

Guatemala, March 6, 2019

Messrs.
Melissa Ortiz and Mauricio Lazala
Business and Human Rights Information Center

Dear Ms. Ortiz and Mr. Lazala:

It is a pleasure to greet you on my own behalf and on behalf of the Association of Oil Palm Growers of Guatemala (GREPALMA).

In view of the accusations made against the oil palm sector of Guatemala through the opinion published by MONGABAY entitled "*RSPO should suspend membership of groups undermining Guatemala's anti impunity commission (commentary)*" written by Doug Hertzler and Jeff Conant on February 6 of this year, which states that we are hampering the work that the International Commission against Corruption and Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) together with the Public Prosecution (MP in Spanish) are doing, we very strongly state that we have never hindered the work done by these agencies against corruption and impunity in Guatemala; we have not sabotaged their work, and much less our democratic system, which this article accuses us of doing. Additionally, it should be noted that the efforts to accomplish sustainability by companies that are already certified, and by those that are in the process of certification **are independent of the opinion of this association.**

The juncture that we are in merits a broader vision and analysis that take into account fundamental principles such as citizen responsibility to develop a true Rule of Law and a system of prompt, impartial and apolitical justice that is equal for all and respectful of Human Rights. We are concerned, just like Mr. Hertzler and Mr. Conant are, that Guatemala continues to rank number 143 of 180 countries in the perception about the fight against

corruption and impunity, according to the Transparency International index. For this reason, we believe that to continue to pursue the efforts of the last 11 years, a structural reform of

the country's justice system is necessary, particularly the Judiciary, since, if we do not address these issues, said efforts will continue to stumble upon a questionable, sluggish and inefficient justice system, which prevents building a fairer country.

Our opinion on the juncture does not ignore the unpostponable priority and the commitment of this association to continue to fight against corruption, to help to solve the structural problems related to impunity, and the consolidation of a Judiciary that is at the service of all its citizens. For us, building the Rule of Law is critical to the stability of the environment in which oil palm companies operate and, in general, for the development of the country. We also believe the presence of the State in rural areas is necessary. Lack of governance, the shortcomings in and needs of rural communities in the areas of health, education, infrastructure, security, justice, utilities, and others, are real and do not allow advancement in the generation of opportunities for development and the accomplishment of the SDGs.

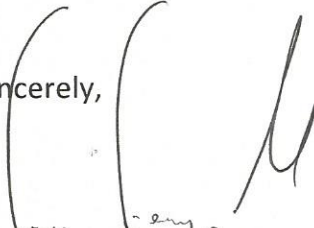
Despite the absence of the State, which is especially evident in rural areas of the country, oil palm invests in Guatemala and, by so doing, has become a tangible option of access to opportunities for Guatemalans; it contributes to the generation of more than 28 thousand direct jobs in the country and to the revitalization of local economies in the areas where the crop is grown.

The Association of Palm Growers of Guatemala -GREPALMA- is an organization that fosters and promotes a culture of compliance with the law. Furthermore, it has become evident throughout these years that we are an unconditional ally of the RSPO Secretariat in the promotion of the standards for this certification, both domestically and internationally, because we believe it is the proper way to promote sustainable palm culture.

That said, we believe that the request made by the authors of the aforementioned article to the Board of Directors and the Secretariat of RSPO to *"suspend all certification processes of Guatemalan palm companies until GREPALMA and its members end their campaign to*

sabotage the International Commission against Corruption (...) and cease undermining the Rule of Law in the Country" is inappropriate.

And last, I underscore that we are ready to engage in a transparent dialogue – that we have formally requested through the Mongabay website, without response to date – which builds a fairer communication based on objective information which promotes responsible decisions.

Sincerely,

Susana Stekavizza M.
Executive Director

