

**Assurance Standing Committee  
13th Meeting (via Zoom)  
Minutes of Meeting**

Physical Venue : Perak Room, Shangri-La Kuala Lumpur  
Zoom Link : Zoom Meeting (<https://zoom.us/j/93562883937>)  
Date and time : 1 December 2022 at 9.30 am – 12.00 pm KL time

**Members Attendance:**

<b>Growers</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Group Representation</b>
Agus Purnomo (Co-chair) (AP)	Golden Agri Resources (GAR)	Indonesian Growers (IGC)
William Siow (WS)	IOI Group	Malaysian Growers (MPOA)
Mariama Diallo (MD) <i>(absent with apology)</i>	SIAT Nigeria	Growers RoW
Lawrence Quarshie (LQ)	Golden Star Oil Palm Farmers Association (GSOPFA)	Smallholders Group
<b>NGOs</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Group Representation</b>
Kamal Prakash Seth (Co-Chair) (KS)	WWF International	E-NGO
Paula den Hartog (PdH)	Rainforest Alliance	E-NGO
Paul Wolvekamp (PW)	Both ENDS	S-NGO
Marcus Colchester (MC)	Forest Peoples Programme	S-NGO
<b>Supply Chain Sector / Downstream / Others</b>		
<b>Name</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Group Representation</b>
Olivier Tichit (OT)	Musim Mas Holdings	P&T
Michal Zrust (MZ) <i>(absent with apology)</i>	Lestari Capital	Financial
Lee Kuan-Chun (LKC)	P&G	CGM

**RSPO Secretariat Attendance:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>

Aryo Gustomo (AG)	Interim Director, Assurance
Wan Muqtadir Wan Abdul Fatah (WM)	Head, Integrity
Zaidee Mohd Tahir	Manager, Integrity
Freda Manan	Sr. Executive, Integrity
Shazaley Abdullah (SA)	Head, Certification
Amirul Ariff (AA)	Manager, P&C Certification
Nadia Nasir	Executive, P&C Certification
Citra Hartati	Head, Risk
'Adilatul Fitry	Executive, Geospatial

**Other attendance:**

Name	Organisation	Role
Sönke Fischer (SF)	ASI	Strategic Development Director
Evi Mateboer (EM)	ASI	Integrity Director
Jan Pierre (JP)	ASI	RSPO Programme Manager for ASI

Item	Description	Action Points
1.0	<b>Introduction</b> WM opened the meeting and invited AP to give welcome remarks. AP informed that KS will join the meeting at 10.00 a.m. since he had to attend another meeting first. WM briefly shared the agenda for today's meeting.	
1.1	<b>RSPO Antitrust Law, Recap ASC ToR (Objectives, Consensus-Based Decision Making)</b> WM reminded the members of the RSPO Antitrust Guidelines and the objectives of the ASC. WM stated that the ASC follows the RSPO consensus-based decision-making process, in accordance with the ASC Terms of Reference.	
1.2	<b>Declaration of Conflict of Interest, Col</b> WM highlighted the ASC Col obligations. No Col was declared at this meeting.	
1.3	<b>Acceptance of MoM from 22 September 2022 Meeting</b> WM asked the members for comments or feedback on the final minutes from the previous ASC meeting on 22 September 2022. All members agreed to accept the minutes.	The Secretariat to present a draft ToR for the second study on de-linking CBs



