

## PROJECT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND THE INSTITUTIONALISATION OF A PAFC CERTIFICATION SYSTEM FOR THE CONGO BASIN



### Procedure for the development of PAFC certification standards for the Congo Basin

*PROC-001-2019-1*



**Version: final**

**Date: April 2022**

The Regional PAFC  
development project is funded by:

It is implemented by ATIBT,  
with technical assistance from TereA:



### Copyright notice

© PAFC Cameroon, PAFC Congo, PAFC Gabon

This document is the property of PAFC Cameroon, PAFC Congo and PAFC Gabon. The document is freely available from the PAFC Congo Basin website (<https://pafc-certification.org/pafc-bassin-du-congo/documents-pafc-bassin-du-congo>) or upon request.

No part of the document covered by the copyright may be changed or amended; reproduced or copied in any form or by any means for commercial purposes without the permission of the PAFC Cameroon, PAFC Congo and PAFC Gabon.

The only official version of the document is English. Translations of the document can be provided by PAFC Cameroon, PAFC Congo and PAFC Gabon. In case of any doubt the English version is decisive.

**Document name :** Procedure for the development of PAFC certification standards for the Congo Basin

**Document title :** PAFC/PROC-001-2019-1

**Approved by :** ATIBT Board of Directors

**Date :** 18 December 2020

**Publication date :** 31 December 2020

**Date of entry into force :** 01 January 2022

**Next periodic review :** 18 December 2025



## Contents

1. Purpose of the present procedure .....	8
2. ATIBT's role in the development of the PAFC Congo Basin standards.....	8
2.1. ATIBT's legal status .....	8
2.2. ATIBT's organisational structure .....	8
3. Role, organisation and functioning of the PAFC Congo Basin Forum .....	9
3.1. Responsibilities of the PAFC Congo Basin Forum.....	9
3.2. How the Forum is set up .....	9
3.3. Structure and roles within the Forum .....	10
3.4. Duration of the Forum.....	10
3.5. How the Forum works .....	10
3.5.1. Voting rights .....	10
3.5.2. Dialogue – Reaching a consensus.....	10
3.5.3. In the event of sustained opposition.....	11
4. The PAFC Congo Basin standards development process .....	12
4.1. Preliminary steps.....	15
4.2. Public announcement on the start of the process, and invitation to stakeholders to express their interest.....	15
4.3. Creation of the Forum and review of the development process .....	16
4.4. Development of a version of the standards for public consultation .....	17
4.5. Public consultation .....	17
4.6. Pilot test .....	18
4.7. Development and validation of a final version by the Forum by consensus .....	18
5. Approval and publication of the standards by ATIBT .....	19
5.1. Formal approval of the standards by ATIBT .....	19
5.2. Adoption of the standards at the national level .....	19
5.3. Submission and recognition of the system by PEFC International.....	19
5.4. Publication and enforcement of the standards .....	20
5.4.1. Publication of the standards .....	20
5.4.2. Enactment of the standards.....	20
6. Periodic review of the standards.....	20
7. Revision of the standards.....	21
8. Archiving of the documentation related to the development or revision process.....	22
9. Handling of complaints and appeals relating to the development of the standards .....	22



## Foreword

This procedure was developed according to the PEFC International requirements listed in the document "Standard setting requirements - (PEFC ST 1001:2017)" dated 15/11/2017.

The PEFC International requirements themselves refer to the following standards:

- ISO/IEC Guide 59, Code of recommended practices for standardisation.
- ISO/IEC Guide 2, Standardisation and related activities - General vocabulary.
- PEFC GD 1007, "Endorsement and Mutual Recognition of Certification Systems and their Revision".



## Terms and definitions

The terms and definitions provided in this document are based on an interpretation of the requirements of the "Standard setting requirements - (PEFC ST 1001:2017)" document dated 15/11/2017.

Other definitions specific to PAFC Congo Basin have been added.

