Resolution GA23-2d

PROPOSED RESOLUTION TO BE ADOPTED AT
THE 23RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY (GA23) OF RSPO MEMBERS
4 NOV 2026

TITLE: RESOLUTION TO SECURE RSPO AS A MULTISTAKEHOLDER FORUM AND ENSURE THE SUSTAINED PARTICIPATION OF NGOS AND SMALLHOLDERS

SUBMITTED BY: Solidaridad, Oxfam International, Forest Peoples Programme, Both ENDS, HUTAN Kinabatangan Orang-utan Conservation Programme, Stichting CNV Internationaal, Retailers' Palm Oil Group*, Sumatran Orangutan Society (SOS), Yayasan Lembaga Penelitian Kaleka Indonesia (Kaleka), Zoological Society of London, Federasi Serikat Buruh Kehutanan, Perkebunan dan Pertanian Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia (Hukatan), BC INITIATIVE SDN. BHD.

*John Lewis Plc, Tesco PLC, Royal Ahold Delhaize N.V, Marks and Spencer plc, Lidl Stiftung & Co.KG, Federation of Migros Cooperatives, Coles Supermarkets Pty Ltd, Coop Switzerland, ALDI SÜD KG (known as HOFER KG), The Co-operative Group, Sainsbury's Supermarket Ltd., ASDA STORES LIMITED, Walgreens Boots Alliance, Inc.

Background

The RSPO is a global, multi-stakeholder initiative. RSPO brings together stakeholders from all across the palm oil value chain to develop and implement global standards for sustainable palm oil. RSPO actively facilitates collaboration and a shared commitment across the value chain to drive demand and ensure sufficient supply of sustainable palm oil.

RSPO drives changes through consensus among multiple stakeholders including financial institutions, downstream companies, growers, smallholders and social and environmental NGOs. Making the palm oil sector sustainable involves everyone in it. With thousands of members worldwide representing every link of the palm oil supply chain, RSPO operates through consensus, ensuring all stakeholders have a voice and share responsibility to protect the RSPO Standards. This shared decision making is the foundation of RSPO's credibility.

This resolution aims to maintain and strengthen the RSPO as a multistakeholder platform. This requires NGO and smallholder involvement in the Board of Governors, P & C Review processes, National Interpretation groups and in the various committees, working groups and task forces. Notably, NGOs are the only non-corporate constituency within RSPO. They bring critical social and environmental perspectives, as well as specific expertise that may not be present in other groups. Smallholders also face resource constraints in participating in RSPO processes and meetings.

Ensuring representation in various groups is becoming increasingly challenging for NGOs because of severely reducing funding streams available for Advocacy work. It is important to note that there is no replacement - but a real reduction (see the Annex for the current overview of NGO involvement in the RSPO). Many southern and increasingly northern NGOs feel unable to join and contribute to RSPO due to a lack of funding. In addition, NGO funding from traditional donor countries (such as the US, The Netherlands, the UK, Germany) is under severe pressure or fully reduced. As of 2026, several

of the northern NGOs that have been active RSPO-members for many years, are facing financial limitations. Their advocacy work in the RSPO might no longer be funded.

To ensure structural participation of NGOs and smallholders in the RSPO new funding models should be explored and established soonest.

To ensure the true multistakeholder spirit, the RSPO should explore ways to ensure NGOs and smallholders can continue to be represented within the various groups and bodies governing RSPO. Compared to other voluntary certification schemes, RSPO has very few NGO members and even fewer of them are able to actively engage in the standard setting and implementation work due to their financial limitations. Many NGOs feel overstretched in their engagements with multiple committees and working groups, as well the Board. This also applies to smallholders.

Without substantial NGO participation, RSPO loses its multistakeholder approach and value. NGOs play a very important role in the transformation of the global palm sector. By agenda development, standard-setting, by flagging and raising issues that are not up to standard, by supporting corporates with improvements and by developing additional transformative strategies. This ensures the credibility of certification amongst Consumer goods manufacturers, Retailers, Banks and investors and consumers.

No previous resolutions on this topic have been identified.

Proposed resolution

RSPO should explore ways and develop a proposal to ensure that NGOs and smallholder representatives can continue to be meaningfully represented within RSPO and that barriers to participation are effectively addressed. Such proposals should include concrete measures across financial, institutional, and participation-related support, including and not limited to, at a minimum:

- Severe Reduction of membership fees for NGOs and smallholders, and;
- Mechanisms to support or co-finance NGO and smallholder participation in RSPO bodies and processes, including the Board of Governors, Executive Committees, Standing Committees, working groups, task forces. Such support should go beyond covering travel fees and expenses, and
- Support for NGO participation in standard-setting processes, including the upcoming Principles & Criteria (P&C) Review process. Such support should go beyond covering travel fees and expenses.

This support should include travel expenses such as accommodation, transportation, meals, as well as appropriate remuneration for time spent to prepare for and attend meetings, as well as the preparation and review of relevant documents and materials.

RSPO should also consider additional measures that may further strengthen and sustain NGO and smallholder participation and representation.

The proponents of this resolution note that the Board has also proposed a resolution regarding Membership fees and the set up of an Stakeholder Inclusion Fund, where at least 10 % of the Annual Trade revenue will be allocated (the Board Resolution on Membership Fees and the Stakeholder inclusion Fund, from now on called ‘The Board Resolution'); The proponents of this resolution recommend the adoption of the Board Resolution. If the Board Resolution is adopted, and membership fee for NGOs is lowered to 250 Euro for NGOs and 100 Euro for NGOs/CSOs with an

annual revenue of below 500,000 Euro or less, the aspect of this Resolution relating to the membership fee can be seen as covered.