	<p>WM added that the RSPO's Assurance Division now consists of 23 personnel, led by AG as the Interim Director of Assurance. WM introduced all Secretariat's personnel who attended the meeting.</p> <p>WM asked the ASC about matters arising. A member asked about the action item for 3.2 - <i>the Secretariat to immediately start on the second study for de-linking CBs with certificate holders</i>. AG responded that the project has been included in the Secretariat's budget and the ToR will be presented to the ASC in Q1 2023. The member continued with the second action item for 3.2 - <i>the Secretariat to develop a code of conduct for auditors for the next revision of the certification system</i>. WM responded that this will be developed by the Integrity Unit in Q1 2023. The member then asked about an action item for 5.2 - <i>the Secretariat to work with the ASC's social NGO constituent on a draft proposal for improvement on social auditing</i>. WM stated that the Secretariat had prioritised the Labour Auditing Guidance in the last 3 months and will get back to the social NGO constituent on this action item. The member informed that some ideas were shared with the BoG and will do the same for the Secretariat to start working on it.</p> <p>A member shared that the RT 2022 Plenary session on Labour &amp; Human Rights emphasised the importance of social dialogue especially in Collective Bargaining Agreement for workers and mentioned that this needs to be more thoroughly anchored in the P&amp;C. The member reminded that the ASC had discussed the possibility of enabling workers to use technology such as Ulula or WageIndicator to voice different aspects of their working condition. WM responded that the reactivation of worker voice tools had been identified in the Assurance Gap Analysis and the Secretariat is working with Ulula to conduct a pilot programme. The member suggested looking at other options as well such as WageIndicator and this was supported by another member.</p>	<p>with certificate holders in Q1 2023 ASC meeting.</p> <p>The Secretariat to present a draft code of conduct for auditors in Q1 2023 ASC meeting.</p> <p>ASC's social NGO representative to share ideas for improvement on social auditing with the Secretariat.</p> <p>The Secretariat to present proposals for worker voice tools from Ulula and Wage Indicator in Q1 2023 ASC meeting.</p>
<p><b>2.0</b></p> <p><b>2.1</b></p>	<p><b>For Discussion</b></p> <p><b>Draft P&amp;C 2023: Consultation with the ASC</b></p> <p>WM explained that the Secretariat had selected a few indicators that are relevant to the ASC for discussion. WM suggested bringing ASC's feedback to the P&amp;C Review Task Force (TF) and asked if the ASC had any questions on this process. A member commented that the TF has been tasked to lead the process and ideally if the TF has any concerns that need the ASC to resolve, it will be done accordingly. Each constituent has a representative in the TF to channel their suggestions. Therefore, minutes from this meeting should only act as discussion points from the ASC for the TF to consider. This was agreed by other members.</p> <p>WM shared the background and timeline of the P&amp;C Review process which is currently in its first public consultation stage and the second public consultation will take place from April-June 2023. WM highlighted the objectives of today's discussion, with some changes based on earlier comments made by the ASC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● to ensure that the revised P&amp;C is implementable &amp; auditable</li> <li>● to focus on indicators relevant to pressing issues related to assurance</li> <li>● to look at how certain sentences can be improved to ensure implementability and auditability of the indicators</li> </ul> <p>WM presented the areas of concern which includes robustness of the MB module, EU deforestation legislation, environmental/ ecosystem impact, indigenous/</p>	

