Alliance of UPM-Kimmene-APRIL under siege

The alliance between UPM-Kymmene of Finland and APRIL of Singapore to develop jointly their respective fine paper operations in Europe and Asia has been severely criticized by environmental and human rights groups (see WRM Bulletin nr. 6).

A letter, whose text is included below, was addressed to the owners and managers of UPM-Kymmene and APRIL, as well as to the Finnish press as a part of a campaign aimed to stop the alliance.

Friends of the Earth-Finland has also compiled an Internet page on the UPM-Kymmene/April case. The page includes documents and links to the company sites as well as relevant links to related topics such as forests fires, human rights and labour union concerns.

The text of the letter follows:

“Friends of the Earth Finland et alia 7.12.1997
President & CEO
Mr. Juha Niemelä
UPM-Kymmene
Finland

UPM-KYMMENE'S COOPERATION WITH APRIL

Dear Mr. Juha Niemelä,

We, the undersigned environmental citizens' oganisations are deeply concerned about the alliance UPM-Kymmene announced in September with Asia Pacific Resources International Holdings ltd (APRIL) on fine paper production. As the planned joint venture April Fine Paper would base its production on pulp supplied by April's Riaupulp mill, and probably also Indorayon mill, UPM-Kymmene will actively participate in converting natural rainforests - partially so called logged-over - to exotic monoculture plantations. This causes irreversible loss of ecological values and destruction of the environment of local communities. Due to Indonesian oppressive labour regulations and practices UPM-Kymmene will also involve itself in a violation of basic labour standards.

For these reasons we find UPM-Kymmene's alliance with April unacceptable.

Therefore we urge you to cancel the announced alliance and abstain from cooperating with April until the following changes are made in its Riaupulp (Riau) and Indorayon (North Sumatra) mills:

1. no more natural forests (even so called logged-over or degraded) are clear-cut and converted to monoculture plantations;

2. the traditional land tenure rights (adat) of the local communities are fully recognised within the

concession area and in other areas where the company is active;

3. if the communities agree in a democratic and open process to allow logging, plantations or construction on their lands, they must be fully compensated;

4. land alienated in the past are returned to the communities or the losses are fully compensated;

5. the basic labour standards, including right to free union association and collective bargaining, are observed in the mills and the companies make an effort to promote such policy nationwide.

We would like to get a substantial reply from you as soon as possible responding on our concerns and indicating your intentions regarding the alliance.

Sincerely yours

(Signatures of 31 representatives of environmental NGOs)”