

# Guyana National Forest Certification Scheme

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## Standard setting procedures

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# Foreword

Stakeholders in Guyana's forestry and forest products sector have agreed to develop a national forest certification system for endorsement by the PEFC Council (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes). The PEFC is a worldwide organization promoting sustainable forest management through forest certification and labelling of forest-based products. A product with a PEFC claim and/or label offers assurance that raw materials used in the manufacture of that product have originated in a sustainably managed forest.

## Introduction

Since 2002, Guyana has developed and implemented initiatives, regulations, procedures, and management systems, in close consultation with stakeholders within the country's forestry sector, to underpin its sustainable forest management objective, including the following:

- Guyana's Forest Regulations of 2018 (No. 6 of 2009) made under the Forest Act of 2009;
- Guyana's Code of Practice (No. 1 of 2018 – The Forest Act (No. 6 of 2009), for forestry operations;
- Guidelines for Forest Operations (Small Concession);
- Guidelines for Forest Operations (Large Concession);
- Guyana's National Wood Tracking System, November 2015;
- GFC's Manual of Procedures:
  - Forest Resources Management Division's (FRMD) Manual of Procedures, 2012;
  - Forest Monitoring Division's (FMD) Manual of Procedures, 2012; and
  - Finance Division's Manual of Procedures.

In addition, Guyana has successfully initialled the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the European Union (EU) under its Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) programme. Guyana has now moved to the pre-implementation phase and is developing the systems that will facilitate the export of FLEGT-licensed wood products.

As part of the VPA, Guyana has developed a robust Legality Definition, a national timber legality assurance system (GTLAS) and updated its Forest Regulations.

The VPA, when finalised and implemented, will provide a strong basis to demonstrate legality of the sources of its wood products to global markets. Guyana also recognises that, increasingly, many markets are asking for the demonstration of sustainable forest management in addition to legality.

Independent third-party certification provides the only way for producers of wood and non-wood forest products to demonstrate their sustainability credentials credibly to the global markets.

In consultation with the stakeholders in the forestry and forest products sector, Guyana has decided that the next logical step is developing a national forest certification system, offering independent third-party certification to operators within the sector voluntarily.

Forest conditions and their environmental, social, economic, and historical aspects vary among different regions and countries. PEFC's standard development approach enables each country to develop standards that are customised and made suitable for that country and its local situations.

Stakeholders have therefore agreed to seek PEFC endorsement of the national forest certification system to be developed under these guidelines because the PEFC-endorsed system:

- uses a “bottom-up” approach that focuses on meeting the expectations of affected and interested local stakeholders on the ground, as well as stakeholders able to influence the implementation of the Standard;
- takes into account local conditions; and;
- are consistent with national laws and regulations, all within a framework of key internationally recognised sustainability benchmarks.

Notably, the PEFC approach recognises and builds on existing inter-governmental processes and is specifically designed to dovetail with legality definitions developed through the intergovernmental Voluntary Partnership Agreement process between the EU and Guyana.

The PEFC approach also presents an opportunity to develop a globally recognised certification system that is genuinely reflective of the uniqueness of Guyana's forest management situation, and the particular needs and expectations of the Guyanese people.

In opting for the PEFC approach, stakeholders have agreed to develop Guyana's national forest certification system using an open, transparent, consultative, and consensus-based process that includes a broad range of stakeholders.

## 1. Objective

This document contains the Standardising body's procedures for setting, recording, and revising standards to support the Guyana National Forest Certification Scheme.

Note: This document was discussed and agreed to by all stakeholder groups (affected, interested, and those able to influence the Standard's implementation) at a stakeholder online workshop held on **8th July 2021**.

## 2. Scope

These procedures describe how Guyana will develop, review, and revise its national standard for forest management.

The Guyana National Forest Management Standard (the Standard) will cover:

- forest management on all land tenures where forest management for commercial purposes is permitted by law in Guyana;
- both individual forest management organisations and potential group schemes involving multiple forest management entities (in accordance with group certification procedures to be developed as part of the System); and
- timber products as well as non-timber forest products.

