



Barcelona, 6 May 2015

Most Honorable Jose Chaves Alvarez, Governor of Palawan
Honorable Dennis Socrates, Vice-Governor of Palawan

Dear Governor and Vice Governor of Palawan,

GRAIN is an international non-governmental organisation based in Barcelona, Spain. In 2012 we were awarded the Right Livelihood Award, popularly known as the Alternative Nobel Prize, by the Swedish Parliament for our "worldwide work to protect the livelihoods and rights of farming communities."

GRAIN has been closely following the land conflicts concerning the expansion of large scale plantations and industrial agriculture around the world, particularly in Asia and Africa. The industrial plantation model concentrates control and profits in the hands of a few multinational companies. This wave of industrial agriculture and large scale plantation is seeing local communities around the world lose access to vital land and water resources. They also have to face all the impacts that come with creation of vast monoculture plantations within their territories – pollution from pesticides, soil erosion, deforestation, and labour migration.

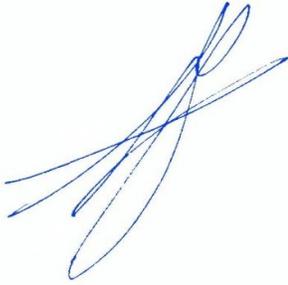
We have been following with great attention and considerable concern the recent controversies related to the massive expansion of oil palm plantations in Your Province ("the Philippines' Last Frontier"). Meanwhile we learned that traditional upland farming practices such as 'slash-and-burn' technology practices for generations by indigenous community in the area has been restricted through legislation. This is despite the fact that the latter fosters local self-sufficiency and plays a fundamental role in the livelihoods and worldviews of indigenous societies.

In this time of climate change, when weather patterns become more unpredictable and changes will affect food production in many parts of the world protecting Palawan from activities that will endangering biodiversity, water resources, topsoil quality and the livelihood of farmers and indigenous peoples becomes crucial. A study published in 2012 notes the share of deforestation linked to commercial agriculture: *"For decades the common view was that growing populations of shifting cultivators and smallholders were the main driver of forest changes. More recently, it has been argued that commercial actors play an increasingly larger role in the expansion of agriculture into the forest. This seems at least to be valid for the Amazon region and Southeast Asia.*

Indeed we believe that the commitment of Philippine's government to resolve food security, to improve farmers' economy and to safeguard indigenous peoples' ancestral domains, is not compatible with the ongoing attempt of converting precious land into large scale plantations moreover by restricting the traditional farming practices. Therefore, we kindly request your government to respond quickly and responsibly to the request of indigenous peoples and farmers of stopping the planting and tending of large scale plantation rather than prohibiting the traditional upland farming practices,

before the adverse and socio-ecological implications of oil palm expansion will become irreversible.

Your sincerely,



Henk Hobbelink
Director
GRAIN

Copy Furnished:

- Hon. Lucilio R. Bayron, Mayors of Puerto Princesa City
- Hon. Mary Jean Feliciano, Brooke's Point Municipality
- Dr. Marlea Pinor Munez, Executive Director National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP)
- Mr. Ruben S. Bastero, Regional Director RIV, National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP)
- Dionisia Banua, NCIP Commissioner
- Mrs. Mearl Hilario, PCSD Committee on Tribal Affairs