

SIOCON SUBANO ASSOCIATION INC. (SSAI)
Canatuan, Tabayo, Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte

February 20, 2005

OPEN LETTER

TO:

PHILIPPINE IP LINKS
CHRISTIAN AID
MINING WATCH CANADA
DCMI
TEBTEBBA
KAIROS CANADA
SURVIVAL INTERNATIONAL
LRC – KSK

AND OTHER NGO'S SPEAKING AGAINST US WITHOUT SPEAKING TO US AND
WITHOUT DOING ANY GOOD FOR OUR PEOPLE

Dear Sirs:

I am Juanito Tumangkis, a pure blooded Subano, and since birth, 40 years ago, have stayed in Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte. Together with my wife and six children, I am staying at Sitio Canatuan, Tabayo, Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte. Also my mother, my four (4) brothers and two (2) sisters and their respective children and hundreds of my relatives live there.

I am the duly elected President of Siocon Subano Association Inc. (SSAI) in the election of October 10, 2004, pursuant to the mandate of the Association's by-laws that calls for an annual election. I got 500 more votes than my opponent Barangay Captain Bonifacio Patcho. This is my second term because I was also elected as President in the election held on November 25, 2001. SSAI has members at the moment more than 2000. SSAI at present is the Administrator of the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) issued to all the Subanons of Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte.

I am also the Chairman of the 30 member Council of Elders of the Subanons of Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte, our policy making body.

I write to you on behalf of my people, men, women and children of Subanons of Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte, approximately 6000 in number. The Subanons are simple, peaceful and loving people whose dreams are for the development of their ancestral domain, employment and freedom from poverty, among others.

Specifically, we ask you the following:

- We ask you to stop telling lies to the world about us.
- We ask you to stop listening to those who say they represent us, but do not.
- We ask you to stop sewing conflict and strife in our community.
- We ask you to stop using us for your personal gain.
- We ask you to leave us to decide what is best for us.

1. You spread lies to the world that we are blind supporters of TVI. We are not. Instead, we are partners of TVI in the development of our ancestral domain. This partnership was institutionalized by virtue of our Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in November 2003. We allow them to mine our natural resources on specific conditions, that it is in accordance with our mining laws and the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA) RA 8371 in addition to priority of employment for our people, payment of royalty fee, livelihood projects, development our area, improvement of our roads, among others. Many of these have already been provided by TVI.

Also, you spread lies by quoting Mr. Anoy that TVI has desecrated our sacred place. The MPSA area of TVI does not embrace any of the sacred places we claim. The nearest sacred place is located at Lumingin Area more than 5 kilometers away. You should be informed that Boy Anoy and Onsino Mato while they were President and Secretary of SSAI, respectively, from 1993 to 2001 allowed 100 small scale miners to operate within the MPSA area of TVI. If indeed, they consider the MPSA area as sacred. then they should not have allowed these small scale miners to operate there.

I add that because of what they did the small scale miners used Subanon children ages 7 to 14 and women to work in their cyanide mills and paid them a pittance such as 30, 40, or 50 pesos per sack, and worst, they were paid depending on the grade of the gold and not based on the weight of the sack or distance from where they carried the ore.

The two (2) did not mind that the small scale miners whose operations were illegal dumped their toxic wastes at Canatuan Creek killing the fish and snails that we used to get for our daily food. Also they cut our trees to construct their illegal plants and houses.

Also, you spread lies by stating that TVI does not have the support of the Subano community. Had you asked the real Subanons residing at Canatuan and neighboring areas, you would have known the truth. For the record, SSAI with more than 2000 members, all Subanons, had expressly supported TVI's operation. I recall that in October, 2001, the Board of Trustees of SSAI signed a MOU with TVI. On October 15, 2002, the Subanon Council of Elders passed and adopted a Resolution allowing TVI to mine "open pit" within their MPSA area. Boy Anoy and Onsino Mato in fact attended and participated in the deliberation of the said resolution. Finally, in November 2003, SSAI and the Council of Elders signed with TVI a MOA.

