

GUYANA NATIONAL FOREST CERTIFICATION SYSTEM

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DEVELOPMENT REPORT



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1. Summary of the standard-setting process

In August 2019, the Guyana Forestry Commission (GFC) applied for membership of the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification systems (PEFC) International Council, as the National Governing Body for Guyana, for the purpose of developing a national forest certification system. In November 2019, the PEFC General Assembly voted to approve GFC's membership of the PEFC.

As the Governing Body, GFC oversaw the establishment of a technical working group which developed and finalised the Guyana National Forest Certification System (GNFCS). The development of the System was based on extensive stakeholder engagement in accordance with the PEFC requirements.

The development of the GNFCS started in March 2021 and has followed the steps presented in Table 1 below. The initial timeframe, as reflected in the Standard Development Proposal document, was adjusted as some actions and tasks were postponed due to the Covid-19 restriction measures taken by the Government of Guyana.

Table 1: Description of the stages of standard development and their expected timetable

Activity	Description of the stages	Timeframe
Application for PEFC membership and nomination of the Governing Body.	Application for PEFC membership.	August to November 2019
	Nomination of the Governing Body.	
Preparation of standard setting documentation necessary to initiate and undertake stakeholder consultations.	Published notice and other useful information on GFC's website.	February, 2021
	Held a national scoping meeting.	March 12, 2021
	Published in newspapers and website.	March 12 - 27, 2021
	Sent follow-up email to attendees on whether they endorsed the development of the proposed national forest certification system for Guyana.	March 29, 2021
	Identification of stakeholders and drafting of the Stakeholder Identification Mapping Report.	March 12 to May 19, 2021

	Drafting of the Standard-Setting procedure.	March 12 to July 29, 2021
Public announcement of the launch of the standard-setting process and invitation to stakeholders to express their interest.	Emails and necessary documentation sent to stakeholders and publication of the announcement on GFC's websites, newspapers.	March 2021 to April 2021
	Sent formal letter to PEFC Council informing them of the official start of the process.	April 4, 2021
	Publication in newspaper and GFC's website of the overview of the process for developing the proposed GNFCs.	October, 2021
Establishing the National Technical Working Group for development of the standards.	Selection and confirmation of the Working Group members.	March 12 to May 19, 2021
	Publication of the members of working group.	
	Analysis of the comments received on the announcement documents	
First formal working group meeting of the National Standard Setting Working Group.	Selection of a chairperson, deputy chair and appointment of a resource person.	June 10, 2021
	Finalisation of the Standard-setting Procedure by taking into account comments received.	June to July 2021
	Approval of the final draft of the Standard-setting Procedures, and for uploading onto the GFC's website.	July 29, 2021
Development of the GNFCs comprising the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forest management standard; - Group forest management certification requirements; and - Adoption of PEFC ST 2002:2020 Chain of Custody Requirements. 		August 13, 2021 to November 04, 2022
First public consultation (60 days) of the GNFCs.	Approval by the NSSWG of the enquiry drafts of the GSSFm and the Group Certification Standard for the first public consultation, pilot testing and desk top review.	June 02, 2022
	60 days public consultation on the enquiry draft of the standard.	June 15 to August 13, 2022

	Analysis of comments	September 27 to October 20, 2022
	Development of a new version of the standard based on first public consultation comments and pilot testing.	October 20 to November 04 2022
	NSSWG approval of modifications to the enquiry draft as a result of comments from the public consultation.	October 20 and November 04, 2022
Pilot testing of the GNFCs.	Desktop review and pilot testing of the GNFCs.	August 6 to September 27, 2022
	Analysis of the desktop review and pilot test report.	September 27 to October 20, 2022
	Development of a new version of the forest management standard for the second public consultation based on pilot test results analysis	October 20 to November 04 2022
Second Public consultation (30 days) of the GNFCs.	Approval by the NSSWG of the enquiry drafts of the GSSFm and the Group Certification Standard for the second public consultation.	November 04, 2022
	30 days to gather comments	November 23 to December 23, 2022
	Sent email the NSSWG Members informing them that there no feedback from the second public consultation	January 16, 2023
Final approval of the suite of documents comprising the GNFCs for submission to the PEFC International Council for the endorsement and mutual recognition of the Guyana's System.	Final approval by consensus of the GNFCs by the NSSWG and the Standardising Body.	April 13, 2023 April 24, 2023
Submission to PEFC International		May 5, 2023

