

# Oilwatch Southeast Asia

## UNITY STATEMENT

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Oilwatch Southeast Asia is a network of civil society and community organizations in Burma, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Timor-Leste working to prevent the negative impacts of fossil fuel exploration, extraction, production and processing. Oilwatch Southeast Asia representatives met in Dili this week to share information about situations in our countries, plan future regional activities and express solidarity with the people of Timor-Leste's ongoing struggle to maximize the benefits from their oil and gas resources, while avoiding damages like those petroleum development has caused in other Southeast Asian countries.

We share common concerns about the impacts of petroleum industry activities, which have caused environmental disasters throughout the region, as well as human rights abuses such as land confiscation and forced relocation from natural gas projects in Burma; loss of livelihoods and corruption in Indonesia; the manipulation of the Philippines' energy policy by international financial institutions (IFIs) and multinational corporations; and health problems from massive petrochemical pollution in Thailand. In our region and worldwide, people are increasingly confronted with crises from energy security and climate change. These and many other issues are likely to occur in Timor-Leste as it expands exploitation of oil and gas deposits, especially after activities begin on shore. If Timor-Leste is to successfully manage these challenges and avoid the resource curse-related problems, it must learn from other countries' experiences and compel oil companies, governments, IFIs and multilateral institutions to respect the rights of its people, communities, environment and future generations.

Timor-Leste is the most oil-export-dependent country in the world, and many Timor-Leste citizens hope that its non-renewable petroleum wealth will pay for public services and improvements in people's lives today and tomorrow. They also hope

that it will be a motor for non-oil economic development which can support the economy after the oil and gas is exhausted in a few decades. However, in Burma, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, promises that oil and gas will improve **people's lives have not been realized**, and Timor-Leste can learn from our experiences. We are concerned that Timor-Leste is about to approve in its first deep-water drilling, hopes to bring the Greater Sunrise gas pipeline and LNG plant on shore and plans to build a refinery, supply base, and petrochemical factories as a **"petroleum corridor" along its southwest coast**. This country is rapidly spending its oil revenues on projects with little long-term benefit for its citizens, and is even considering going into debt so that it can spend even more.

In our countries, such activities and policies have increased poverty, repression, suffering, injustice, displacement, disease, environmental degradation and human rights violations. As a new nation, Timor-**Leste's legal framework and regulatory** institutions are undeveloped and inexperienced. Oilwatch Southeast Asia urges Timor-Leste not to copy the mistakes of our countries, but to move cautiously in exploiting Timor-**Leste's** oil and gas fields, always remembering to put the interests of its people, especially children, first. Petroleum resources should only be developed if they will provide a blessing, not a curse.

The presentations from the Oilwatch Southeast Asia meetings in Dili are at <http://www.laohamutuk.org/Oil/Oilwatch/10OilwatchSEAJul2010.htm>.

In solidarity with the people of Timor-Leste,

- Arakan Oil Watch, Burma
- Central Visayas Fisherfolk Development Center Inc., Philippines
- Ecological Alert and Recovery – Thailand.
- JATAM, Indonesia
- Kalikasan People's Network for the Environment, Philippines
- Timor-**Leste Institute for Development Monitoring and Analysis (La'ó Hamutuk)**