

MALEN AFFECTED LAND OWNERS AND LAND USERS ASSOCIATION (MALOA)

MALEN CHIEFDOM, PUJEHUN DISTRICT

6th November, 2020

PRESS STATEMENT

It came to the notice of MALOA that the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) contracted the Scientific Certification System Global Services (SCS) to undertake an audit aimed at certifying Socfin Agricultural Company in Malen chiefdom.

The Executive Committee and the General Membership of MALOA wish to express their dissatisfaction with the refusal of the SCS Global Services Audit Team to hold an open General Meeting at Shan Malen Court Barray with our membership. This meeting would have given MALOA members the opportunity to acquaint themselves with the RSPO Audit Process and to share their experiences on the activities and operations of SOCFIN in Malen Chiefdom. The RSPO criteria and principles proved that affected persons should be heard.

Unfortunately, a member of the SCS Global Audit Team, Mr. Frank Kwesi, had initially accepted to hold the general meeting at Sahn Court Barray, but however later insisted that a meeting with selected representatives of MALOA be held in the SOCFIN's canteen or outside of the chiefdom, which was rejected by MALOA, because of the transportation costs involved.

Our members have raised serious concerns around SCS Global's reliance on a list of carefully selected "Land Owners and Stakeholders" presented to the audit team by SOCFIN to conduct their interviews. The list did not include names of aggrieved Land Owners negatively affected by the operations of SOCFIN.

Furthermore, members have complained about SOCFIN's provision of lodging and a vehicle to the SCS Global Audit Team. We are concerned that these and other actions may compromise the neutrality of SCS Global as independent auditors and could lead to conflicts of interest that would interfere with the ability of SCS Global to conduct a credible and impartial audit of SOCFIN. MALOA is convinced that an open General Meeting would have greatly helped to build trust in the audit process.

MALOA is calling on the RSPO and its partners to ensure a credible and impartial RSPO Audit of SOCFIN.



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MALOA Chairman

Bockarie M. Koroma

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