INTERNATIONAL palm oil players consisting of producers, buyers and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have pledged their cooperation towards establishing a common stand in promoting sustainable production of palm oil.

Malaysian Palm Oil Association chief executive M.R. Chandran said all the players agree that a common code of conduct and practice has to be developed, agreed and implemented.

“This code of conduct will be signed by all the players in a letter of intent which will be ready by year-end.

“Subsequently, this code will become a charter for players to abide with as well as demonstrate their commitment to promote sustainable palm oil production,” Chandran told reporters in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Chandran had earlier chaired and closed the inaugural Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil.

The two-day forum which ended yesterday was launched by the association’s chairman and Kumpulan Guthrie Bhd’s group chief executive Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim.

The roundtable is the initiative of both Anglia Oils and Sainsbury of the UK, Malaysia’s Golden Hope Plantations Bhd and the Malaysian Palm Oil Association, Migros of Switzerland, Unilever of the Netherlands and the World Wildlife Fund of Switzerland.

The roundtable was attended by 203 participants from 16 countries across five continents from the entire palm oil supply chain.

“As a first major step towards promoting sustainably produced palm oil, the entire supply chain agrees on a common management criteria for plantations, forest conversion, land tenure in the establishment of new plantations, procurement methods and verification processes.”

At present, many misconceptions and misunderstandings arise in the industry.

Environmentalists, for example, worry that palm oil cultivation destroys the forest when actually the situation does not take place in Malaysia.

Another example is that some NGOs view palm oil planting methods in Ghana as sustainable but Malaysia, on the other hand, does not carry out the best agricultural practices.

Chandran added that the participation by the World Wildlife Fund Malaysia is a good sign as it would be able to influence 33,000 other NGOs in the world on palm oil’s sustainability.

“The organisation is a science-based NGO which carries out extensive studies before presenting its views on palm oil and is not emotional like some other
NGOs,” Chandran said.