Appeal	An appeal relates to a decision(s) that has (have) been made and that is (are) being requested to be reconsidered.
Editorial changes	Changes made to a system without altering its technical content. This includes possible clarifications, orientations and grammatical changes.
Consensus	In the case of PAFC Congo Basin, a consensus is believed to exist when there is general agreement characterised by: the absence of sustained opposition on fundamental issues by a significant proportion of those with a relevant interest; a process that seeks to take into account the visions of all parties that are affected and to reconcile divergent positions.  Note: A consensus doesn't necessarily imply unanimity (ISO/IEC Guide 2). The manner in which a consensus is reached is described in section 3.5.2).
Publicly available	In this document, the term "publicly available" refers to information or a document that is generally available to an interested audience in any form and without it having to be requested. The conditions for the public availability of documents from disadvantaged stakeholders will be defined in this procedure.  Note: In contrast, when this document only states that information is available "upon request", this implies that it is made available if a person requests it.
Normative document	A normative document provides rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their outcomes. In the case of the PAFC Congo Basin certification scheme, there are two normative documents: the Forest Management Standard and the Chain of Custody Standard. Technical specifications, codes of practice and regulations may complement these two fundamental documents.
Standard	A standard is a document that is established by consensus and approved by a recognized body, which provides rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results for shared and repeated use, ensuring an optimal level of order within a given context.  Within the framework of PAFC Congo Basin, the consolidated results of science, technology and experience will be taken into account in order to promote a maximum number of benefits (ISO/IEC Guide 2).



Standards body	<p>A standards body is engaged in accredited standardisation activities (ISO Guide 2).</p> <p>In the context of PAFC Congo Basin, it is the body responsible for developing and maintaining the forest certification scheme standards.</p> <p>PEFC stipulates that the standards body may be a PEFC National Organisation. It may also be separated from the forest certification scheme's governance. It was decided that within the framework of PAFC Congo Basin, ATIBT would be the standards body.</p>
Stakeholder	<p>A stakeholder is a person, group, community or organisation with an interest in the subject matter of the standards. In the context of PAFC Congo Basin, the focus is on those that have an interest in sustainable forest management in the Congo Basin.</p> <p>PEFC has identified different types of specific stakeholders:</p> <p><b>Affected stakeholders</b> are those whose living or working conditions could be directly modified as a result of the implementations of the standards (e.g. local communities, indigenous peoples, workers, etc.) and the stakeholders who use the standards, i.e. who are subject to the standards' requirements (e.g. certificate holders or forest managers or timber processors that would like to be certified).</p> <p><b>Key stakeholders</b> are those whose participation is considered fundamental for the successful development/revision of the forest management standards.</p> <p><b>Disadvantaged stakeholders</b> are those who may be negatively impacted (financially or otherwise) if they participate in efforts to develop/revise the forest management standards.</p> <p>Note: Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 identifies nine major stakeholder groups: (i) companies and industrial players, (ii) children and youths, (iii) forest owners, (iv) indigenous peoples, (v) local authorities, (vi) NGOs, (vii) the scientific and technological community, (viii) women, and (ix) workers and trade unions.</p>
Complaint	<p>A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction for which a response is expected. If this dissatisfaction relates to a decision(s) made, then it is an appeal (see above definition).</p>
Review	<p>A revision is defined as the introduction of all the substantive and editorial changes that are necessary in a normative document.</p> <p>The results of the revision are presented via the publication of a new edition of the normative document (ISO/IEC Guide 2).</p>
Revue	<p>A review is a verification of a normative document to determine whether it should be reaffirmed, modified or withdrawn.</p>
Version for public consultation	<p>A version for public consultation is the document that is proposed and available for public consultation.</p>
Final Version	<p>A final version is the document that is proposed and available for formal approval by the standards body.</p>
Working version or working document	<p>A working version is the document made available to a working group for evaluation or for a vote.</p>



## Introduction

This document describes ATIBT's process for the development and revision of the sustainable forest management and chain of custody standards established for the countries of the Congo Basin, namely: Gabon, Cameroon and the Republic of Congo.

In accordance with PEFC International's requirements, the following key principles govern the process of developing and revising the PAFC Congo Basin standards:

- ✓ **Stakeholder involvement:** all stakeholders can participate in a meaningful way, notably through the Forum and the public consultations;
- ✓ **Balanced representation:** the process is established so that no one stakeholder group can dominate or be dominated. Although participation in the process is open, ATIBT strives to ensure the participation of all affected stakeholder groups and to take into account parity;
- ✓ **Consensus:** standards are approved by consensus. Wherever possible, any sustained opposition regarding a specific issue is resolved through dialogue;
- ✓ **Improvement:** periodic review of the standards strives to achieve continuous improvement and ensures that the standards meet the stakeholders' expectations;
- ✓ **Transparency:** key documentation is made publicly available so that interested stakeholders can monitor developments during and after the process.



## 1. Purpose of the present procedure

This procedure describes the various steps and processes involved in the development and revision of the following PAFC standards:

- forest management;
- chain of custody;

Tailored to the context, these standards will be applicable in the Congo Basin countries: Gabon, Cameroon and the Republic of Congo.

