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PRESS RELEASE

PALAWAN COUNCIL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FAVORS COCKATOOS OVER COAL

Katala Foundation

Puerto Princesa City, Palawan. The Palawan Council for Sustainable Development (PCSD) on its August 2, 2013 regular meeting has voted “temporary” approval for the 15MW coal-fired power plant in Palawan with condition to relocate the site away from the flight path of the Philippine Cockatoo. The council further ruled that proponent must secure the needed endorsements from the municipal and provincial councils.

The PCSD’s decision not to endorse the unconditional clearance of earlier executive committee meetings prioritizes the survival of the Philippine cockatoo, a critically endangered species for which 25% of its global population is found on Rasa Island Wildlife Sanctuary and the mainland Panacan. The latter was proposed to be the site of the coal-fired power plant and is directly in the flight path of the species while it forages on mainland Narra, southern Palawan. *“This decision is a relief for all of our supporters locally and internationally. The long wait was worth it though the fight is not over until we are certain the conditions are met religiously by the proponent”*, says Indira Widmann, Program Manager of the Philippine Cockatoo Conservation Program. Widmann added that along with civil society it is hoped that the Palawan Energy Development Plan will be given significant priority under the PCSD’s new leadership.

The proposed coal plant would also endanger the marine ecosystems that provide income and livelihood for residents in Narra, in particular those in coastal areas. Moreover, burning of low quality grade coal from Semirara could result in health problems for the local population. Notwithstanding the carbon emissions that the said project would emit which is not clearly addressed in its supporting documents.

Massive opposition from the civil society, the affected municipal government, environmental groups and experts mounted as the decision of Council dragged. These oppositions were manifested in different media, rallies and two online signature campaigns (www.regenwald.org and www.change.org). The municipality of Narra which has a long standing partnership with Katala Foundation stood firm in its vehement opposition against the coal plant in the proposed site. *“The undeniable threat to the population of the Philippine cockatoo, the possible environmental impact of the thermal and chemical pollution, health effects and risk of bioaccumulation and magnification of toxins which endangers human life”* are the core reasons of the government of Narra’s opposition to the coal plant as indicated in Reso.

No. 2013-1969. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature was one of the numerous international organizations voicing out serious concerns over the project. It's Director General Julia Marton-Lefèvre appealed to the PCSD Chair, Gov. Jose C. Alvarez in a letter to seriously consider the plight of the Philippine cockatoo, the potential threats to marine and terrestrial ecosystems and Philippines' commitment to the Convention on Biological Diversity specifically Aichi Target 12 *"By 2020, the extinction of known threatened species has been prevented and their conservation status, particularly of those most in decline has been improved and sustained."*

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Notes for the Editor:

- The Philippine Cockatoo Conservation Program is implemented by the Katala Foundation Inc. since 1998 with Rasa Island as its pilot site. The Katala as locally known is classified critically endangered under the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- Rasa Island Wildlife Sanctuary is a nationally protected area under Presidential Proclamation 1000 signed on Feb. 15, 2006.