

MINUTES OF MEETING

JURISDICTIONAL WORKING GROUP MEETING #24 (VIRTUAL)

Date: 25 April 2025 (Friday) 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm (MYT)

<u>Attendance:</u> <u>Members and alternates</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. John Watts (Kaleka) 2. Max Donysius (WWF Malaysia) 3. Rob Nicholls (Musim Mas) 4. Paul Wolvekamp (Bothends) 5. Marcus Colchester (FPP) 6. Quentin Meunier (Olam) 7. Alfred Yee (LKSS) 8. Lee Kuan Chun (P&G) 9. Chin Kai Xiang (Bunge) 10. Daniel Liew (RSPO) 11. Francisco Naranjo (RSPO) 	<u>Absent with Apologies</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tom Lomax (FPP) 2. Eza Nurain Abdullah (Sime Darby) 3. Aprilianto Nugroho (Sinarmas) 4. Jon Hixson (YUM) 5. Maria Amparo (CISPS) 6. Lim Sian Choo (Bumitama) 7. Sander van den Ende (SIPEF)* 8. Melissa Thomas (CI) 9. Steni Bernadinus (Kaleka) 10. Rauf Prasodjo (Unilever) 12. Tri Padukan Purba (Rainforest Alliance)
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*Co-chairs of JWG

Agenda

Item	Time (MYT)	Duration (minutes)	Agenda
1 – Admin matters	1600 – 1605	5	1.1 – Opening and welcome
	1605 – 1610	5	1.2 – RSPO Antitrust Guidelines, Conflict of Interest Declaration and Chatham House Rules
	1610 – 1620	10	1.3 – Acceptance of Minutes – JWG Meeting #23 – Nov 24 1.4 – JWG membership updates
2 – Updates and discussion	1620 – 1640	20	2.1 – Projects updates by the Secretariat
	1640 – 1710	30	2.2 – Endorsement – jurisdiction HCV-HCS tool
	1710 – 1740	30	2.3 – Concept alignment – identified HCV-HCS areas vs development
3 - Closing	1740 - 1800	20	3.1 – Any other business

Minutes of Meeting:

Item	Description	Action / Remark
1.1	Opening The meeting started at 4:06 pm Malaysian time.	
1.2	RSPO Antitrust Guidelines, Conflict of Interests Declaration and Chatham House Rules There was no question regarding the guidelines and the rules. And no conflict was declared.	
1.3	Acceptance of minutes – JWG Meeting #23 – Nov 2024 Minutes of the JWG Meeting #23 was adopted by members.	
1.4	JWG Membership Updates The Secretariat provided several updates on the JWG Membership. There will be a change in the representative for Sime Darby; however they were not able to attend the meeting today, and the matter will be discussed in the next meeting. Sime Darby has also indicated that they are open to step down from their position if there is a more active member who is interested in participating. The Secretariat will reach out to other Malaysian Growers to identify any potential candidates interested in joining the JWG and will provide an update soon. John Watts from Kaleka will replace Bernadinus Steni as a member of JWG. The Secretariat also highlighted that the JWG has been operating with only one co-chair following Silvia's departure. The Secretariat would like to fill the vacant co-chair position and are requesting nominations from JWG members. The current co-chair Sander van den Ende and the Secretariat would like to propose John Watts as a candidate for the co-chair role. All JWG members are supportive of the nomination of John Watts to become the new co-chair of JWG. John expressed appreciation for everyone's support and acknowledged the significant progress that has been made, particularly in Seruyan, as well as the work being done on social issues such as FPIC and labour concerns. It is encouraging to see the meaningful impact the approach is having, with strong engagement with the government, local communities, companies, and medium-sized growers in Seruyan. The jurisdictional approach is promising as it effectively addresses many of the global challenges faced today, including social issues and deforestation. The sourcing model embedded in the approach is beneficial and could provide long-term advantages for companies. He expressed hope to see the progress continue toward moving beyond the pilot phase into full implementation,	

	where the effectiveness of the model can be further evaluated and improved.	