The present procedure specifies in particular ATIBT's legal status, its organisational structure, the functioning of the PAFC Congo Basin Forum that is responsible for the reaching of a consensus on the standards and the official manner in which they will be adopted.

This procedure is publicly available on the ATIBT website. It is reviewed regularly, taking into account input from stakeholders.

## 2. ATIBT's role in the development of the PAFC Congo Basin standards

The International Tropical Timber Technical Association (ATIBT - *Association Technique Internationale des Bois Tropicaux*) is the standards body for the development of the PAFC Congo Basin standards on account of its reputation and experience in the field of sustainable and certified forest management for over 20 years in the various countries of the sub-region.

### 2.1. ATIBT's legal status

The International Tropical Timber Technical Association ("ATIBT") was created in France in 1951, with the backing of the FAO and OECD, as an association governed by the French law of 1 July 1901 pertaining to owners' trade unions, corporate foundations and endowment funds.

ATIBT has registered its existence with the relevant Prefecture departments that oversee its head office.

### 2.2. ATIBT's organisational structure

The Association consists of several bodies (statutes are publicly available on the website):

- ✓ the General Assembly: consists of all Members of the Association or their representatives; it approves in particular the orientations of the activities that enable the Association to achieve its aims and objectives;
- ✓ the Board of Directors: the members of the Board are elected by the General Assembly, they handle the General Administration;
- ✓ the Executive Board: consists of five directors appointed by the Board of Directors; it is - on behalf of the Board of Directors - the Executive Secretariat's supervisory, orientation and advisory body;
- ✓ the Secretariat: the Association's executive entity; it consists of all of ATIBT's salaried staff.

The Board of Directors is designated as the body in charge of the formal approval of forest management (FM) and chain of custody (CoC) standards.





### 3. Role, organisation and functioning of the PAFC Congo Basin Forum

#### 3.1. Responsibilities of the PAFC Congo Basin Forum

The PAFC Congo Basin Forum (or Forum) is the temporary consultative body responsible for developing (by consensus) PAFC Congo Basin forest management and chain of custody standards. It must recommend a final version of the standards, established by consensus, for approval by ATIBT.

The standards to be established are:

- forest management;
- chain of custody;

#### 3.2. How the Forum is set up

The public announcement of the launch of the process includes an invitation to stakeholders (see section 4.2) to express their interest in participating in the PAFC Congo Basin standards development process.

Members must sincerely and effectively represent the interests of the category in which they have come forward. The members of the Forum are divided into four categories of interest:

- Interests of owners and the administration;
- Interests of loggers and timber processors;
- Interests linked to the preservation of nature;
- Interests linked to the preservation of people's livelihoods and workers' living and working conditions.

The members of the Forum are selected from those stakeholders who have expressed interest and designated a representative. The composition of the Forum shall be done as follows:

- in a balanced manner: in order to achieve this balance, the number of members from the various categories of interest presented above will be equivalent (+ or - one person);
- integrating stakeholders from each country covered by the PAFC Congo Basin standards and regional stakeholders;
- integrating, as much as possible, at least one representative from each identified stakeholder group (see paragraph 4.1). If this is not possible, alternatives will be explored;
- including at least 50% of stakeholders identified as key stakeholders. Their participation will be proactively sought. If this is not possible, alternatives will be explored;
- including at least 40% of stakeholders identified as directly and materially affected by the implementation of the standards.

The participation of stakeholders with relevant expertise in sustainable forest management and standard setting, and stakeholders who can influence its implementation will also be favoured.

Any inclusion or rejection of a stakeholder in the Forum will have to be justified on the basis of - for example - criteria such as the balanced representation among the categories of stakeholders (as mentioned above), gender balance, the organisation's relevance, a representative's personal skill or



relevant experience and the resources available for the standard-setting process. Reasons for non-inclusion in the Forum will have to be communicated to unsuccessful stakeholders.

Stakeholders selected to be part of the Forum shall strive to contribute constructively to the standards development work.

### 3.3. Structure and roles within the Forum

Within the Forum, an Executive Board of the Forum is formed. It consists of a President, a Secretary and a Facilitator, whose roles are as follows:

- **Chairperson:** responsible for the smooth execution of the process. He/she is appointed by the members of the Forum by vote. He/she will ensure that each member has the opportunity to contribute to the development or revision of the standards and to comment on the working documents;
- **Secretary:** responsible for drafting the minutes of the Forum meetings. He/she will ensure that the results of members' contributions are recorded in the minutes.
- **Facilitator:** helps to facilitate a structured and productive debate, enables the participation of all stakeholders and suggests discussion solutions in the event of conflicting issues.