2. Introduction

2.1 Scope and preliminary information on the standard

Stakeholders in Guyana's forestry and forest products sector have agreed to develop the GNFCs. This development report outlines the process undertaken to develop the GNFCs for endorsement and mutual recognition by the PEFC International Council. The GNFCs will present a unique opportunity for Guyana to continually improve the sustainable management and use of its forests based on internationally recognised forest management benchmarks.

The GNFCs comprises of three main documents:

- Forest Management Standard;
- Group Certification Standard;
- Chain of Custody Standard (the PEFC Chain of Custody Standard);

The Guyana Standard for Sustainable Forest Management 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 developed as part of the System); and
- timber products as well as non-timber forest products.

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

2.2 The objective of the Development Report

This report provides a description and evidence of the steps Guyana followed for developing the GNFCs. The report demonstrates how Guyana has complied with the Standard Setting Procedure and the PEFC's benchmark requirements for developing national certification systems for endorsement and mutual recognition.

2.3 Standard-Setting Procedure

The standard-setting process for the GNFCs started in March 11, 2019, when the GFC made a proposal to its Board of Directors to develop a national forest management standard and a chain of custody certification system for Guyana.

Following the Board's approval, an email was sent to the PEFC International Secretariat on March 27, 2019, enquiring about available financial support for this process.

On April 9, 2019, the GFC wrote officially to the PEFC International Secretariat, expressing an interest in becoming a member of the PEFC Council.

On August 15, 2019, the GFC officially applied for PEFC Council membership, and on November 15, 2019, Guyana became a member of the PEFC Council. The GFC also became the National Governing Body and the Standardising Body.

However, this process was put on hold due to Guyana's General Election scheduled for March 2019 and the subsequent outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

On June 26, 2020, the PEFC International Secretariat agreed for the process to restart by using online (remote) resources.

Subsequently, the GNFCFS formally restarted on October 15, 2020, where a work-plan was developed. However, due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the First National Scoping Meeting was not held until March 12, 2021.

The GFC, as the Standardising Body, presented an outline of the Standard-Setting Procedures at the First Scoping Meeting on March 12, 2021. The outline explained the processes to be followed in developing the GSSFMS and other documents comprising the GNFCFS. The PowerPoint presentation used at the Meeting is at Appendix 24 in Folder 11. The procedures define the stages of the standard development, the selection criteria and operation for the National Standard Setting Working Group members, experts and other stakeholders, and other requirements linked to the development process.

2.43. Stakeholder mapping

The objective of the stakeholder mapping was to identify the relevant stakeholder groups to be included in the development of the GNFCFS.

The GFC undertook stakeholder mapping to identify the relevant stakeholders (interested and affected) to be invited to propose representatives for developing the GNFCFS. The stakeholder mapping drew on the groups the GFC had used to establish the National Technical Working Group (NTWG) for negotiating the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Agreement with the European Union, which commenced in 2012.

This Agreement aims to reduce illegal logging by strengthening sustainable forest management, improving forest governance, and promoting trade in legally produced timber. The GFC managed the Guyana-EU VPA negotiations on behalf of the Government of Guyana.

As part of the negotiation process, the GFC undertook a comprehensive stakeholder mapping to identify the key and relevant stakeholder groups to be invited to participate in Guyana's negotiations.

Following initialing of the Agreement, the GFC established the National Implementation Working Group (NIWG), to guide implementation of the VPA. A copy of the stakeholder mapping report developed during this process is attached in Folder 5. This report highlight the activities and outcomes of the participatory Meeting held on December 11, 2018, particularly, the formation of the NIWG, the group identified to advance the FLEGT VPA implementation phase in Guyana.