<p>traditional people’s rights/ FPIC, land conflict, HCV assessments, labour issue &amp; workers rights and grievance mechanism. WM highlighted two issues that are often discussed in the ASC; conflict of interest &amp; impartiality and audit &amp; report quality, and asked if the two can be made part of the P&amp;C. A member commented that those are not P&amp;C matters and if included in the P&amp;C, members will be bound to it for 5 years. However, the certification system will regularly be improved so it is wiser to keep them separate. This was agreed by another member.</p> <p>WM brought up indicator 2.3.2 related to MB Module &amp; Land Conflict, with the following points of discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While directly sourced FFB can provide information that they are from legal origin, buying indirect FFB volumes from collection centres or any intermediaries adds another layer of complexity and risk.</li> <li>• Even if mills are able to collect geolocation and proof of ownership from their intermediaries, it is difficult to be sure that the information provided actually matches the FFB supplied.</li> <li>• Big growers have a lot of indirect sources, so it is more challenging for them to comply with this indicator and for auditors to verify.</li> <li>• How can the MB model help accelerate the transition to a more sustainable palm oil sector?</li> <li>• Upcoming EU legislation on corporate sustainability due diligence.</li> </ul> <p>WM raised a point on the origin of the FFB, especially for large growers who are unable to collect all the information. A member asked why this cannot be achieved. AG said the indicator does not clearly mention the data must be accurate, complete and up-to-date, so growers may collect it progressively. In its case register, the Secretariat had seen issues in dealing with intermediaries/ middle men who cannot get the necessary information and loss of information in the process of adding more suppliers. A member clarified that the case register is for members who are yet able to fulfil indicator 2.3.2.ii <i>Proof of ownership, customary rights or other land user rights to the land by the farmers</i> and shared that in Indonesia, despite being able to trace their locations, a certain percentage of smallholders do not have land titles. The member asked how to prevent this from causing growers to be in breach of the P&amp;C. Others emphasised the need to make this indicator more implementable and ensure National Interpretation (NI) requirements are not relaxed in locations where it can easily be fulfilled. Another member suggested to reconsider the use of ‘shall’. WM confirmed that NI requirements need to be higher than the indicator and shared that in the Malaysian NI, the MPOB license can be considered proof of ownership.</p> <p>The meeting resumed and WM welcomed KS to the meeting. WM brought indicator 2.4.1(C) - related to Grievance Mechanism and Labour Rights to the discussion. The following points of discussion were presented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Accessible</i> should cover - access, language, literacy, awareness, finance, distance</li> <li>• Should the grievance mechanism be independent from the UoC?</li> <li>• How to ensure grievance does not stop at estate level management? Should this be part of the Metrics Template?</li> </ul> <p>A member commented that the definition of ‘accessible’ seems theoretical and wondered if auditors can find compliance to this requirement, especially for children. Grievance mechanisms should stop at the appropriate level of</p>	
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	<p>management to avoid losing sight of smaller companies. A member asked if this will duplicate criteria 4.2* of P&amp;C 2018 - <i>there is a mutually agreed and documented system for dealing with complaints and grievances, which is implemented and accepted by all affected parties.</i></p> <p><i>*Note: No direct duplication, the closest to 4.2 in P&amp;C 2018 is criteria 4.6 in draft P&amp;C 2023 - There is a conflict resolution system to resolve disputes in a practical and constructive manner.</i></p> <p>WM asked the ASC if internal audits conducted by units of certification (UoC) will give a certain weightage on the auditability of this indicator. A member responded that internal audits should identify risk level, which will then be considered during external audits by CBs. A member commented that grievance resolution is not always satisfactory and suggested a revision to 2.4.1.ii <i>Maintain a registry of grievances received</i> - to include the resolution process. Another member said that this can be done in the form of an action tracker. SF mentioned that the procedure to acknowledge, investigate and resolve grievances is already covered in 2.4.1.i, and 2.4.1.ii is about documentation.</p> <p>WM continued with indicator 4.2.5, related to FPIC and Land Conflict and the following points of discussion were presented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indicator 4.2.5 to include participatory mapping &amp; evidence to show that communities are represented through institutions or representatives of their own choosing, including by legal counsel if they so choose.</li> <li>• ASC to propose alignment with the new FPIC guide.