoming projects and agreements – [especially countless people who are at risk of losing their land even without compensation as they practice customary land tenure systems which are excluded from legal protection].
3. Moreover, the following are a few concluded findings on deciding, agreeing & implementing of projects under CMEC:
 - a. The decision making on the projects and agreements are excluding local communities, potentially affected peoples, ethnic political parties, ethnic armed organizations and civil society organizations.
 - b. Agreeing or signing the agreements for new projects while existing land conflicts unsolved poses the risks to both local communities and investors.
 - c. Armed conflicts widening in ethnic areas are obvious evidences of complicated land sector with many conflicts potentials.
 - d. Projects without transparency and lack of sufficient information are potential receiving public objections and potential of cultivating more corruptions.
 - e. Investments creating more conflicts would also damage bilateral diplomatic relations of two neighboring countries.
4. Therefore, we (LIOH) demand the following points, in order to maintain the good relations between two neighboring countries;
 - a. The peoples from project affected areas, ethnic political parties and ethnic armed organizations must be in the first place along the course of designing, agreeing and implementing the projects.
 - b. Existing & upcoming projects have potentials creating complications on existing land conflicts thus must be accountable for it and for resolution prior to agreements & implementation.
 - c. Customary land tenure systems must be recognized and IDPs' land rights must be fully guaranteed.
 - d. Land rights are human rights – China's investment projects must be responsible & accountable for not uplifting human rights violations.
 - e. The investments must also be responsible & accountable for affecting ecosystems – as evidences of investment related environmental & ecological defects are already existed.
 - f. The projects and the projects from the areas without above conditions must be on hold.

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