Stakeholders have agreed to adopt without modification the PEFC Chain of Custody Standard for entities purchasing, processing and/or trading in forest products.

### 3. Normative references

PEFC ST 1001:2017 Standard-setting – Requirements- In developing these procedures, the Standardising body has adopted in large measure PEFC's standard-setting requirements. Where necessary, the language in the PEFC standard has been modified to incorporate situations and circumstances unique to Guyana's national experience.

PEFC ST 2002 Chain of Custody Standard - stakeholders have agreed to adopt without modification the PEFC Chain of Custody Standard.

Reference is also made in these procedures to:

- ISO/IEC Guide 59, Code of good practice for standardization.
- ISO/IEC Guide 2, Standardization and related activities – General vocabulary.
- PEFC GD 1007, Endorsement and Mutual Recognition of Certification Systems and their Revision.

#### 3.1 Key documents comprising the certification scheme

The Guyana National Forest Certification Scheme shall comprise the following key documents:

- Standard Setting Procedures (this document);
- Forest Management Standard;
- Group Certification Procedures;
- Chain of Custody Standard (the PEFC Chain of Custody Standard);
- Certification and Accreditation Procedures;
- Logo license issuing procedures; and
- Complaints and appeals procedures.

### 4. Terms and definitions

The Standardising body has adopted the definitions in the PEFC ST 1001:2017 — Standard-Setting – Requirements, in developing the national Standard.

#### 4.1 Consensus

General agreement characterised by the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues by any important part of the concerned interests and by a process that involves seeking to take into account the views of all parties concerned, and to reconcile any conflicting arguments.

**Note:** Consensus need not imply unanimity (ISO/IEC Guide 2).

#### 4.2 Editorial changes

Changes to the Standard that do not alter its technical content.

**Note:** This can include clarifications, guidance, and grammatical changes.

### **4.3 Enquiry draft**

A version of a Standard that is available for public consultation.

### **4.4 Final draft**

A version of a Standard that is available for formal approval.

### **4.5 Normative document**

A document that provides rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results. They include technical specifications, codes of practice and regulations.

### **4.6 Publicly available**

Generally accessible to the interested public in any form and without the need for a request.

**Note 1:** When information is available by request only, this is indicated explicitly in the document as available on request.

**Note 2:** Special consideration might be needed for disadvantaged stakeholders to ensure their access, e.g., providing hard copies to stakeholders identified as having no access to electronic media.

### **4.7 Revision**

Introduction of all agreed necessary changes to the substance and presentation of normative documents prepared as part of the standard development process. Following the requirements of ISO/IEC Guide 2, the results of the revision are presented by issuing a new edition of the normative document.

### **4.8 Review**

Activity of checking a normative document to determine whether it is to be reaffirmed, changed, or withdrawn. (ISO/IEC Guide 2).

### **4.9 Stakeholder**

A person, group, community, or organization with an interest in the subject of the Standard.

### **4.10 Affected stakeholder**

A stakeholder who might experience a direct change in living and/or working conditions caused by implementation of the Standard, or a stakeholder who might be a user of the Standard and therefore is subject to the requirements of the Standard.

**Note 1:** Affected stakeholders include neighbouring communities, indigenous people, workers, etc. However, having an interest in the subject matter of the Standard (e.g., NGOs, scientific community, and civil society) is not equal to being affected.

**Note 2:** A stakeholder who might be a user of the Standard is likely to become a certified entity, e.g., a forest owner in the case of a forest management standard, or a wood processing enterprise in the case of a chain of custody standard.

**Note 3:** A primary stakeholder recognised under the VPA process is equivalent to an affected stakeholder.

#### 4.11 Disadvantaged stakeholder

A stakeholder who might be financially or otherwise disadvantaged by participating in the standard-setting process.

#### 4.12 Key stakeholder

A stakeholder whose participation is critical to the outcome of the standard-setting process and those who can significantly influence the process.

#### 4.13 Standard

A document, established by consensus and approved by a recognized body that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree or order in a given context.

**Note:** Standards should be based on the consolidated results of science, technology, and experience, and aimed at the promotion of optimum benefits (ISO/IEC Guide 2).