</li> </ul> <p>A member commented that participatory mapping* and representatives of their own choosing are in indicators 4.4.3 and 4.4.5 of P&amp;C 2018 and asked if they are included in draft P&amp;C 2023. Another member agreed that this indicator should be aligned with the new FPIC guide.</p> <p><i>*Note: Participatory mapping is included as indicator 4.2.6 in draft P&amp;C 2023.</i></p> <p>WM presented a comparison between the EU Deforestation Regulation with the related draft indicators in P&amp;C 2023:</p> <p><b>Aims</b>  EU: Minimise products from supply chains associated with deforestation.  Draft P&amp;C: Ecosystems are protected, restored and resilient, supported by sustainable consumption, production, and management of natural resources.</p> <p><b>Definition of Deforestation</b>  EU: Conversion of forest to other land use whether human-induced or not (FAO).  Draft P&amp;C: Loss of natural forest as a result of: i) conversion to agriculture or other non-forest land use; ii) conversion to a plantation forest; or iii) severe and sustained degradation.</p> <p><b>Rules</b>  EU: Products must be deforestation-free, produced in accordance with legislation of the production country and covered by due diligence statements (Article 3).  Draft P&amp;C: Criteria 7.11: Land clearing does not cause deforestation or damage any HCV/HCS areas, peatlands and other conservation areas.</p> <p><b>Due Diligence</b>  EU: Procedure should ensure risk of non-compliant relevant commodities or products being placed or exported from the EU market is negligible (Article 8).  Draft P&amp;C: Risk management process to identify, prevent, mitigate, and account for how environmental &amp; social risks and impacts in operations, supply chains &amp;</p>	
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	<p>investments are addressed.</p> <p><b>Deforestation Free</b></p> <p>EU: Products were produced on land that has not been subject to deforestation after 31 December 2020.</p> <p>Draft P&amp;C: 7.11.1 Land clearing since November 2005 has not damaged any primary forest and/or HCV areas. Land clearing since 15 November 2018 has not damaged HCS forests. Compensation liability shall be assessed through Land Use Change Analysis (LUCA).</p> <p>WM informed the ASC that the Secretariat will focus on indicators 7.11.1, 7.11.2 and 7.11.3 and highlighted the following points of discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are RSPO P&amp;C indicators stricter than the EU Regulation?</li> <li>• Do we need to include due diligence before land clearing as per EU requirement?</li> <li>• Is compliance to indicators 7.11.1 - 7.11.3 adequate to fulfil the due diligence requirements of the EU Regulation?</li> </ul> <p>A member commented that the TF should decide whether the P&amp;C comply with any regulations and added that the EU Regulation is still in draft stage. However, the new HCSA assessment may make new RSPO developments not compliant with the EU Regulation that has a threshold of 1 ha but the HCSA has taken a different approach to achieve the best environmental impacts i.e. a low priority patch of less than 10 ha can be cleared, provided that it is aggregated to a larger conservation area. Therefore, any RSPO-certified IP mills with cut-off dates of 2019, 2020 or 2021 will not be compliant to the EU Regulation.</p> <p>WM asked a final question; are indicators 7.11.1, 7.11.2 and 7.11.3 auditable or are they fine since some of them are already in P&amp;C 2018, except for 7.11.3 which was adapted from Annex 5, 7.12.2 interpretation document. A member commented that the ASC should only be looking at implementability. Another member asked if the RSPO is keeping abreast of development of regulations outside the organisation. A member responded that the BoG had highlighted this and the RSPO's CEO will continuously monitor and report any new developments to the BoG. Alignment of the P&amp;C with other regulations such as the EU Regulation should be discussed within the TF. Another member shared that there has been monthly EU Regulation updates from the Secretariat (organised by Ruben Brunsveld, RSPO's Deputy Director, EMEA) and asked if it will be more influential if the ASC gives suggestions on implementability of the standard as a group in these monthly sessions since the Secretariat has been experiencing difficulties in getting quality input.</p> <p>WM thanked the members for their comments and reassured that the minutes will be shared with the P&amp;C Review Task Force only as discussions within the ASC and not suggestions from the ASC.</p> <p>A member asked if the Secretariat can share the current checklist for auditors with the ASC because it will be useful in reviewing the audibility of the standard.</p>	<p>The Secretariat to share points of discussion with the ASC on draft P&amp;C 2023 with the P&amp;C Review Task Force.</p> <p>The Secretariat to share the P&amp;C 2018 generic checklist for auditors with the ASC.</p>
<p>2.2</p>	<p><b>Merging of CB's Preliminary Audit Data Form with the RSPO Metrics Template</b></p> <p>AA shared the problem statements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the August 2022 Members Meeting in Medan, Indonesia, United Plantations (UP) raised concerns over the proposed changes in RSPO</li> </ul>	