The Secretary and the Facilitator are not necessarily members of the Forum. They may be from outside the Forum and may come in support of the Forum.

### 3.4. Duration of the Forum

The Forum is established on a temporary basis from its creation (date of publication of the report justifying the composition of the Forum) until the recognition of the standards by PEFC International.

### 3.5. How the Forum works

The Forum works in a transparent and open manner. In particular, the working documents are made available to all members at least two weeks before meetings. This provides the members of the Forum with a genuine opportunity to contribute to the work.

#### 3.5.1. Voting rights

Within the Forum, each represented member has the right to one vote (one represented member = one vote). Observers may be accepted in an advisory capacity, but may not - under any circumstances - take part in the vote, which is reserved for Forum members only.

If a member is unable to attend a meeting, he or she may give a proxy to another member representing the same interest category to vote on his or her behalf. To do so, they must inform ATIBT in writing no later than 24 hours prior to the meeting; ATIBT will then make a statement at the meeting regarding the proxies that have been received.

#### 3.5.2. Dialogue – Reaching a consensus

There are several opportunities for Forum members to express their views on a working document:

- Either during a face-to-face meeting: the absence of opposition will then be established by an oral vote (yes/no), or a vote by show of hands, or by ballot ;



- Or during a teleconference with a verbal vote (yes/no);
- Or by email, when a request for agreement is made: members indicate their agreement or opposition in writing;
- Or in a combination of the three previous processes.

In the case of face-to-face meetings or teleconferences, a quorum shall be considered as reached when a simple majority (50%) of the members of each Forum category is present or represented. If this is not the case, no consensus can be reached.

In the case of face-to-face meetings or teleconferences, the Forum Chairperson shall judge whether a consensus has been reached in the absence of sustained opposition.

In the case of email queries, ATIBT will formally report the results to the Chairperson. The latter will then be in a position to decide whether or not a consensus has been reached. Forum members will then be informed.

A document or the substantive elements of a document will be considered to be validated if there is no sustained opposition on a fundamental issue by any Forum members.

### *3.5.3. In the event of sustained opposition*

There is sustained opposition if a single member or several members of the Forum express their opposition to the requirements contained in the PAFC Congo Basin standards.

In the event of sustained opposition, the facilitator and the President shall attempt to resolve the opposition using various means:

- Direct discussion with the members who have expressed their opposition in order to reach a compromise;
- Negotiation between members holding different opinions in the forum to exchange points of views and reach a compromise;
- Additional targeted public consultations, in order to gather additional input on the dividing subject at hand, with a view to reaching a consensus. These additional public consultations will be focused on the problematic issues and will not exceed 30 days.

The resolution of sustained opposition can be achieved in a number of ways:

- Either no change to the working documents, if the member who expressed his/her opposition withdraws his/her objection;
- Or a reformulation of the requirements proposed in the working documents;
- Or the removal of requirements that were proposed in the working documents;
- Or the inclusion of additional requirements in the working documents.

The last three options require a vote and the approval of the other members.

If a sustained opposition cannot be resolved through the various above-mentioned negotiating mechanisms, ATIBT shall take the initiative to settle the dispute in an impartial and objective manner, in accordance with its procedures.



#### 4. The PAFC Congo Basin standards development process

Table 1 – Presentation of the various steps and responsibilities in the PAFC Congo Basin standards development process

Step	Description	Responsibilities	Deliverables
Preliminary steps	Drafting of this procedure: development and revision of the PAFC Congo Basin standards Drafting of both the project document and a stakeholder map	ATIBT with participation of the National PAFCs (for the CPP)	Procedure for the development and revision of the PAFC Congo Basin standards Project document Stakeholder mapping
Public announcement on the start of the process, and invitation to stakeholders to express their interest	Invitation of stakeholders	ATIBT with participation of the National PAFCs	Proof of the methods or channels selected to send invitations and call for the expression of interest (acknowledgement of receipt, list of documents listed in 3.2)
Creation of the Forum and review of the development process	Selection of the Forum members	ATIBT with participation of the National PAFCs	List of the members of the PAFC Congo Basin Forum Member selection report
	Publication of the list of Forum members and the selection report		
	Analysis of the comments received on the announcement documents		
Development of a version of the standards for public consultation	Election of a Chairperson, Secretary and Forum facilitator	PAFC Congo Basin Forum	Validated development procedure Version of the standards for public consultation Minutes of Forum meetings reflecting the discussions and proof that a consensus was reached
	Validation of the development process by taking into account all comments received since the invitation and the mapping of stakeholders		
	Development by consensus of a version of the standards for public consultation		



