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Title Sponsor Speech | Strong Foundations: Impact in Action
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Title: Greater Possibilities, Rooted in Responsibility

1. Distinguished guests, fellow members of RSPO, colleagues, members of the media, ladies, and gentlemen. Good morning.

2. It is a pleasure to join you here in Jakarta, and a privilege for Guthrie to return as Title Sponsor of the RSPO Roundtable Conference.

3. There is particular significance in gathering here, at the heart of one of the world's most important palm oil-producing nations.

4. Here, sitting in this hall today, are industry leaders, partners and stakeholders who have not only shaped the progress of sustainable palm oil, but also the lives and livelihoods of millions of people in the palm oil industry.

5. So, our discussions here matter and our decisions reach far beyond this hall… how land is managed, how products are sourced, and how millions of people earn a living.

6. For a worker, those decisions can mean a safer working day. For a smallholder, a more secure income. For a community, confidence that its concerns will be heard.

7. Let me begin by taking you to a place somewhere in Sulawesi… to Ungkaya, where Guthrie operates.

8. It's a productive agricultural landscape. There are oil palms, estates, a mill, and communities whose lives are connected to the land.

9. As we move towards the coast, we encounter another tree: the mangrove.

10. It grows where the ground is soft and the tides keep changing.

11. The roots of the mangrove, the tree's foundations… sustain life around it.

12. They provide shelter for young fishes and other marine life. Together, mangroves help protect the shoreline.

13. Now, that's an interesting way to think about the theme of this year's conference: 'Strong Foundations, Impact in Action'.

14. For an industry, the value of strong foundations must become visible in what they protect and enable.

15. Do they help people earn a decent living? Do they protect nature? Do they give us the capability to respond when things go wrong?

16. And what more could they make possible?

17. That is the thought behind my remarks today: Greater Possibilities, Rooted in Responsibility.

18. Since RSPO was established in 2004, we have spent more than two decades building those foundations.

19. We have standards and certification. Greater traceability. Stronger expectations around conservation, rights and responsible sourcing - None of these appeared overnight.

20. Growers invested in changing practices. Buyers examined their supply chains. NGOs challenged problems that deserved greater attention. Governments strengthened requirements. Workers and communities pressed for a greater voice. And the global market has pushed us to become better.

21. Some of these conversations and experiences were uncomfortable.

22. But the willingness to remain at the table, especially when agreement was difficult, has been essential to our progress.

23. We should recognise that work.

24. We should also recognise that a standard on paper and a consistent outcome on the ground are two different things. The distance between them is where our attention must remain.

25. A strong foundation should give us confidence. It should also help us recognise where we need to improve.

26. And its strength becomes clear when it is tested.

27. Ladies and gentlemen, one persistent test of our industry is our ability to protect people and landscapes when fire risk rises.

28. Across Southeast Asia, we know the sight of a sky filled with smoke. And in recent times, orange.

29. When haze returns, people do not experience it as a sustainability debate.

30. They live the experience… Workers breathe unhealthy air. Children remain indoors. Older people and those with existing health conditions face greater risks.

31. That is the reality, when forests and peatland are burning.

32. Now, I'm not here to assign blame. The fact is much of the blame has already been assigned… mostly to the palm oil industry.

33. We also know that allegations can travel faster than facts.

34. We can point out that the issue is complex. We can explain that not every fire begins for the same reason, that a hotspot does not – on its own – prove wrongdoing. We can even point to other crops or agricultural activities!

35. But despite all these complexities, we must always remember, the crop is not the culprit. Human practices are.

36. That is why it is important that we insist on accurate reporting and conclusions grounded in evidence.

37. But more importantly, we must bring the same discipline to examining our own practices.

38. We cannot ask others to look carefully at the evidence unless we are prepared to do so ourselves.

39. The important questions are practical.

40. It's not just how the fire started or spread… how could it have been prevented? Who has the ability to intervene and what must change so that it will not happen again,

41. Timely action, matters. People need protection and that has to be our priority.

42. This brings us back to our foundations.

43. Are our systems working? Are warning signals reaching the right people? And do those people have the authority and resources to act?