Representatives from the multi-stakeholder NTWG and NIWG comprised of members from the private sector, Government agencies and civil society entities including Indigenous and environmental Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) as follows:

- Forest Products Development and Marketing Council
- Guyana Revenue Authority
- Forest Products Association
- Guyana Manufacturing and Services Association
- National Toshias' Council
- Indigenous Peoples' Commission
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of Legal Affairs
- Ministry of Natural Resources
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Amerindian People's Association
- Small Logger Representation
- Iwokrama International Centre for Rainforest Conservation and Development
- National Insurance Scheme

- Ministry of Human Services and Social Security

As part of the stakeholder mapping for the GNFC, the GFC, in consultation with the PEFC International Secretariat, decided to use the organisational membership of the VPA's technical working group and the implementation working group as the starting point.

The stakeholder mapping exercise commenced prior to the First Scoping Meeting which assisted in identifying a list of potential invitees for that Meeting.

The stakeholder mapping exercise continued after the First Scoping Meeting with a gap analysis of the membership of the VPA's NTWG and the NIWG, against the requirements of PEFC ST 1001:2017. The gap analysis focused on identifying affected and interested stakeholders, as well as those able to influence the System's implementation, not already included in the NTWG and the NIWG.

The gap analysis identified the absence of organisations representing women, youth, forestry workers and academia in the NTWG and the NIWG.

Based on the nine major stakeholder groups specified in Clause 6.2.2 of PEFC ST 1001:2017, the GFC identified the stakeholder groups to be invited to discuss the merits of developing a national forest certification scheme for Guyana. The main stakeholder groups and their areas of interest identified by the GFC are as follows:

- forest owners
 - they are groups that produce wood products, and are likely to seek independent-third party certification under the System;
- business and industry
 - comprises individuals and entities involved in the wood products supply chain who may seek chain of custody certification under the System;
- Indigenous people
 - some Indigenous groups are both forest owners and also involved in the wood products supply chain. The main interest of Indigenous stakeholders relates to how commercial forestry impacts on their cultural, economic and social well-being;
- non-governmental organisations
 - mostly environmental NGOs, whose main interest is in ensuring that the potential adverse impacts of any commercial forestry are minimised. The other group

relates to the role of women in commercial forestry in Guyana. They are involved to ensure gender balance, as well as bring women's perspectives for consideration in the Standard's development.

- scientific and technological community
 - this group can influence the implementation of the GNFCs, as well as provide scientific and technological input and knowledge, to ensure the System remains dynamic to incorporate new knowledge based on science and research, as well as changing societal values on how forests should be managed for multiple use objectives.
- workers and trade unions
 - this group is involved to ensure issues related to the protection of workers' rights, including occupational, health and safety issues.
- Government agencies
 - their main interest is to ensure that the Standards meet government policies.
- Civil society organisations
 - their main interest is to ensure effective governance and fair distribution of community benefits and impacts.

3. Announcement of the process and invitation to stakeholders

On March 12 2021, the GFC organised the first national scoping Meeting online, to discuss with stakeholders the merits of developing a national certification system for Guyana. The draft stakeholder mapping document was used to invite the stakeholders to participate in the First National Scoping Meeting. An email announcement, and a notice on the Scoping Meeting, and information on the standard-setting process were published on the GFC's website, as shown in Folder 11. A follow-up email, after the Meeting, was also sent as shown in Appendix 25, Folder 11.

Guyana's population is just under 800,000 persons, and approximately 500 forest sector operators in the forestry sector. Using the stakeholder mapping list, more than 200 stakeholders, including interested and affected stakeholders, were invited to the Scoping Meeting. In March 2021, the Government of Guyana introduced restrictions preventing physical engagements due to the global Covid-19 Pandemic. These restrictions on physical movements and interactions

mirrored similar restrictions introduced globally by other governments. Consequently, the first scoping meeting was held online, and the invitations to the meeting were sent by email. The email invitation to the first national scoping Meeting, including an Information Sheet, Meeting sent to over 214 stakeholders across Guyana, is shown in Folder 11.

