

## **RESPONSE STATEMENT FROM RSPO ON COMMENTS FROM GREENPEACE PERTAINING TO FIRES IN SUMATRA**

July 15, 2013

The RSPO disapproves Greenpeace's claim that it is only seeking to clear its member companies from alleged involvement in the fires in Sumatra. The 5 member companies were selected based on what appeared on the media radar at that point in time. The RSPO responded immediately as soon as the matter came to its attention by directing these member companies to provide digital maps of their concessions to us. The process is still going through its course.

The RSPO reaffirms the importance of maintaining objectivity in any analysis and conclusions. Hence, emphasises the importance of transparently comparing the concession maps posted in the public domain with verified concession maps provided by the implicated companies (these are Business Use Rights licences issued by the National Land Agency which determine the actual concession areas licensed to the individual companies). This is currently only being carried by the RSPO in association with its few member companies; rather than for all the other companies (non RSPO members), which should be the most accurate basis for reference.

The RSPO is of the opinion that Greenpeace has misplaced its objectivity in its analysis of the fires in Sumatra, Indonesia. It has been reported that the palm oil sector has contributed to 20% of the recent fires in Sumatra. Out of the many companies implicated, less than a handful of these companies are RSPO members – which the RSPO views as serious and is fully committed to investigating and taking appropriate action if verified.

However, at its peak there were 9000 hotspots identified and that 80% of the fires are occurring outside of palm oil plantations. The pulp and paper plantations have been identified as having significantly more fires than the oil palm plantations. This is a sector that Greenpeace has been actively involved in and we hope that Greenpeace would regain some perspective and start to apply the same rigour of watchfulness in this sector that the RSPO has in undertaking its own investigations.

The RSPO has systems in place for stakeholders to seek recourse for any alleged violation against its code of conduct. On the other hand - Greenpeace has considerable resources, on the ground, which can provide credible evidence to make it easier for stakeholders to seek such recourse. It therefore would be highly constructive if

Greenpeace and the RSPO can collaborate to address the issue at hand rather than using media sensationalism to address such a critical environmental dilemma.

In light of this and longer term co-operation, the RSPO has availed itself several times by inviting Greenpeace representatives, to a live public discussion to transparently discourse various dimensions on the RSPO as an organization, its standard and dynamics. Disappointingly - Greenpeace has not been responsive to the invitation. This indeed is a shame as it would be an excellent platform for open and uninhibited discussions between both parties whereby external stakeholders sharing mutual agenda on sustainable palm oil can be exposed to for further insights and understanding.

The RSPO remains open to working and collaborating with organizations that can serve its mutual purpose. No one person or organization can solve the issues at hand. Even with the highest level of collaboration and cooperation, globally faced issues continue to be challenging.

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