2.1	<p>Project updates by the Secretariat</p> <p><u>JA RaCP field testing</u></p> <p>The Secretariat provided an update on the JA-RaCP field testing. As mentioned in the previous meeting, the field test will be conducted based on the two recommended approaches from the study that was concluded in 2023, which is the “negotiated outcome” and the “analytical approach”. The “analytical approach” reflects the current standard RaCP process, essentially a “business as usual” method where the Jurisdictional Entity (JE) plays a supporting role by providing data at the jurisdictional level. The “negotiated outcome” approach is similar to a balance sheet method where it compares between two cut-off dates, the land that has been developed and the area that has been protected or committed to protection within the jurisdiction. Rather than applying the usual monetary compensation rate, this approach explores alternatives such as land swapping, depending on the resources and capacities of each individual jurisdiction.</p> <p>The purpose of the field test is to determine whether these two approaches yield the same results—which, theoretically, they should. If the results differ, the consultant will be analysing the results and explaining the discrepancies as well as providing recommendations to improve the implementation of these approaches.</p> <p>Social liability will not be a part of the current scope of the field test mainly because some jurisdictions have not conducted substantial work on social liability. However, the consultant will be expected to propose potential ways for addressing social liability issues, whether through FPIC or other considerations. To date, the Secretariat has conducted two meetings in January and March 2025 with stakeholders in Sabah, and a meeting with Seruyan is scheduled for early May. The plan is to begin the data collection process within May and conduct LUCA and FCL by the end of July.</p> <p>The coverage of the field test has been agreed with the Sabah pilot, which is to conduct LUCA for the entire jurisdiction and to calculate FCL for selected sub-jurisdiction, subject to availability and quality of landscape data. The Secretariat will provide more updates on the progress of the field test at the next JWG meeting.</p> <p>A member raised a question regarding the RaCP development and whether sufficient attention will be given to social liabilities in the next phase, not only limited to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), but also includes the identification of social liabilities related to HCV4, 5, and 6. Some of these values may have been lost due to the absence of previous HCV assessments.</p> <p>The Secretariat responded that social liabilities will indeed be given due attention, and that FPIC will be specifically considered in the development of the RaCP guidance. It is still in the field-testing phase, which is expected</p>	

	<p>to continue for another six months. The current field test only covers HCVs 1, 2, 3, and 4 as it was previously agreed that HCVs 5 and 6 will still be conducted at the company level. While the scope of the field test does not include HCVs 5 and 6, the consultant involved will be asked to propose ways on how social liabilities can be addressed in the development of the guidance.</p> <p>The Secretariat also emphasised the importance of managing expectations regarding the RaCP field test. The primary objective of this exercise is to trial the two recommended options on the ground and determine the final liability. While the exercise may provide valuable insights into how to address social liabilities, its main focus remains on testing the technical feasibility of the two proposed options. This is not the final LUCA or RaCP process, but the findings will contribute meaningfully to the actual LUCA processes planned for the pilots in Sabah and Seruyan, even though they may not represent the final or only approach to be adopted.</p> <p><u>Jurisdictional HCV-HCS assessment tool</u></p> <p>The Secretariat provided updates on the progress of the Jurisdictional HCV-HCS assessment tool.</p> <p>The Secretariat has reviewed several drafts prepared by HCVN and additional references to FPIC have been incorporated based on the comments from the members to emphasize the importance of participation from Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs). The earlier drafts outlined a process closely aligned with the principles of FPIC, though these were not explicitly referenced. Therefore, the Secretariat has revised the drafts to include the necessary and explicit references to FPIC. The latest version of the drafts was shared with the JWG members in early April. If there are no further comments or sustained objections, the Secretariat would like to seek the endorsement from the JWG members in this meeting.</p> <p>The Secretariat is also engaging in a similar process with the Biodiversity and High Conservation Value Working Group (BHCVWG) as of April. No decision has been made during the most recent BHCVWG meeting. The Secretariat will follow up and check whether there are any comments, inputs, or decisions from the group at their next scheduled meeting.