#### 4.14 Standardising body

Body that has recognised activities in standardization (ISO Guide 2).

**Note:** A standardising body for a forest management system/standard is a body which is responsible for the development and maintenance of standards for the forest certification system. The standardising body can be a PEFC National Governing Body, or the standardising body can be separate from the governance of the forest certification system.

#### 4.15 Working draft

Proposed document that is available generally for feedback or voting within a working group.

### 5. Standard-setting principles

The Standardising body has adopted a standard-setting process governed by the key principles adapted from PEFC ST 1001:2017. These are:

- **Stakeholder engagement** - an opportunity for meaningful participation in the process by all stakeholders, through participation in the standard development working group and public consultations.
- **Balanced representation** - no single stakeholder group or individual would be allowed to dominate or be dominated in the process. While each stakeholder group will be free to decide on its participation, the Standardising body will ensure that all relevant stakeholder groups are represented, including appropriate gender balance.
- **Consensus** - The Standard and all related documents will be approved by consensus. Any sustained opposition to specific issues will be resolved using dialogue whenever possible.
- **Improvement** - The Standard will be subject to periodic reviews to ensure its continual improvement so that the Standard continues to meet the stakeholders' expectations.
- **Transparency** - All documents relevant to the Standard shall be made publicly available so interested parties can follow developments during and after the process.

## **6. Organisation**

### **6.1 The Governing body and the Standardising body**

The Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) will be both the Governing body and the Standardising body to develop and implement Guyana's National Forest Certification System.

The GFC is a legal entity established by the Parliament of Guyana through the Guyana Forestry Commission Act 2007 to manage the national forest estate of Guyana. The GFC operates under legislation that does not conflict with PEFC Council statutes.

The GFC has been accepted as a member of the PEFC and confirmed its commitment to follow the PEFC Council rules and requirements.

As the governing body, the GFC's role will include the following:

- System governance and administration. This will include:
  - notifying Certification Bodies, registering certificates and logo usages, handling complaints; and
  - undertaking promotions, and/or training activities (see PEFC GD 1004, Administration of PEFC Scheme).
- Development of implementation and administration procedures, including the development of requirements for Certification Bodies and accreditation and the establishment and maintenance of complaints and appeals procedures.

As the Standardising body, the GFC's role will include the following:

- Coordination and management of the standard-setting process.
- Establishment of a standard-setting working group of balanced stakeholders to develop the Standard - the National Standard Setting Working Group (NSSWG).

### **6.2 National Standard-Setting Working Group (NSSWG)**

The Standardising body has established the National Standard Setting Working Group (NSSWG) to guide the development and revision of the Standard and associated documents, and be responsible for consensus building to ensure they are customised and suitable for Guyana and its local situations.

#### **Key operating principles of the NSSWG**

The NSSWG's key operating principles are:

- facilitated accessibility to all materially and directly affected stakeholders - for disadvantaged stakeholders (defined to include those who may not be able to access documents electronically or digitally), hard copies of all relevant documents will be provided.
- balanced representation and decision making by sectoral groups relevant to the subject matter and geographical scope of the Standard where single concerned interests shall not dominate, nor be dominated in the process, and
- inclusion of stakeholders with expertise relevant to the subject matter of the Standard, (including those who are materially affected by the Standard and those who can influence the implementation of the Standard). The materially affected stakeholders shall represent a meaningful segment of the participants.

The NSSWG shall formally confirm the agreed composition and individual membership of the Working Group at the official start of the standard-setting process. All information on the NSSWG (including the list of organizations participating in the NSSWG) and its work, will be published through the website of the Standardising body (GFC), and other suitable public media the Working Group agrees on.

The NSSWG will appoint a Chair. The Chair will be the central point of contact for the NSSWG. The NSSWG shall be assisted in its work by the PEFC Secretariat located within the GFC.

The Standardising body shall make its standard-setting procedures publicly available and review regularly its standard-setting procedures, including consideration of comments from stakeholder constituencies and the broader general public.

