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Ref: UNDP/RR/2018- 267

Date: 26 December 2018

Dear Paul Goodwin,

Thank you for your message dated 19 December 2018.

This has reference to SECU case # SECU 0010.

The UNDP CO Myanmar would like to further clarify the current status of implementation of the Ridge to Reef (R2R) project.

The decision to temporarily suspend all field activities of the project followed the communications received from the Karen National Union (KNU) Forest Department and the Conservation Alliance of Tanawthari (CAT) raising social and environmental concerns allegedly associated with the project on 16 July 2018 to UNDP. Since 18 July 2018, UNDP has put on hold the planned field activities, including signing of Letter of Agreement/Responsible Party Agreement with Responsible Parties, particularly Fauna and Flora International and Smithsonian Institution for the implementation of project activities.

The KNU and CAT concerns have been raised on behalf of seven Karen communities and membership of the Ah Lin Thitsar Committee, and are in effect specific to terrestrial component of the three sub-landscapes of the project: terrestrial, coastal and marine. The project landscapes are inhabited by Karen, Bamar, Shan, Mon, Maw Kin and Pa Shu communities.

UNDP planned a systematic outreach and consultations with the representatives of the KNU and CAT to discuss the project related concerns. The proposed planned consultations with KNU and CAT were expected to:

[1] jointly review the current geographic focus and activities under the project as proposed in the project document; and

[2] subsequently determine the scope of adaptive management of the project and following the agreement with KNU, Forest Department and UNDP lead to initiation of the project activities particularly vis-à-vis the terrestrial component of the landscape.

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Subsequently, two rounds of consultations (led by UNDP Resident Representative a.i) with KNU senior representatives were held in Mae Sot, Thailand on 3 October and 6 December 2018 by UNDP. KNU has expressed openness to project redesign in principle, however, its support to the R2R project has been made conditional on attainment of higher level strategic and political objectives, achievement of a comprehensive peace process, progress on the implementation of interim arrangements and attainment of a democratic and federal state in Myanmar.

As such, UNDP's considered view on the outlook for R2R project implementation is that project activities may be resumed if any of the following conditions are met and are cleared by SECU:

1. KNU agrees to explicitly support the implementation of the project based on a firm commitment to a joint timebound review and agreement with the Forest Department and UNDP leading to adaptive management of the geographic focus and activities pertaining to the terrestrial component. For this option, UNDP has indicated that it is willing to consider, without any conditions, a thorough review and redesign of the terrestrial component that fully responds to CAT/KNU concerns, taking into account the mandate of UNDP.
2. If option #1 is not feasible, consider all available alternatives, including the option to change the geographical focus of the terrestrial component of the project to government-controlled areas in line with adaptive management of the project and adhering to the Social and Environmental Standards.
3. SECU's guidance and determination that specific project activities which fall outside of KNU controlled areas viz. the coastal and marine components are cleared for resumption. This would need to be clearly communicated by SECU to KNU. It is critical to acknowledge and ensure that the other Bamar, Shan, Mon, Maw Kin and Pa Shu communities in the project area which are vulnerable, in need, and stand to benefit from the project are not unduly disadvantaged. Also, the project stands to benefit the policy and integrated landscape planning initiatives of the Union and regional government of Tanintharyi, which would be critical for all communities in Myanmar in the future.

We look forward to your feedback and guidance.

Yours sincerely,



Nasantuya Chuluun
Officer-in-Charge