The proponents of this resolution are convinced that the Board Resolution's reduction of membership fees and the set up of the stakeholder inclusion fund can play an important role in ensuring the objectives of this resolution are met. However, it is noted that to ensure continued meaningful representation of NGOs and smallholders, additional measures are needed.

The proposal for ensuring NGOs and smallholders can continue to be meaningfully represented shall be finalised by April 2027 so that its conclusions can be incorporated into the budget planning for the 2027-2028 financial year. The proposal is expected to be developed by the RSPO Secretariat in consultation with NGO and smallholder representatives and include governance and funding arrangements, including on how funds would be sourced, administered and allocated, and how NGO independence is safeguarded. To arrange for the support, alternative or cooperative funding arrangements, such as a pooled funding mechanism or external funding sources, can be considered.

Potential benefits

This resolution will ensure RSPO maintains its credibility as a certification system as NGOs can continue to be responsible for providing critical expert input regarding social and environmental concerns. The increased participation of smallholders will also ensure that an important RSPO constituency has a voice in RSPO processes and events. The benefits of adopting this resolution:

- RSPO remains a multistakeholder platform
- RSPO members continue to benefit from the expertise of NGOs.
- RSPO certification maintains its credibility amongst Consumer goods manufacturers, Retailers, Banks and investors and consumers.
- RSPO maintains ISEAL compliance.

Potential risks and mitigation

If this resolution is adopted, there is the risk that NGOs may no longer be perceived as impartial/independent towards RSPO-members, if they are indirectly being co-financed by those members. To avoid this, funding should be channelled through the RSPO. It should be secured that the funding models or approaches are structurally separated from corporate influence. To ensure this, it needs to be governed by an independent body including NGO representatives and neutral experts.

The measures suggested in this resolution could attract NGOs that have previously not invested time and effort in the RSPO. Rather than strengthening the NGO voice and the civil society that they represent, it could lead to support for civil society organisations that are not representative of the RSPO stakeholders: workers, communities, smallholder farmers, nature. This risk should be addressed in the proposal. An option could be to ensure potential funding includes strong accountability requirements to ensure meaningful representation of NGOs receiving support through the mechanisms or by requiring the receiving NGO to be an RSPO member.

Proposed Committee/Working Group/Task Force in overseeing the Resolution

The implementation of the resolution should be overseen by the BOG. When implementing it should be ensured that NGOs are sufficiently involved in the implementation.

If the membership fee for NGOs is lowered to 250 Euro for NGOs and 100 Euro for NGOs/CSOs with an annual revenue of below 500.000 Euro or less, this aspect of this Resolution can be seen as covered.

If a fund is formed with 10% income from trade fees earmarked for outreach to NGOs, smallholder support and other impact activities, it should be ensured that there is governance set up that ensures transparency, meaningful involvement, representation and participation of NGOs and Smallholder representatives with clear safeguards around independence. It should be guaranteed that the allocation of the funds will not be at the expense of and be aligned with earlier earmarked funding for mechanisms such as the Intermediary Organisation (IMO) programme and the smallholder support fund (RSSF).

Contact information

Marieke Leegwater, Solidaridad, marieke.leegwater@solidaridadnetwork.org
Julian Walker Palin, Retailers' Palm Oil Group, julian.walker-palin@etante.co.uk
Suzan Cornelissen, Stichting CNV Internationaal, s.cornelissen@cnv.nl
Fiona Jarden, Oxfam International, fiona.jarden@oxfamnovib.nl

Annex: Overview of Social and Environmental NGO involvement in RSPO in the BOG, Standing Committees, Working Groups and Task Forces as listed on the RSPO Website consulted 5 May 2026.

Social NGO Involvement

	Organisation	**Substantive seats**	**Alternate seats**	**Grand Total**
1	BC INITIATIVE SDN. BHD.	3	2	5
2	Both ENDS	3		3
3	Stichting CNV Internationaal	3	1	4
4	Forest Peoples Programme	4	3	7
5	Federasi Serikat Buruh Kehutanan, Perkebunan dan Pertanian Serikat Buruh Sejahtera Indonesia (Hukatan)	1	2	3
6	Humana Child Aid Society, Sabah		2	2
7	Yayasan Lembaga Penelitian Kaleka Indonesia (Kaleka)	3	1	4
8	Oxfam International		1	1
9	Pemangkin Research Sdn Bhd	2		2
10	SABAH ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ASSOCIATION (SEPA)	4	1	5
11	Stichting SNV Nederlandse Ontwikkelingsorganisatie	1		1
12	Solidaridad	4		4
	Total social NGO seats	28	13	41

Environmental NGOS

	Organisation	**Substantive seats**	**Alternate seats**	**Grand Total**
1	Cheyenne Mountain Zoo	1		1
2	Stichting Conservation International	1		1
3	Fauna & Flora International (FFI)	3	1	4
4	HCV Network Ltd	4	1	5

	Organisation	Substantive seats	Alternate seats	Grand Total
5	HUTAN Kinabatangan Orang-utan Conservation Programme	2	2	4
7	Perkumpulan Mandala Katalika	3	1	4
8	Orangutan Land Trust	1	1	2
9	World Association of Zoos and Aquariums 2018 (WAZA)		1	1
10	World Resources Institute (WRI)	5	1	6
11	WWF International	11	3	14
12	Zoological Society of London	3	1	4
	Total environmental NGO seats	34	12	46

Note: 3 substantive and 21 alternate positions for social and environmental NGOs are **vacant.**

Source: https://rspo.org/who-we-are/governance/, as of 5 May 2026
National offices (of for example WWF) are included under the parent organisation.
This list is limited, as not all groups are included on the RSPO website. For example, the subgroups of the Human Rights Working Group are not included.