

To the General Assembly of RSPO

Joint statement by participants assembled at the ‘Conflict or Consent workshop’,

Medan, 8-10th November 2013.

At the occasion of the Workshop Conflict or Consent, held prior to RSPO RT11 and GA 10, the participants brought together 16 case studies from two continents, bearing witness to serious land conflicts and associated human rights violations caused by irresponsible oil palm plantation development. These in-depth narratives have been compiled in the report titled *Conflict or Consent. The Oil Palm Sector at the Cross Roads*.¹

We observe some advances in procedures and improvements in the Principles and Criteria, and strong efforts by some members and other parties to push for remedies. However, the participants observed that many of the companies implicated in these continuing violations are RSPO members. These realities underline the enormous challenge RSPO, its membership and the market are facing to ensure compliance with basic requirements enshrined in the RSPO Principles and Criteria, such as adherence to fundamental human rights, national laws and international social and environmental conventions.

It is reason for concern that the RSPO membership is still unable to fully grasp the serious social effects accompanying the production of this strategic commodity. It is also to argue that RSPO evolved due to governments not yet being able to regulate the palm oil sector and prevent the serious abuses recorded in the said cases studies and many other field assessments.

It is also to emphasize that participants endorsing this appeal are all intensively involved in the palm oil and RSPO arena, working to develop means to help mitigate and resolve these problems. Some of us have been mandated to engage in the various executive and governing bodies of RSPO

Appreciative of the commitments made by RSPO members to achieve certified sustainable palm oil, we request you to review our report and formulate actions which help ensure that all palm oil entering the market is indeed ‘free of conflict’.

We invite you to join us in our efforts to up-hold the RSPO standard and its implementation, notably by harnessing its remedial instruments such as its complaints mechanism and the RSPO Dispute Settlement Facility, acting with urgency to remedy the violations highlighted in the book, commissioning a genuinely independent review of the quality of audits to assess compliance with social considerations, and to urge our governments to improve the legal-institutional framework guiding the palm oil sector. We request a report back from the Executive Board within six months on substantial progress made in resolving all these serious problems and meantime actions are taken to strengthen accountability back to the affected communities. We request you to verify for yourselves, in the field in consultation with the communities, the conditions under which palm oil is being produced and help co-design and

¹ <http://www.forestpeoples.org/topics/palm-oil-rspo/publication/2013/conflict-or-consent-oil-palm-sector-crossroads>

implement measures to bring the RSPO standard into practice. We stand ready to dialogue with all parties and do what we can to help resolve these problems.

Sincerely yours,

Participants from:

1. Andalas University, Padang, Sumatra
2. Badan Perjuangan Rakyat Penunggu Indonesia (BPRPI), Indonesia
3. Bitra Indonesia, North Sumatra
4. Both ENDS, Netherlands
5. Centre de coopération internationale en recherche agronomique pour le développement (CIRAD), France
6. École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, France
7. ELSAKA, North Sumatra
8. Forest Peoples Programme, United Kingdom
9. Front Mahasiswa Nasionalis Medan, North Sumatra
10. Gabungan Serikat Buruh Indonesia, North Sumatra
11. HuMa, Indonesia
12. HUTAN, Malaysia
13. Hutan Rakyat Institute (HARI), North Sumatra
14. IDEAL, Malaysia
15. Impartial Mediators Network, Indonesia
16. Indigenous Peoples' Foundation for Education and Environment, Thailand
17. Indonesia Peoples' Alliance, North Sumatra
18. Jaringan Kerja Pemetaan Partisipatif (JKPP), Indonesia
19. Jaringan seOrang Asal SeMalaysia (JOAS)
20. Keystone Foundation, India
21. Komunitas Peduli Hutan Sumatra Utara (KPHSU), Indonesia
22. Lembaga Gemawan, West Kalimantan, Indonesia
23. Natural Justice, South Africa
24. Oxfam Novib, The Netherlands
25. PUSAKA Indonesia, Indonesia
26. PUSAKA, Indonesia
27. Qbar Association, Padang, Indonesia
28. Rainforest Action Network (RAN), United States
29. Sawit Watch, Indonesia
30. SCALE UP, Indonesia
31. Setara Jambi, Indonesia
32. Socio-Pastoral Institute, Cameroon
33. StaB-LB, North Sumatra, Indonesia
34. Transformasi Untuk Keadilan INDONESIA
35. Wahana Bumi Hijau (WBH), Indonesia
36. Walhi Kalbar, Indonesia
37. Walhi Kalteng, Indonesia
38. Walhi Riau, Indonesia
39. Walhi SumSel, Indonesia
40. Walhi Sumut, Indonesia
41. Warsi, Jambi, Indonesia
42. Yayasan Konservasi Way Seputih (YKWS), Indonesia