

Press Release

Position Statement of the Victimized Community Impacted by Palm Oil Plantation

Jakarta, 19 November 2023

We, who are speaking today in Jakarta are the people of indigenous and local communities from Riau, West Sumatra, West Kalimantan, and Central Kalimantan that currently standing as the victim of the palm oil plantation companies. Those companies are the one who seized our lands and forest without the consent of our communities. The leaders and members of our communities have been criminalized by the Indonesia police for various fabricated reasoning. Thus, we have been victims for dozens to decades of years.

Throughout the years, we have made all the possible effort to get justice from every available state mechanisms at both local and central levels. Unfortunately to date, those justice is still a far-reaching dream.

We also resorted to the available mechanism provided by the existing market, namely through the RSPO's complaint mechanism. Hope has been given for far too great for this mechanism to give a hope of justice, with a clarity and certainty throughout the complaint process.

“The community really hopes that the existing RSPO complaint system has certainty of time and clarity of procedure for handling complaints, so that the resolution process becomes clear” – Irasan, Batin Talang Parit, Indragiri Hulu, Riau.

However, efforts through the RSPO grievance unit mechanism have so far failed to produce the just result we had hoped for. The excuses given by the RSPO are including: Cases occurred before the RSPO standard existed as it was deemed a baseless statement by Nazar Ikhwan, Angku Imbang Langi a customary judge from Nagari Anam Koto, Kinali, West Pasaman, West Sumatra. “In our opinion the reasons for the RSPO's rejection of our complaint are baseless reasoning and inconsistent with the intent of the sustainable palm oil policy, as stated in the P&C(Principle and Criteria)” as he specifically stated; other reasons such as the case is still being assessed and will be field-investigated. Even more galling, there are companies from RSPO member's business group that were in conflict with communities but were able to sell the unlawful subsidiaries to other parties. All of these violate the established P&C and it should have been appropriate from

our view for RSPO to sanction the company. Unfortunately everything we expected from all these decades of struggling from the RSPO was never answered, let alone fulfilled.

The RSPO P&C violations and persistent disregard that we faced continued as follows: The use of customary land by the company without FPIC(Free Prior Informed Consent); The company not fulfilling it's obligation to build plasma plantations for the community; victimized communities' inability to easily access information about grievance handling procedures; and unfair labor disparities for local communities, including indigenous peoples, who continue to work as casual daily laborers at the company after more than a dozen years of employment. We doubt the advantages of the RSPO In terms of defending and upholding the rights of native populations, nearby communities, and land users who lost their lands and forests. indigenous peoples, local communities, and land users who have lost their woods and lands as a result of a corporate plot involving dishonest government and security personnel. "The RSPO did not pay any attention to the reports we submitted in our complaint and did not give any sanction for the violation of the law and the deprivation of our our rights to our customary land" – said Ramadhan Tanjung, Sinaro Panghulu Basa, The leader of Adat Nagari Simpang Tigo Kotobaru with utter disappointment of RSPO system. We question the RSPO's commitment to enforcing its own Principles and Criteria. As one of the main tenets, we are aware that all RSPO member firms are required to abide by national rules and laws.

However, the RSPO does not penalize their companies group member for breaking laws and policies. neither imposed punishments on them. "We did not find the implementation of sustainable standards in Wilmar's palm oil business in PT AMP, we really hope that RSPO can control the implementation of their P&C and sanction members who violate it" – Gasmil, Indigenous peoples from Jorong Labuhan, Nagari Tiku Limo Jorong, Agam, Sumatera Barat.

We see the problem of RSPO member adherence to the RSPO Principles and Criteria as extremely vital, one that has been disregarded by the organization itself. Especially when it comes to confrontation with indigenous peoples and local communities, "We demand that the RSPO maintain its independence and uphold the rights of the local community and Indigenous Peoples at all times. Our goal is for the certification process to always be open and honest. Additionally, we anticipate that auditors will be able to evaluate based on field results." As stated by Said Faizantas'Ad, Petapahan Village, Tapung, Kampar Region, Riau. Adding to that statement, Weiz from

the Dayak Bekati Riuk Sebalos Community, Bengkayang Regency, West Kalimantan, emphasized the expectations and hope of their community “ "Indigenous peoples want the RSPO to be firm in sanctioning these companies and to follow up on any community complaints about problematic companies filed by the community through the RSPO complaint mechanism," said the largest organization in charge of overseeing palm oil industry companies, the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)”.

We shall keep in mind that the RSPO was founded with the intention of advancing the concept of sustainable palm oil, which places a high value on environmental sustainability as well as the rights of local communities and indigenous peoples. As a result, we insist that RSPO must take responsibility for all violations of the RSPO Principles and Criteria that was done by RSPO member companies. Additionally, we expect that local governments that are presently collaborating with the RSPO to apply the jurisdictional approach consistently and with full responsibility. “We expect the seriousness of the Local Governments that apply a certificate-based jurisdictional approach in resolving plantation conflicts to immediately take a strong action against companies that commit violations. We explicitly address this message to the government of the Seruyan Regency Government.” – As stated by Rusdiana, Tanjung Hanau Village, Seruyan Regency.

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We, The people who declare this statement :

- Community of Nagari Kotobaru, Pasaman Barat, Sumatera Barat
- Community of Anam Koto Kinali Pasaman Barat, Sumatera Barat
- Community of Labuhan, Agam, Sumatera Barat
- Community of Talang Mamak Luak Talang Parit, Indragiri Hulu, Riau
- Farmers Group of Harapan Sp-3, Nagari Simpang Tigo Koto Baru, .Luhak Nan Duo Regency, Pasaman Barat, West Sumatra.
- Community of Tanjung Hanau, Seruyan, Central Kalimantan
- Community of Lampasa Village, Seruyan Regency, Central Kalimantan
- Indigenous people of Bekati Riuk Dusun Sebalos, Bengkayang, West Kalimantan
- Indigenous people of Dayak Bekati Subah, Kabupaten Sambas, West Kalimantan
- Indigenous people of Dayak Hibun, Kerunang-Entapang, Sanggau, West Kalimantan

List of Organization that Supported the Victimized Community :

- Yayasan Masyarakat Kehutanan Lestari
- PROGRESS Kalimantan Tengah
- Wahana Lingkungan Hidup Indonesia (WALHI) Kalimantan Barat
- LemBAH, Kalimantan Barat
- Yayasan Ulayat Nagari Indonesia, Sumatera Barat
- ASM / Accountability Sustainable Monitoring, Riau
- Bahtera Alam, Riau
- Forest People Programme, Inggris