</p> <p>Members raised a question whether a pilot test is planned. The Secretariat clarified that upon receiving endorsement from both the JWG and the BHCVWG, the next step will be to initiate a pilot process, similar to what is currently being planned for the RaCP.</p> <p>Members inquired about the timeline for endorsement from the BHCVWG. The Secretariat explained that while the JA-BHCV subgroup has already approved the draft, it still requires formal endorsement from the full BHCVWG. There have been two meetings held with the BHCVWG to discuss this matter, but some BHCVWG members have requested additional time to review the documents thoroughly.</p>	
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	<p>Members commented that there has already been collaboration with HCVN in Seruyan, where the method is being applied concurrently with its development. Although this may not represent a direct implementation of what is formally agreed upon through this process, much of the approach has already been applied in the Seruyan context. Therefore, there should not be major modifications to what has been done there. This experience should provide useful feedback on the practical implementation of the method within the Indonesian context. The next step would be to identify other jurisdictions such as Sabah or Ecuador that may be interested in applying the method following the testing phase.</p> <p>Members from the Sabah pilot indicated that Sabah would be interested in applying the method as it would be beneficial to pilot this approach.</p> <p>The Secretariat explained that in the case of Sabah, much of the jurisdictional HCV-HCS work has already been completed—particularly for HCVs 1, 2, and 3, and likely HCV 4 as well. The decision on whether to conduct the next field test in Sabah, Seruyan, or Ecuador will still need to be made, considering the work has already been done in some of these locations. Currently, the immediate action required is to seek the JWG’s endorsement on the current draft. There are still other aspects to consider upon endorsement such as the need to establish a quality assurance mechanism for the maps that are developed from this data after fieldwork. These maps will ultimately be handed over to the jurisdiction, and ensuring their accuracy and consistency is crucial. This process has yet to be defined and needs to be developed further, and may also require technical expertise. All these aspects still need to be decided before the field test can proceed.</p> <p><u>Financing opportunities</u></p> <p>The Secretariat provided updates on available financing opportunities. Sabah has raised the need for financial support both in the JWG and during RT. The Secretariat has also been collaborating with some of the JWG members to explore potential opportunities for financing. The Government Affairs and Financial Partnership Unit of the Secretariat has been working to connect local commercial banks in Malaysia, such as CIMB, but these efforts have seen limited success due to commercial considerations.</p> <p>As a next step, the Secretariat are planning to reach out to commodity-focused banks in Indonesia. So far, interest from commercial banks in supporting this work on the ground remains limited.</p> <p><u>Collaboration with UNDP</u></p> <p>The Secretariat provided updates on its ongoing collaboration with UNDP. A partnership has been initiated, with close coordination taking place in Sabah through JASPO. There are planned dialogue sessions and exploring ways to mobilise financing. As part of this collaboration, a platform for pilot and interested stakeholders will be set up to share experiences.</p>	
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	<p>A virtual dialogue session focused on mobilising finance and enhancing technical capacity is tentatively scheduled for May. Further details will be shared in due course. Once the agenda is finalised, invitations will be extended to the JWG members and other relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Members commented that it is encouraging to see UNDP’s engagement across the pilot sites. Members raised a question whether UNDP is still involved in Ecuador?</p> <p>The Secretariat responded that there is ongoing engagement with Conservation International and other key stakeholders in Ecuador. They are currently facing challenges in restructuring their programme in the northeastern part of the Ecuadorian Amazon, largely due to the withdrawal of USAID funding. Despite these setbacks, they remain committed to continuing the programme and are working to reallocate existing funds and revise their priorities to sustain and advance the initiative. The Secretariat will engage with the sitting committee in Ecuador in June, which should provide clearer insights into the situation.