Step	Description	Responsibilities	Deliverables
Public consultation (60 days)	60 days to gather comments	ATIBT with participation of the National PAFCs	Report on the comments received, justification for their possible integration Version of the standards to be submitted to a vote by the Forum members
	Processing of comments		
	Development of a version of the standards for pilot testing (in the event of an initial development)		
	Validation of any modifications made by the members of the PAFC Congo Basin Forum	PAFC Congo Basin Forum	Version of the standards to be validated by the Forum members, either (1) to be submitted for pilot testing (if development occurs), or (2) to be approved (in the event of a revision of the standards = final version) Minutes of the decisions made during the PAFC Congo Basin Forum
Pilot test (in the event of an initial development)	Testing of forest management standards under real conditions	ATIBT with participation of the National PAFCs	Report on the pilot test and recommendations for modifications to the standards Version of the standards to be submitted to a vote by the Forum members
	Processing of the pilot test results		
	Development of a version of the forest management standards for the second consultation	PAFC Congo Basin Forum	Version of the standards for the second consultation Minutes of the decisions made during the PAFC Congo Basin Forum
Public consultation (30 days) (in the event of an initial draft)	30 days to gather comments	ATIBT	Report on the comments received, justification for their possible integration
	Processing of comments		
	Preparation of a version to be presented for validation at the Forum	ATIBT	Version of the standards to be submitted for voting by the Forum members
Development and validation of a final version by the Forum by consensus	Validation of a final version of the standards by consensus by the PAFC Congo Basin Forum members	PAFC Congo Basin Forum	Final version of the standards for approval by ATIBT Minutes of the decisions made during the PAFC Congo Basin Forum



Step	Description	Responsibilities	Deliverables
Approval and publication of the standards by ATIBT	Summary report to be presented at the ATIBT approval meeting	ATIBT and the National PAFCs	All of the documents mentioned in 5.1.
	Approval decision	ATIBT	Minutes of the PAFC Congo Basin standard approval meeting
	Adoption of the standards at the national level	National PAFCs	Reports of the General Meetings or Extraordinary General Meetings adopting the PAFC Congo Basin standards
	Submission to PEFC International	ATIBT	Acknowledgement of receipt of the application to PEFC International
	Mutual Recognition	PEFC International	Correspondence from the PEFC confirming the recognition of the PAFC Congo Basin system
	Publication of the PAFC Congo Basin standards	ATIBT	ATIBT and PAFC websites



#### 4.1. Preliminary steps

In order to prepare the public announcement of the launch of the process, three key documents have been developed:

- ✓ The **present procedure**;
- ✓ The **project document**, which describes the scope of the standards, the justification of the need for new standards, a clear description of the expected outcomes, a risk analysis of the negative impacts that could result from the implementation of the standards, such as factors that could hinder the achievement of the results, the unexpected consequences of the implementation and the actions taken to address the identified risks, and a description of the steps involved in the development of the standards and a provisional timetable;
- ✓ The **stakeholder mapping**, which identifies - at both the national and sub-regional levels - the stakeholders of the forest-timber sector relevant to the scope and objective of the definition of standards while taking into account the nine main groups defined in Agenda 21 of the UNCED (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development), and defines the relevance of each group in relation to forest management in the Congo Basin. For each group, the mapping presents the likely major issues, key stakeholders, disadvantaged stakeholders and the most appropriate means of communication to be used.

PEFC International's requirements stipulate that the following stakeholders, at the very least, be covered by the stakeholder mapping: forest owners, companies and industrial players, local populations and indigenous people, NGOs, the scientific and technological community, and workers and trade unions.

#### 4.2. Public announcement on the start of the process, and invitation to stakeholders to express their interest

The public announcement marks the official start of the PAFC Congo Basin standards development process and includes a call for expressions of interest to any forest management stakeholder in the Congo Basin that would like to participate. The public announcement is made at least one month before the Forum work is to begin.