### **Balanced representation of interests**

The NSSWG shall have a balanced representation of interest groups and has been structured to ensure that no single interest group can dominate the decision-making process. The stakeholder interest groups who expressed interest and are included in the Working Group are:

- Forest owners and forest managers at all scales;
- Supply chain from harvest to end-user;
- Local environmental organisations;
- International environmental organisations;
- Government agencies whose statutory responsibilities influence the forests and forest products sector in Guyana;
- Research and academia;
- Workers' Union; and
- Community interests, including youth and women.

Stakeholders have agreed to ensure gender balance in its membership, and each stakeholder organisation has considered this in selecting primary and alternate representatives. The NSSWG will continually review its composition and membership to ensure it meets the standard setting requirements of PEFC ST 1001:2017 (i.e., gender balance and balanced representation of affected and interested stakeholders and stakeholders able to influence the Standard's implementation).

While the stakeholder groups have nominated participants to represent their interests, the NSSWG recognises that members are also involved in the Working Group as individuals with specific skills, experience and background, including qualifications relevant to the work of the Working Group, particularly the environmental, social, and economic aspects of sustainable forest management.

Members of the NSSWG shall be required to consult with their relevant constituencies and bring forward their constituencies' views and comments, which shall inform the decisions the NSSWG shall make.

The NSSWG shall ask for evidence of consultation with constituencies by members on all issues central to the Standard setting process.

### **Disadvantaged stakeholders**

The NSSWG has identified Amerindian groups and other stakeholders living outside large urban centres as "disadvantaged." This is because this group of stakeholders may lack access to electronic media. Hard copies of documents the stakeholders agree to make available publicly will be made available through the network of GFC Forest Stations in all the forestry regions of the Country. This will apply to all disadvantaged stakeholder groups and/or their representatives who

may be required to participate in online discussions and/or consultations relating to the development of the Standard. The GFC, as the Standardising body, will facilitate access to Forest Stations to enable disadvantaged stakeholder groups and/or their representatives, to use computers and other appropriate electronic devices to take part in online discussions and/or consultations.

## **Membership of the NSSWG**

The NSSWG consists of representatives of stakeholder groups associated with forestry in Guyana or interested in sustainable forest management through certification under Guyana's National Forest Certification Scheme.

Identification of stakeholder groups, individual stakeholders within those groupings, and their representation has been informed and assisted by similar processes undertaken by the GFC for the Voluntary Partnership Agreement, and a series of online stakeholder workshops. This process is documented separately in the Stakeholder Mapping Report prepared by the Standardising Body.

A fundamental principle behind the structure of the NSSWG is to include the broadest range of perspectives in the Working Group's deliberations, at the same time achieving balanced representation and ensuring that no sectoral interest can dominate the process.

Twenty stakeholder organisations are represented on the NSSWG, covering five sectoral interest areas, including affected and interested stakeholders.

The composition of the NSSWG is shown below in

Table 1.

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**Table 1 – Composition of the National Standard-Setting Working Group**

Type of stakeholder	Sectoral Interest	Stakeholder organisation
Affected	Private sector/Forest owners/	National Steering Committee for Community Forest Organization (NSCCFO)
		Guyana Manufacturing & Services Association (GMSA)
		Forest Products Association (FPA)
		National Toshias' Council (NTC)
		Indigenous Peoples' Commission (IPC)
		Guyana Agriculture Workers' Union (representing workers/trade unions)
	Indigenous non-governmental organisations	Amerindian People's Association (APA)
		National Amerindian Development Foundation (NADF)
		Guyanese Organization of Indigenous People (GOIP)
		The Amerindian Action Movement of Guyana (TAAMOG)
Interested	Environmental non-governmental organisations	Conservation International Guyana (CI-G)
		World Wildlife Fund Guianas (WWF-G)
		Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development
	Government	Ministry of Amerindian Affairs (MoAA)
		Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR)
		Forestry Training Centre Inc. (FTCI)
		Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC-Chair of the NSSWG)
	Civil Society	Women and Gender Equality Commission (representing the interests of women)
		Children and Youth (Ministry of Human Service and Social Security) (representing the interests of youth)
		Guyana School of Agriculture (representing academia) (as a stakeholder with potential to influence standards implementation)

## 7. Operation of the NSSWG

Stakeholder organisations are responsible for selecting and approving the individuals they wish to nominate for membership of the NSSWG, including replacing retiring members.