Finally, you spread lies that TVI is evicting 86 Subanon families. Not one Subano is being evicted by TVI. I know for a fact that three (3) separate letters of

demand for reasons of safety were sent to Spouses Emmanuel and Gaga Gonzaga, Ireneo and Luciano Calibo and Josie Gonzaga. But above three (3) families are not Subanons. They are Bisayans from far away towns and part of those remaining small scale miners who squatted, ransacked and mined our ancestral domain without our free prior informed consent (FPIC).

To set the truth, on January 9, 2005, the non Subanons within the ancestral domain were called to a meeting by the Council of Elders as regards the status of their stay within. Accordingly, their stay was without FPIC. Many of them attended and they asked clarificatory questions. They were told that SSAI, if they are willing, will accept them as privilege members thru the issuances of yellow IDs, and will extend to them all the rights enjoyed by the Subanons except the right to vote and be voted as officers of SSAI. Further, they will be relocated and allotted lots at Tanuman Relocation site. The Council of Elders after February 28, 2005, will convene should they fail to submit their intention to join, to act on their status. They were even told that even if they will choose to be members of SSAI, their individual claims with TVI still remain until their resolutions. The reason for said invitation is based on RA 8371, as the IP community has the right to regulate the entries and occupation of migrants and corporations. In short, these non-Subanons who were branded in foreign press as Subanons, were not evicted. Instead, they were invited to join SSAI to make their stay within the ancestral domain as legal.

Except for Boy Anoy and Onsino Mato, those who are opposed to TVI operation are remnants of small scale miners who are non Subanons. They are opposed to TVI because what they are trying to get into their pockets.

2. So that you will not spread lies, do not listen to the following:

1. Jose Boy Anoy, because:

- 1.1. He is no longer the President of SSAI effective November 26, 2001.
- 1.2. He is half Subano, the mother being an Ilocana
- 1.3. He is NOT a Timuay. His father, Lumuyod Anoy from whom he should inherit the title, is not a Timuay.
- 1.4. The local NCIP representative, Ponciano Agbadan, who is a Subano and a resident of Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte, had stated that Boy Anoy is coming from the blood line of "Bulian" (Religious Leader).
- 1.5. He has lost his credibility among the Subanons for receiving monies from small miners. When Cayabyab, a small miner, gave him a house at Canatuan, he moved in from Paduan in 2000. He acted as the small miners liaison as he led the application with the MGB (Mines and Geosciences Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources DENR) to convert the area as peoples mining area for the benefit of the illegal miners.
- 1.6. He does not stay at Canatuan, or Paduan, Tabayo, Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte, any more.

2. Onsino Mato because

1. He is not from Barangay Tabayo but from Candis, Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte.

2. He has lost his credibility among the Subanons for receiving monies from small miners, and he was suspected to be involved in the 2 ambushes in 2002 resulting to the death of 13 Subanons and injuries to many.
3. Timuay Noval Lambo, because:
 1. He is not from Barangay Tabayo, Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte, but from Barangay Lintangan, Sibuco, Zamboanga del Norte, two (2) municipalities away.
 2. He has lost credibility as he allowed himself to be used by DCMI, an anti-mining NGO, and Philippine IP Links.
 3. He has never consulted the Subano community of Siocon, particularly the Council of Elders, of his plans and/or activities and SSAI.
 4. He was never designated by the Subano community of Siocon to be a spokesman on anything.
 5. He has claimed falsely to be an expert on our people and our traditions but he is not from our area so how can he be?
4. Ofelia Davi, because she is not a Subanon; and therefore ignorant of the ways, culture and traditions of the Subanons.
5. Luni Lucas of Siocon because he allowed the small mining and is still acting for them and Anoy and Mato. As we gathered, per his representation, Mayor Cesar Soriano at one time issued a mayor's permits to some of the small miners.
6. Different NGO's, particularly DCMI, Philippine IP Links, Christian Aid, etc. as these are not IP Subanon organizations and therefore do not know the true sentiments, aspirations and desires of the Subano community of Siocon. We have also not authorized them.