</p> <p>UNDP has been actively involved in Sabah, particularly in supporting the capacity-building process and the operations of the JASPO Secretariat. The Secretariat also attended a session of the UNDP’s FOLUR (Food, Land Use and Restoration) programme in Sabah. This integrated landscape management initiative, active in both Sabah and Sarawak, is a promising development in the region. UNDP is fully involved in supporting jurisdictional initiatives and it is encouraging to see growing interest from a diverse range of stakeholders in supporting landscape-based approaches.</p> <p>Members highlighted that the budget request submitted by JASPO has not received a response from RSPO yet. The Secretariat explained that the budget request from JASPO has been brought to the attention of the CEO of RSPO Secretariat. However, such funding requests require deliberation and approval at the Board of Governors (BoG) level, and it appears that it has not been discussed at the BoG due to other commitments. The Secretariat will follow up on this matter and provide an update soon.</p> <p>In the meantime, the Secretariat is actively exploring alternative financing opportunities to help bridge gaps between the pilots and potential donors, impact investors, or financial institutions.</p> <p><u>Jurisdictional RSPO membership category</u> The Secretariat provided updates on the JE membership category.</p> <p>In November 2023, the RSPO General Assembly (GA) adopted the proposal to create a new membership category for JE. Revisions to the RSPO Statutes and other membership-related documents to account for the new Jurisdictional category were completed in 2024. In November 2024, the RSPO GA adopted the revisions in the documents. The Membership unit of RSPO Secretariat together with the JA unit is now developing the SOP for Jurisdictional membership application.</p>	<p>Follow up on the progress of JASPO budget request Action by: Secretariat</p>
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	<p>Members raised a question regarding the approval process for the draft SOP once it is developed. The Secretariat responded that, at this stage, it is unclear what level of endorsement is required. As the SOPs are internal operational documents, they may not need to be submitted to the GA for approval. The Secretariat will consult internally and provide updates to the members.</p> <p>The updated version of the RSPO Membership Rules document now includes provisions for the jurisdictional category. The next step will be to approve this updated document. Once that is done, or concurrently, the development and finalisation of the SOPs can proceed. The Secretariat will coordinate with the Membership team to confirm the timeline and next steps for this process.</p> <p>Members highlighted that although the timeframe for application is still uncertain, both Seruyan and Sabah pilots appear to be in a position to begin applying for membership. Depending on how the process unfolds, this could help encourage progress on JA and build more confidence in the initiative. Members suggested establishing a tentative timeline and aiming for progress to be made by November.</p> <p>The Secretariat reported that both Sabah and Seruyan are making strong progress in preparing to meet the Step 2 indicators. However, the most significant challenge faced by both pilots is identifying and addressing the legal gaps between local regulations and RSPO standards. This legal misalignment remains the primary hurdle to moving forward.</p> <p>Members inquired whether the SOP would help in addressing these legal gaps. The Secretariat clarified that the SOP is intended to outline the process for pilots to apply for RSPO membership once all Step 2 indicators have been met. It does not directly address legal alignment issues. Instead, those issues are linked to the broader piloting framework and the stepwise approach, specifically on how pilots demonstrate that they have fulfilled Step 2 requirements and how this can be verified by an independent reviewer, as was done in Step 1.</p> <p>Members commented that these legal and procedural issues should be further discussed at the pilot level once there is clarity on what is required for the membership application. The Secretariat explained that the SOP will specify the data and documentation a pilot must provide when submitting an application for membership such as jurisdiction-level data including total hectares covered by growers and smallholders. The SOP also links to the Annual Communication of Progress (ACOP), which will be required once membership is granted. For example, if Sabah or Seruyan were to apply and be accepted for membership in 2026, their first ACOP submission would be due in 2028, reporting on the year 2027, due to the 12-month reporting cycle. Additional considerations are still being worked through, including what internal processes and structures need to be in place to support a JE as an RSPO member.</p>	<p>Follow up on the progress of the draft SOP</p> <p>Action by: Secretariat</p>