Each organisation has a primary representative and an alternate who will represent the organisation when the primary representative is unavailable. In the interest of encouraging more comprehensive discussion and consideration of issues that may inform the development of the Standard, the stakeholders have agreed that both primary representatives and their alternates could participate in the NSSWG's meetings.

While it is preferred that the NSSWG comprises representative organisations at the national level, stakeholders have agreed that non-affiliated individuals with the requisite qualifications and

demonstrated interest in sustainable forest management may be invited to join the Working Group if required.

## **7.1 Working Group requirements**

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the GFC has sought and obtained an approval from the PEFC Secretariat to use online meeting resources to progress the standard-setting process until face-to-face meetings are permissible.

Stakeholders have agreed that the GFC's PEFC Secretariat shall be the central point of contact for the NSSWG.

## **7.2 Decision making**

Stakeholders have agreed that the Standardising body (GFC) shall be the highest decision-making body. Where a decision to reaffirm the Standard is to be made, the Standardising body shall provide a justification for the decision and make the justification publicly available. Where the decision is to revise the Standard, the Standardising body shall specify the type of revision (normal or editorial revision).

Stakeholders have agreed:

- that the meetings of the NSSWG shall be chaired by the GFC's official representative or alternate;
  - as chair of the NSSWG, the GFC's role shall be an independent moderator to oversee the standard development process, and therefore, shall not have a vote where consensus on a matter/issue in dispute is to be achieved through voting;
- the Working Group's Deputy Chair position shall be rotated among the private sector stakeholder groups (Guyana Manufacturing & Services Association (GMSA) and Forest Products Association (FPA) and Iwokrama) on a three-month basis; and
- rotation of positions within all stakeholder groups with multiple representatives shall be permitted, and this will be on a three-monthly basis.

To the extent possible, decisions by the NSSWG shall be by consensus. This includes the decision of the Working Group to recommend the final draft of the Standard for formal approval by the Standardising body initially and ultimately to the PEFC Council for endorsement.

To reach consensus, the NSSWG has agreed to use the following alternative processes to establish whether there is opposition:

- face-to-face meeting (COVID-19 restrictions permitting) where there is a verbal yes/no vote, a show of hands for a yes/no vote, a statement on consensus from the Chair where there are no dissenting voices or hands (votes), a formal balloting process,
- online conference meeting where there is a verbal yes/no vote,
- an email meeting where a request for agreement or objection is provided to members with the members providing a written response (a proxy for a vote), or
- a combination of the above options.

If consensus of the NSSWG cannot be achieved through unanimous support on an issue, resolution will be based on four of the five sectoral interests supporting the issue. The five sectoral interests are as follows:

- Private sector/Forest owners;
- Indigenous NGOs;

- Environmental NGOs;
- Government; and
- Civil society.

Stakeholder organisations within each sectoral interest groups will determine their procedures to build consensus at the sectoral interest level. If a vote is required to resolve an overall position of the NSSWG in situations where unanimous support at the membership level of the NSSWG could not be achieved, each sectoral group will be required to nominate a representative who is authorised on behalf of the sectoral group to present that sectoral group's position back to the NSSWG. Resolution of a position will then be based on a vote (through the mechanisms described above) among the five sectoral group representatives. Overwhelming majority (four out of the five sectoral interests) will be required for consensus on, or resolution of an issue/matter in dispute.

Where a vote is required to settle an issue/matter in dispute, the GFC as the Standardising body shall be excluded from voting, so as to ensure its continued independence in overseeing the standard development process.

## Quorum

To ensure the standard development process is not delayed unnecessarily, a quorum shall not be required for a scheduled meeting of the NSSWG to proceed. The NSSWG has agreed that all documents to be discussed at a scheduled meeting will be distributed to the NSSWG members, at least, fourteen (14) days in advance of a meeting. Any NSSWG members unable to attend a scheduled meeting will be required to provide their comments on the circulated document to the Standardising body, so that the comments can be considered at the meeting. The Standardising body shall inform the member who provided the comment(s) of the outcome of the NSSWG's discussion, including any decisions and/or resolutions made on the issue/matter. Copies of all such communication shall be kept by the Standardising body.