44. These questions apply equally to Guthrie. We do not stand outside the system.

45. Our scale, history and certifications do not place us above scrutiny. They increase the standard to which we must hold ourselves.

46. What happens on our land matters to our neighbours. What happens on our neighbours' land matter just as much.

47. Yet our ability to control events has limits… But our willingness to co-operate, to get involved, to contribute meaningfully to our surrounding areas and communities, that's really up to us.

48. Our responsibility cannot end at a line on a map.

49. We should learn from every failure. But we should not need another crisis to make changes we already know are necessary.

50. Guthrie has had our fair share of crises. We've had to dissect ourselves, examine the difficult issues, learn from them, and make the changes.

51. And we have come out stronger because of them.

52. The lesson is straightforward: we must always do the right thing.

53. All companies, including Guthrie, must be prepared to examine the landscape we manage, the products we purchase, the partners we work with, and the effects of our decisions beyond our immediate boundaries.

54. Ladies and gentlemen, there are many roads that lead to Rome. So allow me to offer one option which has three practical tests.

55. First, SEE IT.

56. Today, monitoring, traceability and science give us greater visibility. The knowledge of people living and working in a landscape helps us understand what the data means.

57. We should be able to recognise risks before we see smoke.

58. But a warning on a screen only becomes useful when it reaches someone who can respond.

59. So, the test is this: does our information lead to a timely decision?

60. Second, OWN IT.

61. Responsibility for actions must be clear.

62. Are we checking on our neighbours to see how they are doing? Are we coordinating with communities and authorities when a fire risk crosses boundaries?

63. We cannot assume responsibility for every action around us. But where we have information, resources or influence that could help prevent harm, we should be prepared to use them.

64. That may mean sharing an alert, supporting a coordinated response, or helping communities access practical alternatives to burning.

65. Third, SORT IT.

66. Once a risk is clear, we must respond without delay.

67. Where wrongdoing is established, there must be consequences. Where harm occurs, we must address it. Where systems fail, we must improve them.

68. No credible organisation can promise that nothing will ever go wrong.

69. But all companies can commit to taking serious action when it comes to fire prevention and preparedness.

70. See it. Own it. Sort it.

71. Before workers breathe unhealthy air. Before communities suffer. Before a manageable risk becomes a wider emergency.

72. That is how responsible action earns public trust.

Ladies and gentlemen,

73. When it comes to fixing our reputation and rebuilding trust, I'm afraid doing the bare minimum is no longer enough.

74. Preventing harm, complying with standards, these are essential.

75. But these are the foundations of responsible operations – not the limit of what we can possibly achieve.

76. Look around us and ask, what more can we do to improve the surrounding world beyond ourselves?

77. For Guthrie, this question sits at the heart of our "Beyond Zero" sustainability framework.

78. It represents our ambition to go beyond minimising harm towards creating positive outcomes for nature, lives, and livelihoods.

79. This is what achieving greater possibilities means to us.

80. And under “Beyond Zero” we see these possibilities through 3 connected pillars.

    a. **Zero**: Which is fundamentally the aim to reduce negative impacts on people and the planet.

    b. **Restore**: Conserving and restoring nature and biodiversity. And lastly,

    c. **Transform**: which is our aim to improve lives and livelihoods.

81. These pillars are connected because the challenges within a landscape are also connected.

82. Landscape resilience is connected to soil, water, biodiversity, and community livelihoods.

83. To achieve greater possibilities, our positive impact on a landscape must be holistic, not one at the expense of another or all others.

84. We need to build that resilience but also look beyond the borders of our landscapes and concessions to grow our positive impact.

