



**PONGO ALLIANCE STATEMENT ON  
SURVIVAL OF ORANGUTANS IN OIL PALM LANDSCAPES  
21 September 2017**

Palm Oil NGO (PONGO) Alliance, an alliance of several major palm oil producers and nature conservation organisations, has a mission to support the proper management of orangutans and other wildlife within plantations.

The health and survival of orangutans depends ultimately on having year-round access to their staple foods of diverse fruits and nutritious leaves.

One of the biggest challenges of PONGO Alliance is to set in motion a general move away from separating orangutans and plantations, and from automatically taking orang-utans out of plantations on the assumption that they will do better somewhere else. PONGO Alliance believes that the time has come to seek ways to allow free-ranging orang-utans to live and breed in plantation landscapes which incorporate patches and corridors of original and restored forests.

This is an enormous challenge, not least in terms of convincing governments, company decision-makers and NGOs to radically change the way they have been dealing with orang-utans and oil palm plantations over the past forty years. Big palm oil producers and traders tried to do the right thing in announcing policies on “No Deforestation, No Peat, No Exploitation” and “High Carbon Stock” in recent years. But as with most bold new policies based on noble principles, there have been unintended side effects due to retention of established land use allocation rules and procedures.

Land use planning mechanisms involve many interests and compromises. In this context, a big challenge has been that land most suitable for oil palm and other plantation crops is also most suitable as habitat for breeding populations of orangutans and many other wildlife species. In recent years, some companies with leases to plant oil palm have proposed to retain large patches of natural forests within the lease, to help sustain orangutans and other “high conservation values” and carbon stock. This thinking is in line with the rules of Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) and with the purchasing policies of the big traders. But proposals to retain forests on land allocated for plantations may be in breach of lease conditions. The time has come to seek ways to resolve this dilemma.

The dilemma is exemplified in Ketapang District, West Kalimantan, where government, industry players and civil society groups alike struggle to seek a way forward to satisfy the valid visions of all stakeholders. PONGO Alliance will do its best to address the needs of orangutan conservation, including within oil palm land leases from which fruit bunches and palm oil will be sourced in the coming years. The Alliance is committed to help create dialogue between relevant stakeholders, so that patches and corridors of forest may be retained and restored to help sustain orangutans within their original landscape.

END



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