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**TOWARDS ECOLOGICAL RECOVERY AND REGIONAL ALLIANCE (TERRA)
PRESS BACKGROUNDER**

**Wildlife Conservationists Urge World Bank to Postpone Lao Dam
Decision**

Bangkok – A group of prominent wildlife scientists in Thailand have urged the **World Bank** to postpone its decision on financing the Nam Theun 2 hydro project in neighbouring Lao PDR.

The World Bank's idea to "build [Nam Theun 2] now and develop a [wildlife] management plan later violates all principles of sustainable development," according to a March 11 letter sent by Thailand's leading conservation organizations to the World Bank.

World Bank guidelines stipulate that before any final decision on environmentally threatening projects like Nam Theun 2, the project developers are required to complete an assessment of the project's impact on wildlife, which includes recommendations "to prevent, minimize, mitigate, or compensate for adverse impacts," the letter notes.

Yet wildlife studies in the Nakai-Nam Theun watershed have not been completed, meanwhile the developers, including Thailand's **Electricity Generating Company**, have started construction.

The letter further criticizes the World Bank for tying funds for wildlife conservation to a project that, if completed, will destroy wildlife habitat. "Conservation of wild elephants and other wildlife on the Nakai Plateau relies on the cooperation of the local people in the area, not the construction of the Nam Theun 2 dam," the letter notes.

If built, the Nam Theun 2 dam would flood 450 square kilometers of the Nakai Plateau-Nam Theun watershed, an area that wildlife scientists believe surpasses Thailand's finest wildlife sanctuaries in terms of its rich biodiversity.

The letter warns of the disastrous effects large hydro reservoirs in Thailand have had on wildlife. Wildlife around Thailand's Chiew Larn, Khao Laem, and Sri Nakarin dams was quickly hunted out by loggers, construction workers, and others before the dams were completed. Efforts to rescue starving and injured animals failed. Nor has anyone found an effective way to prevent human-elephant conflicts once the elephants' original habitat is flooded.

The World Bank is expected to make its decision early April.

The letter is signed by Soraida Salwal, Secretary-General, **Friends of Asian Elephant Foundation**, Veerawat Dheeraprasart, Chairperson, **Foundation for Ecological Recovery**, Rataya Chantian, Chairperson, **Seub Nakasathien Foundation**, Dr. Surapol Duangkae, Secretary-General, **Wildlife Fund Thailand**, Dr. Saranarat Kanjanavanit, Secretary-General, **Green World Foundation**, and Dr. Philip Round, Faculty of Science, **Mahidol University**.

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