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OKOMU OIL PALM COMPANY PLC

ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS ACTION/FRIENDS OF THE EARTH NIGERIA (ERA/FoEN) ALLEGATIONS ON ROUNDTABLE ON SUSTAINABLE PALM OIL (RSPO) CERTIFICATION ARE SPURIOUS AND LIBELOUS – OKOMU OIL PALM COMPANY PLC

BENIN CITY, EDO STATE; 8TH JUNE 2018

Okomu Oil Palm Company Plc's attention has been drawn to a press conference organized by a local NGO called ERA/FoEN alleging that the company had been "parading" an RSPO certificate. We categorically deny this allegation and dismiss this assertion as false, defamatory and without foundation. Furthermore, our company tasks the NGO to immediately furnish the requisite proof that the company had been doing so or face the consequences. It is strange that ERA/FoEN, which had originally been invited to participate as a stakeholder in the RSPO National Interpretation exercise, along with other interested and affected stakeholders in the oil palm pipeline, chose to decline the invitation, publicly stating that they were against RSPO in all its forms and calling it "false land grabbing and inhumane activities against communities", but suddenly now seemingly wanting to take an active interest in the RSPO certification scheme. However, their lack of understanding on the workings of RSPO is patently obvious in their spurious utterances, as well as their inability to comprehend the difference between ISO (International Standards Organisation) certifications from those of RSPO in their reports. Had they remained part of the RSPO process for Nigeria, they would not have embarrassed themselves by this inaccurate and totally fictitious report as they would have been kept abreast of developments within the RSPO local interpretation community, which not only includes Okomu, but also other large scale plantation owners and smallholders who are all also preparing to become certified in the near future. If ERA/FoEN had done their homework they would also be aware that the Federal Government actually utilizes a number of protocols that are contained in RSPO and which our company has been audited on during the Ministry's usual statutory, quarterly environmental and social audits.

RSPO's international head office as well as that of the National chapter of RSPO have been duly contacted by our company about ERA/FoEN's spurious allegations and this NGO's typical, ongoing modus operandi of falsely accusing companies rather than constructively engaging with the company concerned, like other internationally recognized NGO's such as Proforest and The Forest Trust (TFT) who have been doing so for a number of years now. If ERA/FoEN wants to be taken seriously by the oil palm fraternity and Government they should take a leaf out of the book of their international peers and actively engage with companies such as Okomu, and others, on matters of mutual concern rather than just sitting back and making glib, unfounded accusations such as those as described herein.



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