In order to provide an opportunity for as many stakeholders as possible to constructively contribute to the process, ATIBT will make a public announcement, through the following means (at minimum):

- ✓ A press release on its website and an article in its newsletter;
- ✓ National press releases in the countries that are affected through the local media (radio and/or written press and/or online press);
- ✓ An email or postal mail campaign (including all relevant documentation) targeting the stakeholders identified in the mapping ;
- ✓ Making all documentation available to those representatives of key disadvantaged stakeholders that don't have internet access.



The announcement and invitation package for participation in the process includes:

- The project document and this procedure (or a link for public access to the documents);
- An invitation to express interest in participating in the Forum by designating a representative(s);
- An open invitation to submit comments on the scope and the standard-setting process as a whole (via a form with clear instructions);
- A simplified description of the standards development process, including in particular:
  - the various ways in which one may participate in the process (Forum and public consultations);
  - the deadline for the submission of comments and expressions of interest;

Special attention will be paid to key stakeholders and disadvantaged stakeholders, by ensuring that:

- appropriate communication means are used to contact them and inform them of the process in a way that is understandable to them;
- effective ways to involve them are found so that they can contribute to the various standards development stages.

#### 4.3. Creation of the Forum and review of the development process

Based on an analysis of the expressions of interest received and in order to comply with the guidelines and requirements established in section 3.5 of this procedure, ATIBT shall set up the PAFC Congo Basin Forum and publish (on its website) a list of the members of the Forum as well as the results of its analysis including, if necessary, the justification for the inclusion or rejection of an expression of interest.

ATIBT will ensure that it meets the requirements of this procedure, in particular as regards the representation of each stakeholder group in the Forum as well as the proportions of key and affected stakeholders that are involved.

Selected stakeholders as well as those who have expressed interest but were not selected shall be notified individually.

The first tasks of the Forum shall be to:

- elect a PAFC Forum chairperson,
- appoint a volunteer secretary,
- definitively adopt this procedure, amended, if necessary, in the light of comments received, particularly during the public announcement.





#### 4.4. Development of a version of the standards for public consultation

On the basis of the working documents it receives prior to the working meetings, the Forum develops, during a sub-regional workshop, a version of the PAFC Congo Basin standards ensuring that a consensus is reached on the substantial items of the standards. This version will then be subject to a 60-day public consultation.

In order for the Forum to work in an open and transparent manner, ATIBT shall:

- Send to all members of the Forum - two weeks prior to the sub-regional workshop - the workshop's agenda and the standards working documents to be analysed;
- Present and explain the standards development process: the steps, the terms of participation and the various standards;
- Facilitate the participation of disadvantaged stakeholders as well as the other members of the working group (by covering their travel, accommodation, and food costs).

#### 4.5. Public consultation

The version of the PAFC Congo Basin standards developed by consensus by the PAFC Congo Basin Forum is submitted for public consultation one month (at the latest) after validation by the Forum.

The day before the start of the public consultation (at the latest), ATIBT invites all Congo Basin forest management stakeholders to comment on the version released for public consultation while clearly indicating the consultation's start and end dates. This first public consultation lasts at least 60 days.

ATIBT posts the version of the standards (available on its website as well as on the PAFC website) and sends a direct invitation to all stakeholders identified in the mapping and to the Forum members. Other means can also be used (through local media: television and/or radio and/or print and/or online press).

ATIBT shall make sure that access to these documents is granted to key stakeholders as well as disadvantage stakeholders. ATIBT shall also ensure that the different documents for the public consultation are easy to understand by all stakeholders.

Paper versions are available upon request from the national PAFC representatives where they exist.

ATIBT acknowledges receipt of each comment sent during the public consultation. ATIBT compiles, condenses and analyses all of the comments that it receives. A summary of these comments is sent to the Forum members. It also proposes objective and justified responses to the comments received (e.g. modifications of the standards).

Two situations can then arise:

- In the context of the development of new standards, all of the comments received and the proposed responses are sent to the Forum members, especially any modifications that are made. A final response to the comments will be validated by the Forum according to the procedures described in 3.5. A version featuring the proposed changes is then subject to a pilot test (see next section) and a second public consultation (30 days);
- As part of the revision of existing standards, the changes proposed following the public consultation are directly discussed during a sub-regional validation workshop (see section 4.7). Once a consensus has been reached, the amended version will constitute the final version of the standards.



Once the summary of the comments and responses made is validated by the Forum, it is sent to each stakeholder that made a contribution and published on the ATIBT and PAFC Congo Basin websites.

#### 4.6. Pilot test

Note: in the case of a revision of standards, the pilot test is optional.