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	<p>creates a potential conflict, particularly with Criterion 7.7 of the RSPO 2024 P&C, which prohibits development within identified HCV-HCS areas. The question arises: if a government chooses not to follow this and proceed to develop the identified areas, what are the implications?</p> <p>While this has not yet become a direct problem, it is a foreseeable issue that requires discussion. For example, in the case of Sabah, if the jurisdiction has already designated a significant amount of land for protection, can development be permitted in HCV-HCS areas that fall outside of those officially protected zones? This is a key question that needs to be addressed.</p> <p>Members commented that even after HCV-HCS zoning is completed and a final map is produced, this does not eliminate the need for a full HCV-HCS assessment for areas to be converted for new plantings of oil palm. In such cases, a more detailed, fine-grained analysis is still required before any conversion can proceed. The risk may not be as severe as initially feared due to this procedural “safety net” as further due diligence will still take place prior to development. However, there’s another challenge on the potential for non-palm developments—such as mining, forestry, or conversion to other crops like rubber or rice—to be approved within HCV-HCS areas. This is not unique to the jurisdictional approach but reflects a wider issue faced across the RSPO system.</p> <p>The Secretariat highlighted that the issue arises when, even after a final HCV-HCS map has been developed for a jurisdiction, the government may decide to exclude certain areas—say, 20,000 hectares—for infrastructure projects, palm oil expansion, or conversion to other crops like rubber. Since RSPO does not have regulatory authority over government land-use decisions, it is not in its position to prevent such changes. This directly conflicts with the RSPO rule which clearly prohibits development in identified HCV-HCS areas after the cut-off date. Should RSPO seek to find a compromise mechanism? And if so, how would that work in practice while maintaining the integrity of RSPO standards? These are questions that need thoughtful consideration as the jurisdictional approach evolves.</p> <p>Members noted that the RSPO JA is a long-term, oriented idea. A key concern raised was the alignment between the long-term goals of the JA and the short-term nature of political cycles. Using Seruyan as an example, the current kabupaten government is highly committed to the JA, likewise in Sabah. However, what happens if the political leadership changes following upcoming elections? How can RSPO safeguard the initiative from political instability or changes in jurisdictional leadership? What mechanisms can be built into the JA framework to protect against the risk of political turnover undermining years of groundwork and partnership building? These require further thinking and discussions.</p> <p>Members commented that the RSPO JA is for the responsible and sustainable cultivation and production of oil palm. For example, if the Sabah government were to consider converting identified HCV areas to</p>	
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	<p>coconut or other non-palm crops, such actions would technically fall outside the scope of RSPO's mandate. However, if the proposed development is for palm oil within HCV areas, this would directly conflict with RSPO's standards and must not be permitted under any circumstances. RSPO cannot operate under dual standards. While the RSPO cannot stop a government from authorising new development on HCV areas, it can and must be clear that such actions would disqualify entities from RSPO compliance. Given that government representatives sit within the JE, there should be no ambiguity. These stakeholders should already fully be aware and understand the RSPO rules. RSPO must remain firm to maintain the integrity of the JA and the credibility of RSPO standards.</p> <p>Members highlighted that strict adherence to the RSPO Standards is fundamental. Upholding the P&C is at the core of RSPO's credibility, and deviation from these standards should not be normalized or treated as an acceptable form of non-compliance. This issue has been discussed repeatedly during the development of the JA framework. When a development decision, such as the clearing of HCV areas, originates from within government structures, does the JE, particularly its multistakeholder advisory board with government representation, have any capacity to conduct due diligence or intervene. Is there a viable "upward delegation" process through the JE that can be used to prevent or mitigate such actions at higher political levels? The idea is to explore whether the JE itself can play a proactive role in resolving these issues internally. On the other hand, if a jurisdictional government ultimately allows development in HCV areas in breach of RSPO criteria, what are the consequences for the JE and its members? Would such a breach mean that the entire JE is disqualified from the JA framework? Or would the non-compliant party (e.g., a specific company or government entity) be removed from the JE or RSPO membership? These are crucial governance questions that must be addressed.