

**STATEMENT BY THE SIOCON PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT ADVOCATES  
ALLIANCE LEAGUE (SPDAAL), OF BARANGAY SIAY, SIOCON, ZAMBOANGA  
DEL NORTE**

**TO**

**THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND INTERNATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND  
INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

**MARCH 23, 2005 - OTTAWA**

Dear Chairman Kilgour and honorable members of this Subcommittee,

The Siocon Peace and Development Advocates Alliance League (SPDAAL) is an organization composed of Muslims (mostly former members of Moro National Liberation Front [MNLF]), Christians, and Indigenous People<sup>1</sup>.

This Alliance is the result of the "Final Peace Agreement" that was reached between the MNLF and the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) on September 2, 1996. This agreement was reached with the support of the United Nations Multi-Donor Program (UNMDP) together with the Peace and Development Community.

It is SPDAAL's wish to maintain peace and order in our municipality, protect the people and environment, and facilitate unity between Muslims, Christians, and Indigenous Peoples.

Siocon has always been a land abundant in marine, forest and agriculture products.

We believe that peace is more than just the absence of physical conflict. True peace must come from the attainment of social justice.

We believe that development is only achieved when the people themselves own and direct the development process. Development that is pushed on the people from 'experts' or organizations is unsustainable and unhelpful.

The entry of TVI mining company in Canatuan has violated the right of our Subanon and Visayan brothers and sisters to live peacefully. It destroyed their lands and their plants. The company has just recently notified the people to leave the area immediately or the company will charge them with illegal occupation.

The Muslim people living downstream now fear diminishing agricultural harvests and fish catches. Frequent flooding is now occurring and certain species of fish – like the hepon – are observed to be decreasing. This indicates to us that the rivers that flow from Canatuan to the sea are already polluted with waste from TVI.

<sup>1</sup> These groups are also known as Moros, Visayans and Subanons.

Another indication of the pollution in our water is that skin diseases now experienced by residents along the Siocon River. Records of this can be found at our local health centers. Furthermore, the river now turns a brown color at even the slightest rains.

Sixty percent (60%) of the Moro population are fishers, 20% farmers, and the remainder are involved in related industries. This makes the decline of fish and agriculture products extremely troubling for us.

We believe that peace and development cannot be achieved until mining operations upstream are stopped.

Thus, SPDAAL states that TVI is not bringing development to the people of Siocon, and that its mining operations should be immediately stopped in order not to worsen the lives of our Moro, Subanon and Visayan brothers and sisters.

Signed

MOBIN ABUNAWAS  
President  
SPDAAL