85. So, this leads us ask the following questions:

    a. Can productive agricultural landscapes help restore nature?

    b. Can habitats be reconnected while sustaining production?

    c. Can soil and water systems become more resilient?

    d. Can workers, communities, and smallholders benefit as the industry grows?

86. These are no simple answers to these questions. Challenges of this scale cannot be addressed by one organisation alone.

87. Guthrie certainly doesn’t have all the answers.

88. So, to find the solutions, we approach the challenges like we have always done in the past – and that is to work with like-minded partners who bring different experiences, expertise, and perspectives.

89. Earlier this year, in collaboration with WWF Malaysia, we announced a five-year regenerative palm oil pilot project covering approximately 13,000 hectares across Sabah’s Tawau–Kunak landscape.

90. Our baseline assessment covered four RSPO-certified estates and one mill. We looked at their established agricultural practices, their work on conservation areas and their practices to ensure workers safety. Those observations give us a strong starting point.

91. But what makes this landscape particularly compelling is the wildlife it supports.

92. Camera traps recorded species including the Sunda pangolin, Bornean clouded leopard and sun bear, with some detected within our plantation area.

93. These animals were there. They exist. So now, the question is – “What more can we do to help protect them?”.

94. The assessment identified priority areas where reconnecting habitats could help wildlife move across the landscape.

95. Protecting individual patches of forests matter. But when these individual patches of forest are connected, we now have a landscape allows for wildlife to thrive.

96. Natural forests remain essential and irreplaceable. Our opportunity is to manage productive agricultural land co-exist and support the wider landscape.

97. That includes strengthening soil health, sustaining productivity and delivering further benefits for workers and surrounding communities.

98. This brings us back to the title of my remarks: Greater Possibilities, Rooted in Responsibility.

99. Responsibility begins with protecting what is already there — the habitats, the rights of our workers, and the livelihoods connected to the landscape. It also means being honest about where we stand and measuring whether our actions make a difference.

100. From that foundation, greater possibilities emerge: reconnecting habitats, strengthening resilience, and creating further benefits for people while sustaining productive agriculture.

101. That is what we are exploring with WWF-Malaysia.

102. I'm proud that representatives from Guthrie and WWF-Malaysia have had the opportunity to present the findings and progress of our regenerative agricultural collaboration at COP17 in Armenia just last week.

103. At this opportunity, I would like to invite all of you to consider building on to the impact from the foundations you have built.

104. I know not every company will begin in the same place or even follow the same model – different landscapes face different conditions and require different approaches.

105. But every organisation should nevertheless be able to explain how it is strengthening the resilience of the landscapes under its influence.

106. For RSPO-certified growers, our foundations are already strong. This should give us the confidence to rise above old challenges and reach for greater heights!

107. How much longer do we want to take the blame for the haze?

108. It is time to rise above it and reach for greater possibilities.

109. Let us return to the mangrove at Ungkaya.

110. Its roots keep the tree standing. Their wider value lies in the life they support.

111. The same test should apply to the foundations of our industry.

112. Their value should become visible through forests that remain standing, habitats that reconnect, workers whose rights are respected, and communities with better opportunities.

113. Through productive landscapes that become more resilient.

114. And through people who can breathe clean air.

115. These are outcomes worth working towards.

116. They give purpose to the standards we uphold and the investments we make.

Ladies and gentlemen,

117. We have spent more than two decades strengthening our foundations.

118. We must continue that work and use the capabilities we have developed to address the challenges before us.

119. The greater possibility is an industry that produces responsibly, helps nature recover and creates better opportunities for the people who depend on it.

120. Our challenge is to understand our starting point, choose where we can make a difference, and demonstrate what changes.

121. The next time haze threatens our region, let it not find us asking only who is to blame.

122. Let it find us already connected, already transparent, and already acting.

123. Greater possibilities begin with the responsibilities we are prepared to take today.

124. Thank you, and I wish everyone a productive and meaningful RT2026.

Thank you.

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