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**SUBJECT:** Concerns over the Batang Toru Dam and its impacts on the Tapanuli orangutan

June 9<sup>th</sup> 2023

Dear Honourable Hu Xiaolin,

We would like to raise concerns with one of the projects you have committed financing for which is impacting the Critically Endangered Tapanuli orangutan (*Pongo tapanuliensis*). This project is the Batang Toru hydroelectric dam on the island of Sumatra, Indonesia.

The Tapanuli orangutan has fewer than 800 individuals remaining for its entire species. They possess a highly restricted range which overlaps with the location of the Batang Toru dam. This project will not only generate direct impacts, but potentially significant indirect impacts. The flooding of the area will destroy orangutan habitat and cause fragmentation thereby decreasing the connectivity between the different forest blocks used by orangutans, which will render this fragile population even more vulnerable to extinction and significantly compromise its long-term survival. Furthermore, the construction of power lines and roads will increase access to the area which can lead to further impacts on their populations. Ongoing construction is already impacting orangutans, notably through the loss of habitat, noise and other disturbances associated with human presence and construction activities. These impacts have already led to an increase in reported orangutan-human conflicts since orangutans are being driven out of their habitat into cultivated land or neighboring villages. For these reasons, the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) called for a [moratorium](#)<sup>1</sup> in 2019 on all industrial development projects in the Batang Toru landscape. NGOs, in collaboration with the government of Indonesia, are currently collecting robust data on this orangutan population that will feed into a conservation management plan to ensure the survival of this species.

Several lenders have refrained from financing this project given the social and environmental impacts, the latest being the Bank of China. We are asking the Export-Import Bank of China to follow in their

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<https://www.iucn.org/news/secretariat/201904/iucn-calls-a-moratorium-projects-impacting-critically-endangered-tapanuli-orangutan>



footsteps and respect the 2019 IUCN moratorium that was put in place to prevent any further decline of the Tapanuli orangutan population.

We would also welcome the Export-Import Bank of China to contact the IUCN SSC PSG SGA ARRC (Avoid, Reduce, Restore, & Conserve) Task Force to receive advice on any potential projects they are looking to finance in great ape habitat. This is now a requirement in the International Finance Corporation Performance Standard 6, paragraph 73:

*“Special consideration should be given to great apes (gorillas, orangutans, chimpanzees and bonobos) due to their anthropological significance. Where great apes may potentially occur the IUCN Species Survival Commission (SSC) Primate Specialist Group (PSG) Section on Great Apes (SGA) must be consulted as early as possible to assist in the determination of the occurrence of great apes in the project’s area of influence. Any area where there are great apes is likely to be treated as critical habitat. Projects in such areas will be acceptable only in exceptional circumstances, and individuals from the IUCN SSC PSG SGA must be involved in the development of any mitigation strategy.”*

Given that the Export-Import Bank of China follows best practice standards and is looking for ways to be a leader in their field, notably through its green financing program, we would encourage you to disengage from the Batang Toru dam and support alternative energy projects in other locations which would have less environmental and social impacts.

Please let us know if you have any questions or if you would like to set up a call to discuss further.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Genevieve Campbell".

Dr Genevieve Campbell  
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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dirck Byler".

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