



**Karen National Union
Supreme Headquarters
Kawthoolei
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KNU Statement on The Salween Peace Park's Equator Prize Award

The Karen National Union is proud that The Salween Peace Park was awarded the United Nations Development Program's Equator Prize 2020. The Equator Initiative received 583 global nominations from 120 countries and awarded 10 communities worldwide for local, innovative, nature-based solutions.

The Salween Peace Park is a bio-diverse landscape in Mutraw (Papun) District, Kawthoolei (Karen State), Eastern Burma (Myanmar). The Park is sustainably managed by Mutraw Indigenous Karen communities through an inclusive democratic governance structure that provides spaces for local people and leaders to 'talk' as peers. The Salween Peace Park won the award for maintaining stability and conservation of a 5,400 square kilometer continuous ecosystem made up of protected areas, community forests and indigenous lands. Even though the Karen indigenous communities have suffered the consequences of over 70 years of civil war, the communities stood firm and confronted the various obstacles trying to destroy the rich bio-diverse landscape. This demonstrated love, peace and practicing self-determination rights, while maintaining their environmental integrity and culture.

On the other hand, this demonstrates how the Karen Indigenous from Mutraw practice their Kaw-customary land, whereas the government of Burma (Myanmar) has still not acknowledged or accepted customary laws of the Indigenous people in Burma.

The Salween Peace Park was initiated in 2014 and submitted to the KNU 16th Congress in 2017. It was supported and approved at the Central Standing Committee's first meeting following the 16th KNU Congress in 2017. The Salween Peace Park is recognised by the KNU as an Indigenous managed Karen Cultural Heritage and Wildlife Sanctuary.

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