</p> <p>The Secretariat agreed that if RSPO chooses to strictly enforce the standards, there must be clearly defined follow-up actions for such scenarios. This includes determining whether the entire JE is held accountable or only the entity responsible for the violation. While some level of compromise might be considered in complex cases, this may cause reputational risks and open RSPO to accusations of permitting jurisdictional entities to join the JA framework while continuing harmful practices.</p> <p>Members raised concerns that there are a lot of accusations regarding JA as a greenwashing mechanism. Allowing new areas to be cleared, under any rationale tied to participation in JA, would undermine the credibility of the entire approach. While some flexibility exists through mechanisms like RaCP, which allows for historical deforestation to be addressed through offsetting, this flexibility must have clear limits. Offsetting historical deforestation by allocating forest reserves or protecting forested areas can be acceptable under strict conditions. However, any allowance for future deforestation would be unacceptable and incompatible with RSPO's standards. Another critical challenge highlighted was the issue of sectoral</p>	
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	<p>linkage. While oil palm companies operating under RSPO observe HCV area protections, other sectors such as uncertified forest companies pose significant threats to these same areas.</p> <p>A member highlighted the challenges and opportunities of applying the JA in high forest cover countries (HFCC) in the African context. Using Gabon as a case study, the idea of JA is to have an approach for enabling responsible development without encouraging deforestation. In Gabon, where over 90% of the land is forested, and RSPO standards have been embedded into national law, the space for agricultural expansion is extremely limited. Even low-value forests trigger the protections of RSPO Criterion 7.7, effectively closing off any viable room for development under a strict interpretation of the standard. If 7.7 is applied rigidly, development will become impossible, therefore there should be some flexibility for HFCCs.</p> <p>The political volatility in Gabon underscores this fragility. After decades of strong environmental leadership, a recent military coup shifted national priorities from conservation to rapid development. This kind of sudden political change is not unusual and must be anticipated. The question is not if breaches will happen, but how we will respond when they do. However strict enforcement such as removing JA members risks collapsing the only cooperative framework (JA) that currently enables sustainable development planning in countries like Gabon. Without JA, countries could either abandon RSPO entirely or regress to unsustainable development models.</p> <p>Another critical question raised was that if a country or jurisdiction makes a verifiable commitment to protect a certain percentage of its land, can development within HCV-HCS areas then be allowed? If it is allowed, what is considered reasonable?</p> <p>Members stated that this issue was raised during the drafting of the 2018 RSPO Standards, when it was recognised that in some HFCC contexts, there may be situations where development should be allowed in those countries, notwithstanding zero deforestation commitment. RSPO then established the No Deforestation Joint Steering Group (NDJSG) to specifically address this. However, despite years of deliberation, no clear solution was found and the NDJSG has since been dissolved. With the dissolution of the NDJSG, members expressed concern about where this critical issue will now be addressed. The responsibility for resolving this does not fall solely on the JWG. This is not just a problem for JA, rather a generic problem for the whole institution. Instead, this issue should be escalated to the BHCVWG and the BoG.</p> <p>A member shared that in the context of Papua New Guinea (PNG), while there is a clear need to enable responsible development, the risk of deforestation remains ever-present—and the reputational stakes are high. Any allowance for forest conversion risks is being labelled greenwashing and undermining RSPO's credibility. Currently, it is stuck between recognizing both the need for development and the responsibility to</p>	