The version of the forest management standards that was amended after public consultation must be pilot tested, in the case of the development of new standards. The purpose of this pilot test is to assess the feasibility of their implementation and to evaluate the relevance of these standards.

The results of this pilot test may lead to proposals for amendments to the standards which will be sent to the members of the Forum (by email and via a remote meeting). Any proposed changes will be validated by the Forum according to the terms described in section 3.5. The version with the proposed changes developed as a result of the pilot test is subject to a second 30-day public consultation.

The terms of this second public consultation are identical to those described in the previous section (except for the duration: 30 days instead of 60 days).

#### 4.7. Development and validation of a final version by the Forum by consensus

The amended standards (either after a second public consultation as part of the development of new standards or after a first public consultation as part of the revision of existing standards) are validated by the Forum at a sub-regional final validation by consensus workshop according to the terms described in section 3.5.2.

In order to enable the Forum to work in an open and transparent manner, ATIBT will strive:

- Send the workshop agenda and the version to be validated by consensus to all Forum members two weeks prior to the sub-regional workshop;
- Present the modifications resulting from the process that haven't been validated yet and submit them to a vote by the Forum members;
- Facilitate the participation of disadvantaged stakeholders as well as the other members of the working group (by covering their travel, accommodation, and food costs).

The unopposed validated version backed by the Forum members during this final workshop is therefore the final version of the PAFC Congo Basin forest management and chain of custody standards that will then be submitted to ATIBT for final approval (see next section).



## 5. Approval and publication of the standards by ATIBT

### 5.1. Formal approval of the standards by ATIBT

The final version of the PAFC Congo Basin standards is submitted to ATIBT's Board of Directors for formal approval.

For this, ATIBT's Board of Directors will need to have the final version of the PAFC Congo Basin Standards and proof that a consensus was reached regarding the final version of the standards two weeks before. This may include, but is not limited to:

- ✓ An overview of the schedule regarding the standards development process;
- ✓ Public announcement and invitation documents;
- ✓ Documents relating to the constitution of the Forum;
- ✓ This procedure and the stakeholder mapping;
- ✓ Documents relating to the development of the public consultation version of the standards;
- ✓ Documents relating to the development of the final version by the Forum.

### 5.2. Adoption of the standards at the national level

The Congo Basin PAFC standards are designed to be applicable in the three countries that are covered: Gabon, Cameroon and the Republic of Congo.

Thus the national organisations governing the national schemes in these countries, the national PAFCs, can adopt them through the processes intended for this purpose (e.g. General Assembly or Extraordinary General Assembly).

### 5.3. Submission and recognition of the system by PEFC International

The final version of the standards approved by ATIBT and adopted by the national PAFCs is then submitted to PEFC International (in its English version) together with all of the other documents pertaining to the certification system (the standards documents and all procedures required by PEFC International) for evaluation and recognition as well as complete proof that will enable them to assess whether the standards development process was carried out in accordance with PEFC International's requirements (in particular that a consensus was reached). A report on the development of the standards shall also be submitted to PEFC International.

In the event that PEFC International requests any changes to the PAFC Congo Basin standards to bring them into line with international requirements, and if these requests do not substantially change the standards, the amended standards shall be approved by ATIBT in the same manner as in section 5.1. If the requested changes are substantial, they must be validated by the PAFC Congo Basin Forum.



## 5.4. Publication and enforcement of the standards

### 5.4.1. Publication of the standards

Within 14 calendar days following ATIBT's approval, the PAFC Congo Basin standards and other standards documents are published and made publicly available on the ATIBT website at no cost. The standards include the contact details of a contact person, the date of approval and the date of the next periodic review. Moreover, the standards specify that if there are contradictions between the English and French versions of the standards, it is the English version recognised by PEFC that is used as a reference. The report on the development of the PAFC Congo Basin standards will also be made public.

Paper copies of the standards and the PAFC Congo Basin standards development report are available at real cost from ATIBT or from the national PAFCs (if they exist).

### 5.4.2. Enactment of the standards

The certification system goes into effect:

- on its date of publication if no national standard already exists;
- on its date of recognition by PEFC International if an approved national standard already exists (in the case of a revision, for example). In this case, a transition period of up to one year may be granted for compliance with the new standards.

## 6. Periodic review of the standards

At minimum, the standards are reviewed every 5 years. These reviews are based on feedback received during the standards implementation period and following a gap analysis. Where appropriate, a public consultation may be conducted in order to obtain further information and input.