This First Scoping Meeting was recorded and streamed on the Ministry of Natural Resources' Facebook page, which has over 25,000 followers.

Of the over 200 stakeholders, 50 participants representing the key stakeholders took part in the First Scoping Meeting. A list of the participants at the First Scoping Meeting is at Appendix 1 in the Stakeholder Identification Mapping Report.

Public announcement of the First Scoping Meeting, and the invitation to key stakeholders are at Appendices 26, 40, 41, and, 27 and 29 in Folder 11 respectively. The PowerPoint presentation and related Information Sheet used at the Meeting are at Appendices 24 and 39, Folder 11. Participants at the First Scoping Meeting were informed of the following:

- Introduction to PEFC;
- The scope of the Standard;
- A justification of the need for the Standard;
- Key benefits for Guyanese Stakeholders and why is Guyana Developing its own; Certification System
- Advantages of the PEFC Certification System;
- Details of the project;
- The role of GFC;
- How the Standard will be developed;
- How the certification system will work; and
- Cost of the certification.

As shown in Appendix 39, the above information was placed in a user-friendly Information Sheet and was shared with the invitees prior to the First Scoping Meeting. This Information Sheet was also uploaded on the GFC's website, www.forestry.gov.gy, for public access. The PowerPoint Presentation used at the First Scoping Meeting was also uploaded on to the website, along with contact information, to facilitate public request for additional information and/or clarification.

The participants were also asked to decide whether they may want a certification system of this nature in Guyana, and to suggest possible members for a working group to oversee the process.

At the First Scoping Meeting were key participants, including the Minister of Natural Resources with portfolio responsibilities for the GFC, the Chairperson of the GFC Board of Directors and the Commissioner of the GFC.

The Minister for Natural Resources, Hon. Minister Vickram Bharrat, in his opening speech at the Meeting, specifically informed participants that the objective of the meeting was to seek their views on whether they supported the development of the GNFCS. (Live recording of this Meeting is at Appendix 28, Folder 11).

A follow-up email was also sent to participants, asking them to indicate whether they accepted the proposal for the System in Guyana (Appendix 25, Folder 11).

A summary of comments from participants providing support to the proposal to develop the GNFCS are included in Appendices 6 and 8 of the Stakeholder Identification Mapping Report and the Minutes to the meeting in Appendix 30, Folder 11.

At the conclusion of this Meeting, the GFC informed participants about the next steps, which included formation of the National Standard-Setting Working Group (NSSWG), to guide the development of the Standards. The GFC invited each stakeholder group to nominate its representative for the NSSWG.

Following confirmation by stakeholders to develop the GNFCS, the GFC formally started the process on April 30, 2021. A further request was made to stakeholders, through email, for them to suggest suitable nominees to be part of the NSSWG.

Request to stakeholders for endorsement, formal start, and progress made were published by the GFC via media advertisements in March through to October 2021. The GFC also created a link on the GFC's website (<https://forestry.gov.gy>) for the GNFCS' development process and posted all information (public announcements and drafts of the GNFCS) on the website for ready and easy access by the public and stakeholders.

In these announcements the GFC made through newspaper articles, its website and at Meetings the following information was provided:

- the overview of the standard-setting process;
- information about opportunities for stakeholders to participate in the process;

- how stakeholders can nominate their representative(s) or themselves to the working group;
- explicit invitation and clear instruction on how to submit feedback on the scope of the GNFCs and the standard-setting process;
- how to access the standard-setting procedures;
- how the GFC will review the GNFCs based on feedback received in response to the public announcement; and
- how the GFC will establish the NSSWG including how its composition would be reviewed to accommodate existing and emerging stakeholder groups.

4. Creation of the national working group

Stakeholders, including the Forests Products Association, the Guyana Manufacturing and Services Association, the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Steering Committee for Community Forest Organisations, gave a 'no-objection' to developing the GNFCs for Guyana as shown in Appendix 3 of the Stakeholder Identification Mapping Report.