	<p>Metrics Template. While digitalisation will create alignment, the issue of RSPO Metrics Template and the CB's Preliminary Audit data form being developed as separate structures with separate functions remain.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UP suggested the CB's Preliminary Audit data form (which includes the requirements of Annex 3 in the RSPO Certification Systems Document) to be merged into the RSPO Metrics Template, claiming that the two documents have the same data points.</li> <li>• As a response to this suggestion, the Secretariat conducted an analysis on the similarities of the two datasets to see the possibility of merging similar input into one document (i.e. RSPO Metrics Template).</li> </ul> <p>AA then explained the differences between the CB's preliminary audit data form and the RSPO Metrics Template and showed samples of the documents. The Secretariat's analysis concluded that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are 13% similarities between the two datasets.</li> <li>• This is equivalent to 16 out of 123 data points.</li> <li>• Merging the two datasets will add at least 50+ data points to the RSPO Metrics Template.</li> </ul> <p>For discussion, AA shared the Secretariat's opinion; merging the two datasets into a single template should only be necessary when there is a higher similarity between the two datasets. AA asked, with only 13% of similarities, would the ASC support the merging of these two documents into one template (i.e. RSPO Metrics Template)?</p> <p><b>Discussion points</b></p> <p>A member asked if the CB's Preliminary Audit Data Form is part of the implementation of Annex 3, to which AA responded yes. The member commented that even with 13% similarities, it is understandable that RSPO members may find difficulties in filling in the same data points twice and this may result in errors. It is worth looking into having the same data input be provided once, even if the two documents are not merged together. The member posted another question; does the Metrics Template go into PalmTrace in a separate field, will it be uploaded as a pdf document or is it not going to PalmTrace at all? AA answered that it is uploaded to PalmTrace as a separate document. The member commented that a lot of information in the metrics template is already being collected in PalmTrace via other sources so there is room for synergising the input to increase accuracy and make it easier for CBs and companies.</p> <p>Another member asked about usage of the data sets and how it relates to ensuring assurance implementation on the ground. WM responded that information from the Metrics Template will be analysed by the RSPO's Impacts team, to look at a management unit's performance such as freshwater consumption, dispersion of labours etc. A member shared that the Metrics Template is a standardised document for all CBs and members to use in order for the Secretariat to measure members' performance. Another member commented that the Metrics Template must include social aspects e.g. decent living/ minimum wage to assess the essential impacts. WM shared that the Metrics Template was developed by its own task force and approved by the Standard Standing Committee (SSC).</p> <p>A member emphasised the importance of a single template for many uses to prevent errors. The Secretariat needs to look into the needs of the Metrics Template and the CB's Preliminary Audit Data Form and simplify the two. Another</p>	<p>The Secretariat to convey the ASC's suggestion on strengthening social aspects in the Metrics Template to the Impacts Team.</p>
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	<p>member said that when RSPO and auditors present growers with separate templates, similar data points can be found in each one. The member also shared that the particular grower who raised the problem statement had offered to have a discussion with the Secretariat to sort out the issue. The member then asked why different CBs listed in the analysis who are looking at the same P&amp;C audit system, would ask different questions? Another member commented that the Secretariat should allow auditors and growers more time to capture real opportunities in audits instead of spending too much time on administrative tasks, which can also affect the credibility of assurance. Another member pointed out that 13% similarities is actually a problem and the Secretariat needs to find a solution for this.</p>	
<p><b>2.3</b></p>	<p><b>Updates from ASI</b>          WM invited SF to present this topic. SF shared ASI's slides which contains the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ASI has kept track of P&amp;C audit report data since 2015 through manual data extraction. The database sums up more than 2,400 RSPO P&amp;C audit reports, which include more than 4,900 Major and 3,800 Minor Non-Conformities (NCs) raised by CBs.</li> <li>• Labour, Waste Management and Health &amp; Safety are the most common issues found by auditors. There are also indicators that were not identified.</li> <li>• ASI will use these data to reveal differences in rigor and performance by different CBs, auditors and countries, to inform ASI sampling and assessment approach. ASI will also use it to share learnings with e.g. CBs and as input to RSPO for upcoming standard revisions.</li> <li>• ASI will further analyse and interpret these data together with the RSPO Standard Development Team.</li> <li>• Most common NCs found by CAB auditors: Labour, Waste Management and Health &amp; Safety (question remains about real prevalence of NCs at CH level).</li> <li>• Least common NCs: e.g. employment of young workers, access to clean water. Potentially, auditors are challenged to detect, raise or do not have an understanding of the evaluated concept.</li> <li>• Further analysis will be done to uncover problems with e.g. auditability or competence.</li> <li>• More NCs are raised against the highlighted criteria (4.4, 6.1, 6.2, 6.5 &amp; 6.7) when ASI is witnessing which raises the questions; What is the real prevalence of NCs? What do CAB and CH do when ASI does not witness?</li> </ul> <p>EM then presented recent examples of social compliance assessments:</p> <p><b>Honduras</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Findings at CH level: failures by the CH in the management of stakeholder complaints, lack of H&amp;S risk assessment, social and environmental impact monitoring plan not fully implemented, workers' lack of enrollment in social security system, excessive working hours on one farm.</li> <li>• Findings at CAB level: ASI raised a "Compliance follow-up" repeated failure to close nonconformities, stakeholder consultation, unidentified nonconformity, and failure to define the scope of certification.</li> </ul> <p><b>Guatemala</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Findings at CH level: Incomplete Social Impact Assessment by CH including participatory mapping of stakeholders. Water pollution, identification of impacts regarding water in the EIA. Gaps in the grievance mechanism.