The start of the PAFC Congo Basin standards review process shall be announced at least four weeks prior to any stakeholder consultation.

A feedback mechanism for the gathering and archiving of information sent regarding the standards shall be established and maintained. It will be accessible from the PAFC website. Feedback may be provided either through comments, requests for clarification or interpretation, complaints, etc. Feedback received during meetings, training, etc. is archived and considered.

The standards review begins with an update of stakeholder mapping and a gap analysis between the PAFC Congo Basin standards and PEFC International's standards, as well as national laws and regulations, and all other existing standards. Recent scientific knowledge and research as well as emerging issues will also be taken into account.

If the results of the feedback and gap analysis do not identify a need to revise the PAFC Congo Basin standards, stakeholders' views on the merits of revising the standards will be sought:

- Either through a 30-day public consultation as described in section 4.5. The gap analysis is published during this public consultation.
- Or through meetings organised with stakeholders. The gap analysis is transmitted to stakeholders prior the meetings.

On the basis of the feedback received during the standards implementation period, the results of the gap analysis and the results of the stakeholder consultation, ATIBT's Board of Directors will decide whether to reaffirm the standards or revise them, as appropriate.



In the event of a reaffirmation of the standards, ATIBT shall justify its choice and make it public on its website.

In the opposite case (a revision of the standards), ATIBT will specify whether it is a normal revision or an editorial revision.

## 7. Revision of the standards

There are several types of standard revisions:

- ✓ A full revision, which consists of repeating all the development steps provided for in section 4;
- ✓ An editorial revision which consists of making editorial changes that are formally approved by ATIBT's Board of Directors. An amendment or a new edition of the standards is then published;
- ✓ A critical revision.

A critical revision may be conducted either following a change in national laws and regulations that prevent compliance with PEFC International's requirements, or following instructions from PEFC International to comply with its new or specific requirements within a timeframe that is too short for a full revision.

The steps involved in a critical revision are as follows:

- ✓ Development of a revised version of the standards;
- ✓ A consultation with stakeholders, as appropriate;
- ✓ Formal approval by ATIBT's Board of Directors;
- ✓ Preparation of justification for urgent changes (made publicly available).

In all cases of a revision of the PAFC Congo Basin standards, the following are defined:

- an implementation date: date from which the revised standards are to be implemented. This date shall not exceed a period of one year from the publication of the revised standards.
- a transition period: date from which (re)certification audits may be conducted on the basis of the revised standards. The transition shall not exceed a period of one year after the date of implementation, except in exceptional circumstances where the implementation of the revised standards/normative documents requires a longer period. These circumstances must be justified.



## 8. Archiving of the documentation related to the development or revision process

ATIBT is responsible for archiving documented information relating to the standards development and revision process. Proof of compliance with the requirements of this procedure and with ATIBT's internal requirements includes:

- The standards setting procedure;
- The stakeholder identification document;
- Proof of the stakeholder invitations and communications with them;
- The list of Forum members and meeting attendance lists;
- A document summarising the comments that were received and their handling;
- All of the working versions of the standards and the final version submitted to ATIBT for approval;
- Minutes of the meetings or other steps in the process where the results of the Forum members' considerations were recorded;
- Proof that a consensus was reached regarding the final version of the standards;
- Proof of ATIBT's approval of the final version of the standards.
- Other evidence related to the standards development or revision process.

These documents are archived and retained until the next review or revision of the standards to which they refer, or otherwise for a minimum of 5 years after the publication of the standards.

Upon request, any natural person or legal entity may request a copy of these documents according to the progress made in the standards development process.

## 9. Handling of complaints and appeals relating to the development of the standards

Complaints and appeals relating to standards development/revision activities must be dated, signed and addressed to ATIBT's Director by email (with acknowledgement of receipt) or via the website (if it is operational). They may relate to the content of the standards or the implementation of the standards development procedure as well as decisions that were made during the standards development process.

Upon receipt of a complaint or an appeal, ATIBT will:

- (a) acknowledge receipt of the complainant/appeal to the complainant within two weeks;
- (b) gather and verify all information necessary to validate the complaint/appeal, impartially and objectively assess the purpose of the complaint/appeal, and make a decision regarding the complaint/appeal, and;
- (c) formally communicate to the complainant the decision that was made regarding the complaint/appeal and the complaint/appeal handling process within 60 days after the acknowledgement of receipt.

In the event of a complaint or appeal, the decision shall be communicated by ATIBT's Director.