## 8. Standard-setting procedures

This document describes:

- The legal status and organisational structure of entities involved in the development and implementation of standard-setting activities (**section 6**),
- procedures for keeping documented information (**section 8.1**),
- procedures for a balanced representation of stakeholders (**section 6.2**),
- the standard-setting process (**section 9**),
- handling of complaints and appeals (**section 8.2**)
- the mechanism for reaching consensus (**section 7.2**), and
- review and revision of standard(s)/normative document(s) (**section 12**).

### 8.1 Documented information

Through the PEFC Secretariat at the GFC, the Standardising body shall keep documented information relevant to the standard-setting and review process. In addition, evidence of compliance with the requirements of PEFC ST 1001:2017 and these procedures shall be kept. Documented information to be kept shall include:

- Standard-setting procedures (this document),
- Stakeholder identification mapping,
- Contacted and/or invited stakeholders,
- Stakeholders involved in standard-setting activities, including participants in each working group meeting,
- Feedback received and a synopsis of how feedback was addressed,
- All drafts and final versions of the Standard,
- Outcomes from working group considerations,
- Evidence of consensus on the final version of the Standard,
- Evidence relating to the review process, and
- Final approval by the Standardising body.

The Standardising body shall keep the documented information until the completion of the following review or revision of the Standard to which they refer. Otherwise, the Standardising body shall keep the documented information for a minimum of five years after the publication of the Standard. Documented information shall be available to interested parties upon request.

## **8.2 Handling of complaints and appeals**

The following procedure has been agreed for dealing with any substantial and process complaints and appeals relating to the Standard-setting activities.

When the GFC or NSSWG receives a complaint, it shall:

- acknowledge receipt of the complaint to the complainant within five working days,
- gather and verify all necessary information to validate the complaint;
- impartially and objectively evaluate all information related to the complaint;
- decide on the complaint, and
- formally communicate the decision on the complaint and of the complaint handling process to the complainant.

All complaints shall be directed to the Chairperson of the NSSWG. All administrative processes related to dispute resolution shall be managed through the PEFC Secretariat within the GFC.

# **9. Standard-setting process**

## **9.1 Standard proposal**

The GFC, in its capacity as the Standardising body, shall develop a Standard Development proposal. The document (a copy which will be made available on the GFC's website) will describe:

- the scope of the Standard,
- justification of the need for the Standard,
- a clear description of the intended outcomes,
- a risk assessment of potential negative impacts arising from implementing the Standard, such as;

- factors that could affect the achievement of the outcomes negatively,
  - unintended consequences of implementation,
  - actions to address the identified risks, and
- a description of the stages of standard development and their expected timetable.

## 9.2 Public announcement of the process

The GFC, in its capacity as the Standardising body, shall make a public announcement of the start of the standard-setting process and include an invitation to stakeholders, including the general public, to participate in the process. The announcement shall be made in a timely manner (at least two weeks) through suitable media (for instance, GFC's website), as appropriate, to give stakeholders an opportunity for meaningful participation. Information to be included in the announcement and invitation on GFC's website shall include:

- overview of the standard-setting process;
- access to the proposal for the Standard (discussed at the first stakeholder online workshop),
- information about opportunities for stakeholders to participate in the process (provided at the first stakeholder online workshop);
- requests to stakeholders to nominate their representative(s) or themselves to the working group (done at the first stakeholder online workshop). The request to disadvantaged stakeholders and key stakeholders shall be made in a manner that ensures that the information reaches intended recipients and in a format that is easy to understand (this will be done using the stakeholder mapping process the GFC used to establish the National Technical Working Group for the Guyana/EU VPA negotiations);
- explicit invitation and clear instruction on how to submit feedback on the scope and standard-setting process; and
- access to the standard-setting procedures.

**Note 1:** In a timely manner, in this case means (at the latest) one week before the first standard-setting activity is scheduled to occur.

