

# CLOSING OF THE CONFERENCE

## RSPO Closing Address



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First Latin American Meeting of  
the Roundtable on Sustainable  
Palm Oil, RSPO

Cartagena, October 16 -17, 2008.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Vice-Minister of Environment, Housing and Territorial Development, Claudia Mora, who was the architect of this event taking place here in Cartagena, Colombia, following her attendance last year at the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Roundtable in Kuala Lumpur.

It was quite a whirlwind visit. The Vice-Minister flew halfway round the world, spent a few hours in Kuala Lumpur, and then came back again. I think that when she arrived back she realized the madness of what she'd just done; I said to her that, as a result, we were inviting her to Valley, but that this time she would need a little more time. Thank you so much, Claudia Mora. It has been truly important for the oil palm sector in Colombia and Latin America to have been able to hold this First Latin American Meeting.

It has given Fedepalma great pleasure to sponsor this 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting and to be involved in its organization. Since the beginning, we have been committed to the RSPO initiative because it overlaps with a series of activities and aims that we have in our own organization.

For us, it has been something very easy to carry forward and we want to continue along this path with the goal that a very significant number of producers in Colombia, hopefully all of them affiliated to Fedepalma, can be certified or very nearly certified in an appropriate time period.

We believe that, with the organization of this event, we have in some way fulfilled our responsibility to our affiliates and also our counterparts elsewhere in



Latin America with whom we have shared on many occasions the issues of the RSPO. Some of them had not seen the Roundtable as closely as they did here and I sincerely trust that we will have more developed Latin American delegations in the future, starting with the meeting in Indonesia.

It will also be important to consider that, as we gain a greater understanding, we should create incentives for companies, especially the most visible and representative, in each country so that they consider joining this initiative formally.

On behalf of Fedepalma and those who work with us, I would like to extend thanks to all the foreign visitors who came to this meeting and gave it a truly Latin American scope. This was the intention that we had drawn up with the RSPO.

I would also like to offer a special thank-you to the RSPO President, Jan-Kees Vis, for coming. It took no little effort for him to be here these three days, especially on the eve of a special family event. Let us give him a special round of applause for the important leadership that he has given the organization.

Equally, I'd like to thank our Secretary-General, Vengetta Rao, whom many of us have known for a long time through his association with oil palm cultivation and now his important role in the RSPO. Without doubt, his participation was fundamental for us all to have a better understanding of what the RSPO is looking to achieve. We consider Vengetta a friend of the oil palm sector in Colombia and to him too we offer our applause.

I am very pleased to hear that there are already members with strong interest in all of this and who have offered their countries for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Latin American Meeting. In the end, our dear friends from Ecuador, bearing in mind that they are the second-biggest producers in Latin America, will host the event.

Our thanks go especially to Ancupa –the National Association of African Palm Cultivators of Ecuador– and to all the other oil palm producers for their interest and

for offering to lead the organization of the next meeting. Fedepalma, together with the RSPO Secretariat, will be there to assist you.

To our friends from Brazil, who also showed their willingness to host, we are keeping your offer to lead the 3<sup>rd</sup> Latin American Meeting, after the meeting in Ecuador. To these delegations, our thanks.

As I said in my opening address, we have a great industry and I think that you would all agree that if we do things well we can make an enormous contribution in the economic, environmental and social dimensions. Without a doubt, those of us who are involved in this activity, from different angles and for many years, can testify that in the majority of cases that is what happens. Yet we must be vigilant that new entrants to the sector do things correctly.

In this sense, I want to reiterate that those of us who are part of this industry have to try to protect it and the most effective way to do that is that we producers organize ourselves. I invite you to build a consolidated national association in each country, an association which can seriously represent the responsible producers there and contribute to giving us a stronger Latin American voice for the defense of this agro-industry.

Becoming organized will facilitate our participation in initiatives like the RSPO. I hope that producers in Colombia and abroad really support this proposal because it will benefit the strengthening of our industry.

I leave pleased by this meeting with you and I hope that your expectations when you registered for and participated in the event have been fulfilled. If they haven't been, I hope that we can fulfill them in future meetings.

In Fedepalma, we have always had an open and transparent organization which tries to give the world more information about the oil palm agro-industry, not just in Colombia but also throughout the region and the whole world. Let us try to continue to honor that commitment.

Many thanks.