After the First Scoping Meeting on March 12, 2021, the GFC subsequently held the Second Online Meeting as part of the stakeholder mapping exercise on April 30, 2021, for the formation of the National Standard-Setting Working Group.

Twenty (20) participants participated in the Meeting. The Minutes and list of the participants are at (Appendix 31, Folder 12).

The participants comprised of representatives suggested by the key stakeholder groups, including participants who attended the First Scoping Meeting on March 12, 2021. As mentioned earlier, experiences were also drawn from the Guyana-EU FLEGT exercise to forming this Group since both Working Groups carry similar functionalities.

Before this Second Meeting on April 30, 2021, and as part of the invitation, the GFC sent the stakeholders the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the NSSWG (Appendix 32, Folder 12) to assist stakeholders in selecting their representatives for the NSSWG. A draft of the ToR was discussed with the PEFC International Secretariat, prior to its finalisation.

The participants were also informed that the working group and the process would include the following stakeholders:

- Disadvantaged stakeholders

The stakeholder mapping process identified Indigenous groups and other stakeholders living outside large urban centres as “disadvantaged.” This is because these groups of stakeholders may lack ready access to electronic media.

To ensure disadvantaged stakeholders were able to participate effectively in the development of the GNFCs, hard copies of documents were made available to them through the network of GFC Forest Stations in all the forestry regions of the Country and stakeholder engagement meetings organized throughout the Country. Evidence that copies of the drafts of the Standard of GNFCs were provided to the members of the working group is in Appendices 33 and 34, Folder 14.

In addition, the GFC facilitated access to Forest Stations to enable disadvantaged stakeholder groups and/or their representatives to use computers and other appropriate electronic devices to participate in discussions and/or consultations.

Television, radio, newspapers, emails, and social media platforms were used to inform stakeholders about upcoming meetings, and also provided updates on the progress of the GNFCs. See Folder 13 for images of community stakeholder engagements held across Guyana, presentation done at national forums and information on PEFC presented in booklets.

- Balanced representation

Under the PEFC guidelines, “balanced representation” does not only mean that the standard development process involves a lot of different interests around the table. Instead, it means that the different interests receive balanced emphasis.

The GFC ensured that a balanced representation of interest groups was achieved by drawing representatives from the key stakeholder groups relevant to the subject matter and geographical scope of the Standard, where a single interest group will not dominate nor be dominated in the process. The GFC has also ensured gender balance in the membership of the NSSWG.

Additionally, the GFC took into consideration stakeholders with expertise relevant to the subject matter of the standard, those that are affected by the Standard, and those that can influence its implementation of the standard.

Members of the NSSWG were required to consult with their relevant constituencies and bring forward their constituencies' views and comments, which informed the decisions of the NSSWG.

The NSSWG will continually review its composition and membership to ensure it meets the PEFC Standard Setting Requirements - ST 1001:2017 (i.e., gender balance and balanced representation of affected and interested stakeholders, as well as stakeholders able to influence the standard's implementation).

- Effective participations by stakeholders

The role of the standard setting working group is to build consensus on the GNFCs. Achieving these required incentives and appropriate and relevant support to garner the effective involvement, commitment and active participation of individuals from the different interest groups.

While sometimes it was challenging to convince individuals to invest their time in the process, the GFC invested the necessary resources and provided the required incentives, to ensure effective engagement and participation by all stakeholders.

The GFC established a secretariat to manage the standard setting process, the secretariat provided the stakeholders with the necessary administrative and financial support to participate in NSSWG meetings.

4.2 Composition of the National Standard-Setting Working Group

After the Second and Third Online Meetings held on April 30, 2021, and May 8, 2021, participants agreed to the groups listed in Table 2 to constitute the NSSWG. As shown in Table 2, twenty (20) stakeholder groups represent five (5) sectorial interest groups.

