

Nordea Response

24 March 2017

Business & Human Rights Resource Centre invited Nordea to respond to:

“Silent Approval: The role of banks linked to the crisis faced by Borneo’s indigenous peoples and their forests”, Swedwatch and Fair Finance Guide, 7 Mar 2017

http://www.swedwatch.org/sites/default/files/tmp/silent_approval_borneo_full_report_0.pdf

Nordea responded with the following statement:

Nordea takes the information presented in Swedwatch report seriously. Human rights and indigenous rights are important issues for us. Through our engagement work we are constantly trying to push for environmental and social improvements within the companies we invest in. The engagement starts by initiating a dialogue with the companies that we identify in our norm based screening and/or the companies that we identify as having serious weaknesses in their work on environmental and social issues. The norm-based screening flags when a company violates international standards.

The connection between Nordea, the companies and the site studied in the report is as follows; BHP Billiton is since October, 2016 no longer active in Borneo. The other companies discussed, we have no holdings in, or has not been caught in our norm-based screening. After the report was launched Nordea has conducted meetings with AAK, BHP Billiton and Deutsche Bank to discuss the raised allegations. Our general conclusion is that these companies are more advanced in their management of environmental risks than social risks, such as indigenous rights. Hence, we have made the companies aware of that improvements have to be made within this area.

Nordea’s overall comprehension is that the report highlights important areas that companies as well as the financial sector must work on. However, our opinion is that the report reflects a very small part of the work Nordea does within this field. We have had a dialogue with several other companies that are not highlighted in the report, pushing for human rights and indigenous people’s rights. As an example, we were deeply engaged in these matters most recently in North Dakota in the United States. For more information about this please visit:

<https://www.nordea.com/en/press-and-news/news-and-press-releases/news-en/2017/%20Exclusion-of-Dakota-Access-Pipeline-companies.html>) We have also engaged in dialogue with companies related to deforestation in Borneo and made a field visit there in 2011 and now, in early 2017, we were in Indonesia. See the film from our last visit to Indonesia (<http://sustainablefinance.nordea.com/articles/can-we-have-palm-oil-industry-without-heavy-deforestation>)

Besides from our own work on matters relating to human rights Nordea works closely with other investors in industry initiatives, such as PRI and Corporate Human Rights Benchmark, to be able to affect a large number of companies concerning their work with human rights.