3. We had already reached a major decision and that is to allow TVI to operate within our ancestral domain, as evidenced by the MOA we signed and the Resolution of October 15, 2002. We asked therefore that this decision of ours should be respected by you. We are big enough with sane minds to know what is best for the Subanons of Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte. Now that we are enjoying to reap the dividends of the MOA, such as royalty, good roads, electricity, employment, health, school, livelihood projects, do not inject anything in that relationship that will sow conflict among us Subanons and other tribes. TVI despite the distance and risk has shown that it cares for the welfare of the Subanons, and as we stay here in Canatuan we feel it, we see it and we enjoy it. Our people have been working in jobs, our babies have been saved in childbirth, our women have been learning to grow rice and vegetables. If there is one who could attest to it better, it is we, not anyone else. We do not want to go back to the days of small miners (1993 – 2001) where we, men, women and children, worked virtually as their slaves. You should be proud and thankful of TVI for helping the causes and interests of the Subanons.

Our National Government knows better what is good for the IPs like us, and we are all supportive of its program for responsible mining and sustainable development.

We are all for the development of our ancestral domain which to us is the only visible and viable solution to free us from ignorance and poverty.

4. Some NGO's are using the Subanons of Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte, to get donations from abroad. In their solicitation for donations, they depict us as being oppressed. Grants and/or donations are given for our cause but far from reaching us, these monies just stay at the hands of the NGO's who solicit them.

What have the Churches and the NGOs done for us? They have not put one peso into our community. For instance DCMI, leading the picket in March 2004 at Pisawak to stop TVI bringing benefits to the Subano community, blocked 100 Subano mourners who passed by after burying their dead relative. It has not provided any livelihood projects for us. It has not visited our ancestral domain to teach us how to plant, to read, to write or to take care our ancestral domain. It does not help deliver our babies safely or fight diseases in our homes. It does not even talk to us who are the real traditional leaders of our place. It brings NGOs here to only talk to small miners and Anoy and Mato and then tells lies to the world about us.

We are human beings, and we ought not to be depicted as ignorant and poor for the personal gains of these NGOs.

Finally, unless you are prepared to really help us, I ask you to leave us alone, because such right is enshrined in RA 8371, right to govern ourselves. This unique right of empowerment is given to us because as IPs, we use our customs, traditions, culture and usages in dealing with Mother Nature and our fellow men. Thus we know better than you do on how we could improve and protect ourselves within our ancestral domain.

Should you need further clarification as to any matter I state above, please write to me.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Timuay Juanito Tumangkis', enclosed within a large, hand-drawn circular scribble.

TIMUAY JUANITO TUMANGKIS
President

(The Siocon Subano Association Inc. (SSAI) was registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission in 1991 to represent the Subanon Indigenous People of

Canatuan, Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte, Philippines. At present, it has around 2,000 Subano members. Timuay Juanito Tumangkis is also the Chairman of the Subanon Council of Elders of Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte, whose legitimacy was upheld by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) per its decision on June 1, 2004. Said Council with a composition of 30 traditional tribal leaders is the policy making body of the Subano of Siocon, Zamboanga del Norte.)

Attorney Pablo Bernardo has assisted writing this letter and he is the Chairman of the Provincial Consultative Body of the Subanons of the entire Province of Zamboanga del Norte per the consensus of 175 delegates in the forum from January 28 – 30, 2005, held in Dipolog City.

A handwritten signature in purple ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'P' followed by a series of loops and a vertical stroke.

Copies furnished:

Her Excellency Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, President of the Philippines
Philippines Media
Canadian Media