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	<p>prevent deforestation, yet with no clear or acceptable middle ground currently in place. In contrast, in Indonesia, much of the deforestation has already occurred, and in many regions, the focus is now on protecting what remains.</p> <p>Members suggested that maybe for HFCCs, there could be a separate approach or exception, while maintaining the existing RSPO standards for other countries.</p> <p>The Secretariat agreed that the challenge of enforcing Criterion 7.7 in HFCC contexts is a generic issue. At the management unit level, the application of 7.7 is relatively straightforward where if a company or group of smallholders violates the standard, it results in non-compliance. However, in the jurisdictional context, the situation becomes significantly more complex. Here, RSPO is not dealing with individual members, but with government authorities who hold the legal mandate over land use and development decisions. If a jurisdictional government decides to authorize development in an HCV-HCS area, even against RSPO's standards, can RSPO realistically tell a government "You cannot do that" in their own jurisdiction?</p> <p>Members commented that JA is a voluntary initiative, and the intent is not to tell governments what they can or cannot do within their own jurisdictions, but rather to establish clear, pre-defined standards and expectations. If a jurisdiction chooses to participate, it does so knowingly and willingly, understanding the commitments and obligations involved. This voluntary nature is key: jurisdictions are not compelled to join, and not all will qualify. JA is, by design, a niche initiative, aimed at jurisdictions that are both capable and politically aligned with RSPO's values and principles. While the long-term vision is to mainstream and streamline this approach, some jurisdictions may not be suitable to join JA. The hypothetical scenarios being discussed are valid concerns, but these should not deter RSPO from holding the line. The JA initiative is for those who are willing to commit and understand what they are signing up for.</p> <p>The Secretariat asked whether some flexibility could be considered in situations where a jurisdiction has already placed 40% or 50% of its land under formal protection, could development be allowed in areas outside of those protected zones, even if those areas include HCV-HCS lands? A member responded that the key consideration is whether the development involves oil palm. Governments may choose to plant other types of crops for food security purposes, such as carbohydrate-based crops, in HCV areas. In such cases, these actions would not fall under RSPO's jurisdiction if they are unrelated to oil palm. If the development is for oil palm, and it is carried out by an RSPO member, then it falls under RSPO's standards. Any development in HCV-HCS areas by RSPO members would be a direct violation of Criterion 7.7 and would therefore be subject to the applicable penalties and compliance procedures.</p>	
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	<p>A member shared the challenges faced by Gabon where Gabon had undertaken a comprehensive HCV-HCS assessment at the national level, implementing a country-wide version of a jurisdictional approach. Through this process, detailed national maps were developed, identifying areas designated for conservation and those considered suitable for development. The effort included a significant conservation commitment and was underpinned by a robust scientific methodology, including carbon measurements from over 100 locations. However, the initiative faced strong resistance and criticism particularly from NGOs and environmental advocates as they firmly opposed permitting any development in HCV-HCS areas. If a country like Gabon despite the government's demonstrated willingness, the scientific rigour of the assessment, and a clear zoning strategy could not gain support, then it raises serious doubts about how RSPO will be able to advance JA elsewhere. If RSPO is overly cautious or hesitant due to potential reputational risks associated with permitting development in limited areas, JA risks being stuck indefinitely and will not be able to progress.</p> <p>The Secretariat recognised that the issue at hand is not something for the JWG to resolve alone. Once there is greater clarity on potential pathways forward, the matter will likely require the involvement of the GA.</p> <p>The Secretariat also mentioned that sustainability is a constantly evolving concept. What sustainability meant ten or twenty years ago is not exactly what it means today. This evolution is precisely why RSPO regularly updates its standards, to keep pace with emerging sustainability challenges and expectations. Political changes are inevitable and often occur more frequently than desired. This is a reality that must be accounted for in long-term planning. New sustainability approaches and evolving elements need to be brought into the conversation as well. This is where JA has a distinct advantage. Unlike traditional certification at the management unit level, the JA brings together government entities, civil society, growers, and other key stakeholders in a shared platform. This allows for more nuanced and inclusive discussions about what is best for a given landscape or jurisdiction. JA is not merely about certifying individual entities—it is about collective, landscape-level governance. Therefore, it must be viewed through a different lens than typical certification approaches.</p> <p>The Secretariat will take note of all the ideas and feedback raised by the members for further consideration and deliberation.</p> <p>Members emphasized that it is clear RSPO cannot allow greenwashing and cannot have double standards. If governments choose to engage with RSPO and participate in its initiatives, they are, by doing so, committing to uphold RSPO's standards in full. However, there remains an unresolved and long-standing issue regarding how RSPO should approach development in HFCCs. This issue needs to be referred to the relevant working groups, including the BoG, and potentially escalated to the GA for proper deliberation and resolution.</p> <p>Members shared an update on the discussions taking place in Sabah.</p>	
