

## Resolution GA16-6e

### Proposed Resolution to be adopted at the 16th General Assembly of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO)

6<sup>th</sup> November 2019

**Title:** Submission of Peat Inventory by all RSPO “Grower” and “Processor and Trader” Members

**Submitted by:** Global Environment Centre, Stichting AIDEnvironment, ALDI International Services GmbH & Co. oHG, Bumitama Agri Ltd, Royal Ahold Delhaize N.V, Sumatran Orangutan Society (SOS), Wetlands International, World Resources Institute (WRI), WWF Malaysia

#### **Background:**

Peatland conservation and management is one of the critical environmental issues related to the palm oil sector. Peatlands are one of the most important ecosystems for biodiversity conservation and climate regulation. Peatlands globally cover 3% of the land surface but store 150% of the carbon of the biomass of all the world’s forests combined. They also play a critical role in water resource management and livelihoods of local communities. Clearance and drainage of peatlands is responsible for one of the main sources of GHG emissions for the oil palm sector. Conversely protection and restoration of peatlands is a cost effective approach to reduce GHG emissions, protect biodiversity, water resources and support local community livelihoods.

In response to this, RSPO P&C 2018 has clearly specified that there should be no new planting on peat after 15 November 2018 (Indicator 7.7.1); that all existing plantings on peat are to be managed according to the RSPO Manual on Best Management Practices (Indicator 7.7.6); and all areas of unplanted or set aside peatlands in the managed area are protected as peatland conservation areas (Indicator 7.7.7). The P&C 2018 also specifies that all areas of peat within the managed areas are to be inventoried and reported to RSPO Secretariat (effective from 15 November 2018) (Indicator 7.7.2).

The RSPO Secretariat has circulated to all members in May 2019 an inventory format (developed in association with the RSPO Peatland Working Group 2) that needs to be submitted by each company/unit of certification (together with peat maps and shapefiles of peat boundaries). However up until August 31 2019, there had been very limited response from RSPO members despite reminders being sent. While existing certified units are expected to comply with the 15 November 2019 deadline – there are concerns that there may still be gaps in the submissions related to uncertified units, undeveloped peatland land banks as well as for new members.

Receiving complete information for all RSPO members is critical to enable RSPO to have a clear understanding of the extent and status of peatlands within the land holdings of RSPO members. Since the time of the formation of the RSPO Peatland Working Group in 2010, RSPO has been trying to get an accurate understanding of the area of peatland managed by members, but this is yet to be achieved. The RSPO Secretariat has written to all RSPO members thought to have peatland areas to ask them to verify estimates of peatland in their holdings, but has not yet been able to obtain complete information. Information from the RSPO New Planting Procedure (NPP) has indicated that no member has applied to plant a new peatland area since 2015, but no figures on the existing planting and conservation areas are available. This has meant that RSPO has not been able to effectively communicate clearly to external stakeholders some of whom continue to accuse RSPO of facilitating peatland development. If reliance is placed solely on the certification process, then gaps in information on peat extent in

planted and conserved areas may only be identified after plantation certification is complete (at least four years after plantation development).

### **Proposed Resolution:**

We therefore call on the 16th General Assembly of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, to resolve that it is mandatory for:

1. All existing RSPO “Grower” and “Processor and Trader” members<sup>1</sup> as at 6 November 2019 (irrespective of whether or not they have RSPO certified units) with any area of peat under their management or within their managed areas or land holdings to complete and submit the RSPO Peat Inventory Form (together with supporting documents as required)<sup>2</sup> to show the peat areas as at November 2018 and with subsequent changes to the RSPO Secretariat at latest by 31 March 2020<sup>3</sup>. Acknowledging the challenges for some members to obtain the shapefiles for uncertified areas, submission of shapefiles for uncertified areas must be submitted to RSPO latest by 31 May 2020.
2. All RSPO “Grower” and “Processor and Trader” members<sup>1</sup> to update their RSPO Peat Inventory Forms when there are any changes (such as through acquisition or disposal) or as specified by the RSPO Secretariat.
3. All new “Grower” and “Processor and Trader” members<sup>1</sup> who join RSPO after November 2019 with any area of peat under their management or within their managed areas to complete and submit the RSPO Peat Inventory Form for all peatlands under their management (together with supporting documents as required) to the RSPO Secretariat within four months of becoming a member.

We further call on the 16th General Assembly of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil, to resolve that:

- a. The RSPO Secretariat (in conjunction with the RSPO Peatland Working Group, as appropriate) shall collate and analyse the information within the submitted peat inventories to provide an annual status report on the management of peatlands by RSPO members, but not make any public release of individual company information<sup>4</sup>.
- b. The RSPO Secretariat should clearly incorporate the requirement to report on peatland areas and their management into the specified requirements for new RSPO members and to highlight the need for the member should update the inventory when making any new acquisitions or disposals.
- c. RSPO Secretariat should adjust, as necessary, the specific requirements for submission of documentation taking into consideration any restrictions in information sharing at country level.

### **Potential Benefit/Risk:**

If RSPO were to have complete information from all its members it could issue definitive statistics on the extent of peatlands under the management of RSPO members and the trends in terms of enhancing BMPs for planted areas and managing and enhancing conservation areas on peat. RSPO could then demonstrate that the area of planted/certified peatlands is decreasing as a proportion of the overall oil palm planted /certified area (as more

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<sup>1</sup>Excluding independent smallholders

<sup>2</sup> Using the formats that are provided and may be periodically updated by the RSPO Secretariat.

<sup>3</sup> Certified units and those that intend to be certified in the future, need to submit the Peat Inventory Forms by the fixed RSPO deadline of 15 November 2019 to comply with Indicator 7.7.2.

<sup>4</sup> In line with the requirements of the RSPO Peat Inventory process, the individual company information and maps will NOT be made publicly available (unless agreed with or requested by the company concerned) but are for the purpose of analysis and assessment of overall impact.

non-peatland areas are certified/developed). It would also enable clear information on the increasing area of conserved peatland areas being actively protected and managed by RSPO members. This could enhance the reputation of RSPO and RSPO members in delivering a clear positive impact on peatlands.

A potential concern may relate to sharing of information – but the proposals are fully in line with information sharing requirements for P&C 2018. The resolution is in particular aimed to ensure that all members even those without certified units share the information. In addition, the information will only be for the use of RSPO and individual company information or maps would not be made publicly available.

**Contact Information:**

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**References:**

1. RSPO P&C 2018;
2. RSPO Peat Inventory Form