**Note 2:** Through suitable media means at least through the Standardising body's website and by email and/or letter to identified stakeholders. Other media includes press releases, news articles, features in trade-press, information sent to branch organizations, social media, and digital media.

The Standardising body shall continually review the standard-setting process based on any feedback received from stakeholders and the general public.

The work of the NSSWG shall be organised openly and transparently where:

- working drafts shall be available to all members of the Working Group two weeks before a formal meeting;
- all members of the working group shall be provided with meaningful opportunities to contribute to the development or revision of the Standard and submit comments to the working drafts; and
- comments and views submitted by any working group/committee member shall be considered in an open and transparent way and their resolution and proposed changes shall be recorded.

### 9.3 Public consultation on the enquiry draft

The Standardising body shall organise public consultation on the enquiry (final) draft and ensure that the start and end dates of public consultation are announced timely (at the latest two weeks) through suitable media. The Standardising body shall use the following guidelines for the public consultation:

- a direct invitation to comment on the enquiry draft shall be sent to each stakeholder group, and required to distribute them within their group;
- invitations shall be sent to disadvantaged and key stakeholders by methods that ensure they reach recipients and are easy to understand;
  - the Standardising body shall facilitate the availability of both electronic/digital and hard copies of the final draft to disadvantaged stakeholders, including the general public; and
  - the Standardising body shall promote widely the availability of the enquiry draft using GFC's existing stakeholder engagement measures.
- the enquiry draft shall be made publicly available through the GFC's website and GFC's network of forest stations within the Country;
- public consultation shall be for at least 60 days,
- all feedback received shall be objectively considered by the working group, and
- a synopsis of any feedback received shall be compiled for each material issue, including the outcome of considering the issue. The synopsis shall be made publicly available through GFC's website and sent to each stakeholder/party that gave feedback.

Note: In a timely manner means (at the latest) the day before the start of public consultation.

For new standards, the Standardising body shall organise the second round of public consultation lasting at least 30 days.

### 9.4 Pilot Testing of the Standard

The Standardising body shall organise pilot testing of new standard(s) to assess the clarity, auditability, and feasibility of the requirements. The Standardising body shall consider the outcome of pilot testing and determine if there is a need to revise the Standard to ensure clarity, auditability and feasibility of the requirements.

**Note:** Pilot testing is not required to revise an existing standard when experience from its usage can substitute for pilot testing.

## 10. Approval and publication

### 10.1 Formal approval of the Standard

The decision of the NSSWG to recommend the final draft of the Standard for formal approval by the Standardising body shall be taken based on consensus within the NSSWG. To reach a consensus, the NSSWG shall use the following alternative processes to ascertain agreement:

- face-to-face meeting (COVID-19 restrictions permitting) where there is a verbal yes/no vote, a show of hands for a yes/no vote, a statement on consensus from the Chair where there are no dissenting voices or hands (votes), a formal balloting process,

- online conference meeting where there is a verbal yes/no vote,
- an email meeting where a request for agreement or objection is provided to members with the members providing a written response (a proxy for a vote), or
- a combination of the above options.

If a consensus of the NSSWG cannot be achieved through unanimous support on an issue, the resolution will be based on four of the five sectoral interests supporting the issue, in accordance with the procedures described in section 7.2 above.

## **10.2 Publication and availability of standards**

The Standardising Body shall approve publication of the formally approved Standard and make it publicly available at no cost within 14 days of approval, or as otherwise defined by the Standardising body. The Standard shall include:

- identification and contact information for the Standardising body (the PEFC Secretariat at the GFC);
- official language of the Standard (which shall be English); and
- the approval date and an indicative date of the next periodic review

Printed copies shall be made available upon request at a price that covers no more than administrative costs (if any).

The Standardising body shall make the development report (refer to PEFC GD 1007) publicly available.

## **11. Periodic review of the Standard**

The Standard shall be reviewed and revised if required, every five (5) years. The review shall be based on consideration of feedback received during the Standard's implementation, as well as a gap analysis to ascertain whether there have been any developments (new scientific, technological information and/or changes in international benchmarks for the legality and sustainable forest management). The Standardising body, through the NSSWG, shall decide if stakeholder consultation shall be organised to obtain further feedback and input and the extent of the consultation.