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	<p>Sabah has committed to the JA in 2015, and the state government has been consistently supportive of the initiative. As part of their efforts, Sabah has completed High Conservation Value (HCV) mapping across the entire state, which has enabled the identification of No-Go areas. The Sabah government has also committed to maintaining 50% forest cover for the state. Of that, 30% has been marked as Totally Protected Areas (TPAs), and as of now, they have already achieved 27% toward that goal. A recurring question from stakeholders on the ground is whether development can be permitted in non-HCV areas. When broader discussions on this topic take place, the Sabah initiative would be happy to share further updates and insights.</p>	
<p>3.0 Any Other Business</p>	<p>A JWG member has been in conversation with members and individuals outside of RSPO who have an interest in JA. There is a clear need to build bridges between those who are heavily engaged in JA development and the majority of RSPO membership and external stakeholders who may not be as involved or aware. To facilitate this, the member suggested to develop a Q&A fact sheet that addresses common questions raised within this group as well as those that outsiders might have. This bridge building is crucial, not only for better communication but also to ensure that the larger RSPO membership and other stakeholders can clearly understand what JA stands for and its significance. There are many questions coming from outsiders who believe in the roundtable concept and see the JA as an important approach, not only for palm oil but also for broader transition elements. Questions such as what happens if one company within a jurisdiction does not adhere to the agreed norms, how are other commodities within that jurisdiction treated, and many other concerns that provide interesting topics for discussion.</p> <p>The Secretariat agreed that this is a good way forward, since external stakeholders who may not be directly involved on the ground can bring different perspectives. The Secretariat will collaborate with JWG members who volunteered to develop the factsheet and also welcomed contributions from all JWG members as part of a collective effort. They also highlighted that this initiative would address important communication challenges.</p> <p>Members recommended scheduling a call after the meeting to invite people to share commonly asked questions they encounter. These questions would then form the basis for developing a comprehensive Q&A fact sheet. Members also emphasized the need to improve communication about the JA model, noting that many people do not fully understand it. Providing simple explanations with diagrams and visuals would be helpful.</p> <p>Members raised a question regarding the standing agenda item on pilot updates that was included in previous meetings, asking if it still takes place. The Secretariat responded that it had not been included in the past couple of meetings but would reinstate it if members wished. Members believed that hearing updates on how the pilots are progressing would be valuable. Members also requested clarity on the JWG’s work plan, noting the</p>	<p>Design a JA Q&A factsheet Action by: Secretariat</p> <p>Schedule a call for members to share commonly asked questions Action by: Secretariat</p> <p>Include JA pilot updates and the JWG workplan in the agenda of the next meeting Action by:</p>

	<p>importance of ensuring all necessary infrastructure is in place within RSPO to achieve key milestones. Having a clear to-do list that tracks progress, highlights outstanding tasks, and identifies any need to engage other parts of the Secretariat or RSPO would be useful. The Secretariat takes note of these suggestions and will include both agenda items in the next meeting.</p> <p>Members reemphasized the importance of communication and the clarity on what JA is remains crucial. Developing a factsheet explaining the JA is equally important, as misunderstandings have repeatedly arisen during past efforts due to a lack of understanding of the approach. More effective planning is needed to improve communication about what JA truly is, as current efforts are still insufficient.</p> <p>The meeting ended at 5:50 pm.</p>	Secretariat
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