</li> </ul>	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Findings at CAB level: ASI raised a “Compliance follow-up”, Incomplete SEIA, poor stakeholder consultation.</li> </ul> <p><b>Malaysia</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Findings at CH level: No finding was raised during surveillance 4 and re-certification audit.</li> <li>Findings at CAB level: ASI raised a “Compliance follow-up”, freedom of association, gender committee, overtime, wages, contracts, PPE, and FFB sourcing.</li> </ul> <p><b>Conclusion</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Root causes are diverse (e.g. auditor competence, standard clarity).</li> <li>Compliance assessments help to determine real CAB / CH performance.</li> </ul> <p><b>High-level overview of CAB performance patterns</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Systematic review of CAB performance patterns allows ASI to see strengths and weaknesses per CAB and at the scheme level, and also inform ASI’s oversight focus.</li> <li>A higher performance is required for some CABs when auditing (CHs) against social and environmental RSPO requirements. In response, ASI conducted e.g. specific compliance assessments and integrity investigations in relation to workers’ rights in Southeast Asia, and land grabbing in Latin America.</li> <li>Low performing CABs are subject to more ASI assessments and costs, while well-performing CABs are rewarded through less oversight. In the past two years, ASI had adjusted the oversight levels for 10 out of 25 CABs, of which 7 have received more and 3 have received less assessments. 2 CBs are currently suspended.</li> </ul> <p>EM continued with the core risks to RSPO integrity at system and programme levels that require more oversight and assessments; CAB - client relationship, violation of land rights &amp; workers’ rights (ASI is currently working on a larger stakeholder engagement project to identify the target for the assessments, a report will be submitted to the Secretariat) and poor stakeholder engagement.</p> <p><b>Discussion points</b></p> <p>A member asked for clarification on <i>higher performance required</i>. SF responded that suspended CBs will not be able to pick up new business until their performance is improved. A member asked about the actual risk on a CB-client relationship. SF responded that this includes over-familiarity &amp; impartiality. Another member asked if ASI had seen some performance being impacted by this relationship? SF answered that ASI has hard data on the witness effect, while direct causality cannot be proved, SF believes that it boils down to the relationship. SF gave an example of the audit allocation system done by Rainforest Alliance in Ghana. However, ASI advocates for studies to explore different levels of separation. The RSPO requirement states that the same lead auditor must be changed after two consecutive audits, but ASI has seen the lead auditor switching roles to become team member after the first audit. Therefore, more work needs to be done to see the pros and cons of auditors rotation.</p> <p>Another member spoke about the witness effect especially on NCs related to land &amp; workers’ rights and asked ASI’s recommendations on how to ensure CBs will spot the NCs when they are not being witnessed. SF responded that ASI will conduct more compliance assessments and present the data to each CB to get their explanations. SF said this could be due to insufficient sampling or CBs’ reluctance to raise NCs that could lead to suspension. The member questioned</p>	
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	<p>what is the point of audit if CBs are scared to raise NCs. Another member asked that if the assumption is that auditors fear losing business, is it better for them to not be paid by the company they are auditing? A member commented that this brings back the concept of decoupling because auditors need to be our eyes and ears on the ground.</p> <p>The member then asked ASI to explain the access to grievance mechanism and how it ensures stakeholders safety. EM responded that the grievance channel is directly accessible from ASI's website, regularly promoted on social media, and is an easy process. If the whistleblower cannot be contacted, ASI will use the report to guide its investigation. If ASI can access the whistleblower, a proper dialogue will be held in a controlled environment. ASI would like to bring this to a larger stakeholder to promote more interaction and tap on worker tools that are currently available, to understand the problems and conduct more targeted investigations. Another member asked if auditors are more competent in the presence of ASI. SF answered that the witness effect cannot be seen in all CBs, so when it is detected, ASI will confront the particular CBs to find out the root cause, and put higher level of conformance and alignment on issues that are listed in ASI's presence. However, ASI would also like to see if this is enough and what are the other options.</p> <p>A member asked ASI to make clear recommendations on how to address the witness effect. Another member reminded the group that the purpose of audits is to find compliance, instead of non-compliance. Auditors face real dilemmas and auditees should view audits as an opportunity to find out the problems within their operations and work on the solutions. SF agreed with this and mentioned that sometimes when auditors find a non-compliance in a company that is doing better than the industry average, it is human nature for them to think of other ways to address it. SF added that audit reports are only published when findings are closed, but thought that it would be better to see the findings early on and decide if 90 days are enough, especially for the more difficult topics.</p>	<p>ASI to present their recommendations regarding the witness effect in the Q1 2023 ASC meeting.</p>
<p><b>3.0</b></p>	<p><b>For Updates</b> WM reminded everyone that detailed information in this section had been shared in the pre-read sent prior to the meeting. WM asked for comments or questions on the following topics.</p>	
<p><b>3.1</b></p>	<p><b>Assurance Progress Report Q3 2022</b> WM informed the ASC that the next progress report will include a full review on the Assurance Gap Analysis. This will be published on the website in Q1 2023. No comments received on this topic.</p>	
<p><b>3.2</b></p>	<p><b>Labour Auditing Guidance</b> WM informed the ASC that the Secretariat will start working on the ToR for review on the effectiveness of the Labour Auditing Guidance. No comments received on this topic.</p>	
<p><b>3.3</b></p>	<p><b>From the Action Tracker</b> WM updated the ASC that the Secretariat has completed 101 action items, closed 17, is currently working on 13 tasks and 7 tasks are yet to start. No comments received on this topic.</p>	