### **11.1 Feedback mechanism**

The PEFC Secretariat within the GFC shall, on behalf of the Standardising body, be the permanent mechanism for collecting and recording feedback on the Standard, and this information shall be communicated on the GFC's website, including clear directions for providing feedback. Once the Standard is published and available for use for certification purposes, the PEFC Secretariat within the GFC will begin to collect and store feedback (comments, requests for clarification and/or interpretation, or complaints) on an ongoing basis for consideration. Additional channels for receiving feedback shall include meetings and training courses.

Note: Feedback can be sent in various formats: comments, requests for clarification and/or interpretation, complaints, etc.

### **11.2 Gap analysis**

At the start of a review, the Standardising body shall evaluate the Standard against appropriate PEFC International standards, national laws and regulations, and other relevant standards and the

GFC's forest management and operational procedures to identify potential gaps in the Standard. The Standardising body's review process shall also consider the latest scientific knowledge, research, and relevant emerging national and international issues.

### **11.3 Stakeholder consultation**

Where the feedback and the gap analysis do not identify a need to revise the Standard, the Standardising body shall organise stakeholder consultation to determine whether stakeholders see a need for revising the Standard. The Standardising body shall include the results of the gap analysis in the stakeholder consultation.

At the start of a review, the Standardising body shall:

- announce the review publicly in a timely manner (at least four weeks);
- organise a public consultation period of at least 30 days and/or stakeholder meetings; and
- review the composition of its membership (stakeholder mapping) to ascertain continued representation of affected and interested stakeholders, as well as stakeholders able to influence the Standard's implementation.

### **11.4 Decision-making**

All decisions relating to revisions of the Standard (normal or editorial revision) shall be made by the Standardising body after reviewing:

- the accumulated feedback received during the period of the Standard's implementation; and
- the outcome of the gap analysis and stakeholder and public consultations.

The Standardising body shall publish its decision on whether to undertake a revision of the Standard on the GFC website, including the reason(s) for the decision.

## **12. Revision of the Standards**

### **12.1 Review and revision of the Standardising Body's Procedures**

The Standardising body shall publish its standard-setting procedures (this document) publicly on the GFC's website and shall review its standard-setting procedures regularly. Reviews of the Standardising body's procedures shall consider feedback from the NSSWG, stakeholders and the general public.

### **12.2 Editorial revision**

Editorial revisions can be made to the Standard without triggering the normal revision process. Where editorial revisions are required, the Standardising body, in consultation with the NSSWG, shall make the changes and then publish an amendment or a new edition of the Standard.

### **12.3 Time-critical revision**

A time-critical revision is a revision between two periodic reviews using a fast-track process. The Standardising body shall undertake a time-critical revision of the Standard, should any of the following situations arise:

- change in national laws and regulations affecting compliance with PEFC International requirements; and
- instruction by PEFC International to comply with specific or new PEFC requirements within a timescale that is too short for a normal revision.

The time-critical revision shall follow these steps:

- a) The Standardising body shall draft the revised Standard,
- b) The Standardising body may consult stakeholders, but it is not mandatory,
- c) The revised Standard shall be approved formally at the highest appropriate decision-making level of the Standardising body (i.e. the GFC),
- d) The Standardising body shall explain the justification for the urgent change(s) and make the justification publicly available.

#### **12.4 Application and transition of revised standards**

The Standard shall be reviewed and revised as appropriate at intervals not exceeding five-yearly periods. The procedures for revising the Standard shall follow similar procedures to those described in this Document for its development.

The revision procedure shall indicate the application date and transition date of the revised Standard. The application date for the revised Standard shall be up to a period of one year from the publication of the revised Standard, to allow for the endorsement of the Standard, certified companies to revise their procedures in line with the new changes, dissemination of information about any changes, and implementation of any training that may be required.

The transition date for the revised Standard to come into effect shall not exceed one year, except in justified exceptional circumstances where the implementation of the revised Standard may take longer.