Table 2 – 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)

Type of stakeholder	Sectoral Interest	Stakeholder organisation
	Indigenous non-governmental organisations	Guyana Agriculture Workers' Union (representing workers/trade unions)
		Amerindian People's Association (APA)
		National Amerindian Development Foundation (NADF)
		Guyanese Organization of Indigenous Peoples (GOIP)
		The Amerindian Action Movement of Guyana (TAAMOG)
Interested	Environmental non-governmental organisations	Conservation International Guyana (CI-G)
		World Wildlife Fund Guyana (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, Standardising, and National Governing Body)
	Civil Society	Women and Gender Equality Commission (WGEC) (representing the interests of women)
		Children and Youth (Ministry of Human Services and Social Security (MoHSSS)) (representing the interests of youth)
		Guyana School of Agriculture (GSA) (representing academia) (as a stakeholder with potential to influence standards implementation)

The Working Group comprises of representatives from the private sector/forest owners, Indigenous NGOs, Environmental NGOs, Government Ministry and Agencies, and civil society. The twenty members of the Working Group are all stakeholders identified as key stakeholders, including ten affected stakeholders and ten stakeholders classified as interested groups. The Working Group is also composed of representatives of women and youths.

4.3 NSSWG Meetings

The development of the Guyana Standard for Sustainable Forest Management and the Group Certification Standard occurred between 2021 and 2022, which unfortunately coincided with the period when there was a worldwide restriction on human movement (both domestically and

internationally) due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The meetings of the NSSWG were therefore conducted online via Zoom, following approval from the PEFC International Secretariat to use Information and Communications Technology online resources to progress the project.

The GFC held a total of twenty-one (21) online meetings (Zoom meetings) with the NSSWG (representing the various stakeholder groups) to review drafts of the Criteria, Indicators, and Verifiers for each of the eleven Principles and the requirements and prescriptions of the Group Certification Standard. Folder 6, Appendices 1 to 21, contain the Minutes of the NSSWG meetings and live recordings. Discussions continued until there was unanimous agreement on and approval for each Criterion, Indicator, and the associated Verifiers of the GSSFM and the Group Certification Standard.

Emails were also sent to Working Groups members absent from meetings to ensure they were informed of the process and the decisions taken at the meetings. Members absent from meetings were also given the opportunity to provide their feedback through emails (a sample of the email sent is at Appendix 35, Folder 15).

5. First Public Consultation

Following discussions and review of the Criteria, Indicators and Verifiers associated with the eleven key Principles, the NSSWG approved the enquiry drafts of the GSSFM and the Group Certification Standard at its meeting held on June 02, 2023, for the initial public consultation period of 60 days from June 15 to August 13, 2022.

The public announcement for the consultation is in Appendix 5, Folder 7. The public announcement was placed on GFC's website and published in newspapers. The public announcement was published before the start of, and throughout, the consultation period. An email was also sent to stakeholders who were present at the First Scoping Meeting, informing them of the public consultation for the draft Standards.

The public announcement included information on the start and end-dates for the consultation on how to obtain either hard copies or electronic versions of both documents, and how to submit feedback for consideration by the NSSWG.

There were no suggestions from the public consultation for changes and or revisions to the GSSFM and the Group Certification Standard. Only letters of support from key stakeholders for the GSSFM and the Group Certification Standard were received, as shown at Appendices 1 to 4 in Folder 7.

6. Desktop Review and Pilot Testing

Simultaneously, the drafts of the GSSFM and the Group Certification Standard were sent to an independent consultant for review to ensure:

- conformity with the relevant PEFC benchmark standards; and
- auditability in the field.

The independent review involved desktop assessment and field testing from August 6 to September 27, 2022. A large concession, which contained the variation of conditions and characteristics that are representative of forestry and forest management in Guyana, and which already had an FSC Forest Management certification, was chosen for the field assessment. This was done to ensure that the conformity requirements in the GSSFM were comparable to those of the FSC.

The consultant who undertook the desktop review and pilot testing made recommendations for improving the readability of the documents. The main conclusion from the pilot study was that both adapted standards (GSSFM and the Group Certification Standard) are clear, comprehensive, and broadly met the benchmark requirements of PEFC. Also, it concluded that the Indicators developed (and their associated Verifiers) are normative, clear, measurable and performance related.

