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Contacts:

For English please contact Paul Sein Twa at +66.(0)81.724.7093

For Burmese please contact Wong Aung at +66.(0)85.713.3344

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Burma Environmental Working Group Issues Benchmarks for Investment in Energy, Extractive and Land Sectors in Burma

Today, the Burma Environmental Working Group (BEWG) – an alliance of grassroots-based organizations – has issued its *Benchmarks for Investment in Burma's Energy, Extractive and Land Sectors* to serve as a framework for responsible investment in critical sectors in Burma.

The release of the benchmarks comes at a very important time when Western democracies are considering easing or eliminating existing economic sanctions against Burma, and companies and countries are showing renewed interest in investment in Burma despite a high risk investment environment.

Adherence to the benchmarks will increase the likelihood that investment in sectors that have been historically linked with human rights and environmental abuses will benefit the people of Burma and does not undermine effective political, social and environmental progress in this emerging South East Asian country.

“Investment in Burma must support genuine peace and national reform and must follow the will of local communities who have long paid the price for resource-driven investments through forced labor, land confiscation, illegal taxes, loss of life, and other human rights abuses,” said BEWG spokesperson Paul Sein Twa.

The following is a summary of BEWG's five major benchmarks for investors:

- 1) Do No Harm: Investment should not exacerbate natural resource and land-based conflict in Burma.**
- 2) Best Practices or No Practices: Investors should respect the widely accepted global standards for environmental and human rights law while following international best practices in human rights, social and environmental impact assessments.**
- 3) Act Transparently and with Principles: Investors should have a zero-tolerance policy on corruption and should uphold full revenue and contract transparency.**
- 4) Support Civil Society not Impunity: Civil society should be free to fulfill its role without threat of repression or abuse.**
- 5) Empower Communities: Community grievances must be fully addressed in existing and proposed investments.**

BEWG intends to work with additional stakeholders as space increases for civil society inside Burma to further refine and publicize these benchmarks.

For more information on this topic and BEWG member groups, please see accompanying statement. For more background information, please refer to BEWG's 2011 report, *Burma's Environment: People, Problems, Policies*. More information is also available on BEWG's website (www.bewg.org).