4.0	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p>	
4.1	<p><b>Vacant seats in the ASC</b>  <b>CGM</b>                  WM asked if LKC (who is an alternate) would become the substantive member for this constituent. LKC agreed and this was supported by all.  <b>Retailer</b>                  This seat remains vacant despite the Secretariat's efforts and WM asked the ASC members to propose anyone from their network, if any.</p>	
4.2	<p><b>Project Management Team for Pool of Experts (PoE)</b>  <b>Expression of Interest (ended on 12 September 2022)</b>                  WM informed that no expression of interest was received and asked if PW can help to reach out to his network, to which PW agreed. WM mentioned that if there is still no one to take this on, the Secretariat will come back to the ASC on the next course of action.</p>	<p>The Secretariat to connect with PW to recommend a project management team for PoE.</p>
4.3	<p><b>ASC Meeting in Q1 2023</b>  <b>Mode: Virtual meeting, Proposed dates: Wednesday, 15 March 2023 or Thursday, 16 March 2023 (one week before Ramadan/fasting month), Proposed time: 3.00 p.m. - 6 p.m. MYT</b>                  WM asked if the ASC agrees to the proposed date for the next meeting. A member requested for the Secretariat to send a full schedule for ASC meetings and Assurance Forums in 2023 to help the ASC members plan their schedules ahead.</p>	<p>The Secretariat to send proposed dates for all ASC activities in 2023.</p>
<p><b>End of meeting</b>                  WM thanked all participants and handed to KS for closure of the meeting. KS conveyed a key takeaway from the recent BoG meeting, that more needs to be done to enhance RSPO's credibility. Stakeholders are looking forward to recommendations to strengthen the MB module from the latest study conducted.                   WM requested the ASC to stay for a quick photo session. The meeting adjourned at 12.05 pm.</p>		