A copy of the Desktop Review and Pilot Testing Report is in Folder 10.

Following the independent review process, the NSSWG was presented with the suggested changes to the Standards, as shown at Appendix 37 in Folder 10. The NSSWG discussed the consultant's report at its meeting on October 20, 2022, and approved the recommendations and the additional changes to the Standard, as shown in the Minutes of NSSWG Meetings 19 and 20 in Folder 6.

On October 20 and November 04, 2022, the NSSWG approved the revised enquiry drafts of the GSSFM and the Group Certification Standard for the second public consultation.

7. Second Public Consultation

The NSSWG approved the revised enquiry drafts of the GSSFM and the Group Certification Standard at its meeting held on November 04, 2023 for the second public consultation for thirty days from November 23 to December 23, 2022.

The public announcement for the consultation is in Appendix 6, Folder 7.

The public announcement was placed on GFC's website and published in newspapers. The

public announcement was published before the start of, and throughout, the consultation period. An email was also sent to the stakeholders who were present at the First Scoping Meeting, informing them of the public consultation period.

The public announcement included information, start and end-date of the consultation period, on how to obtain either hard copies or electronic versions of both documents and how to submit feedback for consideration by the NSSWG.

At the conclusion of the second public consultation, there were no comments/suggestions or recommendations for amending the publicly available documents. A copy of the email informing the NSSWG of the outcome of the second public consultation is at Appendix 38 in Folder 7.

In addition to the formal public consultations required by the PEFC guidelines, the GFC continually held stakeholder engagements to promote and publicise the Standard development process.

In this regard, the GFC has conducted extensive community outreaches throughout the country during the development phase of the Standards. These stakeholder outreaches were conducted based on the FLEGT National Communication Strategy, shown in Appendix 6, to ensure disadvantaged and affected stakeholders were appropriately reached. Though at the beginning of the GNFC process, physical outreach meetings were not possible due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, as soon as the restrictions were relaxed, the GFC conducted national community-level meetings and radio broadcast programs to ensure the relevant stakeholders were aware of the GNFC process in Guyana, and were directed to GFC's website to access softcopies of the Standard documents. Stakeholders outside Guyana's national capital, Georgetown, were informed that they were able to obtain both hard and electronic copies of the GNFC documents at any of the 33 GFC's Forest Stations, located throughout the country.

The GFC has also taken several opportunities at various national forums, including national learning events held during 2022 and 2023, which involved participants from other countries such as, Gabon, Indonesia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, Ghana etc., and at expos and conferences, including celebrations of International Days of Forests in 2022 and 2023, to promote awareness of the GNFC process in Guyana.

See Folder 13 for images and reports of stakeholder engagements held across Guyana, presentations done at national forums and information on PEFC in Booklets.

8. Endorsement of the GNFCs for Submission to the PEFC International Secretariat

At its meeting held on April 13, 2023 the NSSWG approved the suite of documents comprising the GNFCs, based on the requirements of PEFC GD 1007 - Endorsement and Mutual Recognition of National Systems and their Revision, for submission to the PEFC International Secretariat to commence the endorsement and mutual recognition process. See Folder 6 for the Minutes of Meeting 21 for record of this consensus.

The decision of the working group to recommend the final draft for formal approval was taken on the basis of consensus. A hybrid of the following methods were utilised: both face-to face and online meeting, telephone calls and an e-mail request to the working group for agreement or objection where the members provide a formal (written) response. See Folder 16, Appendices 42 to 44 of an email requesting members for agreement or objection and their responses.

Additionally, the Board of Directors of the GFC, the Standardising Body and the National Governing Body for the GNFCs, at its meeting held on April 24, 2023, resolved to approve the suite of documents comprising the GNFCs for submission to the PEFC International Secretariat for assessment, endorsement, and mutual recognition of the GNFCs. See Folder 16, Appendix 45 for a Letter of Endorsement by the Board of Directors of the GFC.