28th General Assembly

PRESENT:

National Governing Bodies from:
Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Guyana, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Malaysia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, Uruguay, USA.

By proxy:
Argentina, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, China, Congo, Gabon, India, Ireland, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Myanmar, New-Zealand, Romania, South Africa, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, Vietnam.

International Stakeholder Members:
ICFPA, Metsä Group, Mondi, Purinus Ekaperinusa (APP), SAPPI, WestRock, Weyerhauser.

By proxy:
APP Timber, ATIBT, Celulosa Arauco, CEPI, Smurfit Kappa, Stora Enso, Suzano, UPM Kymmene.

Members of the Board

APOLOGIES:

National Governing Bodies:
Belarus, Cameroon, Ghana, Hungary, Lithuania, Russian Federation, Ukraine.
International Stakeholder Members:
APRIL, Bioenergy Europe, BWI, CEETTAR, CEPF, Double A, ETS, ETTF, European Panel Federation, European Pulp Industry Sector, IFFA, Olam, Recoftc, USSE.

Members of the Board:

- Eduardo Rojas Briales
- Lena Ek
- Dradjad Wibowo

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Michael Berger - Secretary General and CEO- PEFC International
- Siti Mustapha – Deputy Secretary General and COO – PEFC International
- PEFC International Staff
- Esa Härmälä – Chair of the Nominations Committee
- Brian Kernohan – Sustainable Forest Management Working Group Chair

Of a total of 138 eligible votes, 117 votes were present (85%)
1. **AGENDA**

**Unanimously Agreed:**
- To approve the Agenda of the 28th General Assembly.

102 votes “For” and 2 votes “Abstain” (ICFPA, Suzano)

2. **MINUTES OF THE 27TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**Agreed:**
- To approve the minutes of the 27th General Assembly held virtually on 16th November 2022.

98 votes “For” and 5 votes “Abstain” (Guyana, Portugal, ICFPA, Mondi, Suzano)

3. **PEFC UPDATES**

**PEFC Chair of the Board:**

Greetings and welcome to this long waited in person meeting, and thanks to SFI for organising this joint event.

Words were on how the world has changed in the past couple of years, and how it has affected our work and interactions. In parallel, consensus in combating climate change and SFM globally.

The Chair listed all opportunities related to the forest-based sector, and how PEFC was fit for purpose, both through its work internally (organisational infra structure, regional systems and WGs, increase in Members’ engagement and visibility, etc.). Suggested priorities were to finalise PEFC’s internal reorganisation, improve external engagements, strengthen internal capacities and systems and adopt and implement a new fee system, including ancillary issues. The Chair invited Members to bring forward issues, proposals and jointly collaborate to strengthen our Alliance.

The Chair finally thanked wholeheartedly all staff at the Secretariat, acknowledging the staff’s hard work through the past hectic three years, as well as Board Members for their high commitment.

**Secretary General:**

The Secretary General (SG) based his speech on his November 2022 message. Re the Secretariat, PEFC’s newly nominated COO, Ms Siti Syaliza Binti Mustapha was officially introduced to all. On the key issues mentioned in 2022, the SG reflected on the leadership change, the war in Ukraine, stakeholder outreach and politics and collaborative spirit. In-person engagement, though positive, has its disadvantages too.

On the Strategy 2030: the SG shared his views on how he saw the Secretariat moving forward, and talked in great detail about the Strategy pathways:

- A credible and empowered PEFC Alliance, which touched upon our overall activities, acknowledging the ISMs’ support,
- Demonstrate the sustainability impact, together with other organisations involved in various areas,
- Provide innovation, the most challenging indicators but crucial for enhanced efficiency and which encompasses all areas of our work, and;
- Provide recognised solutions to society through the market, and whereas the way PEFC was perceived in the media was fair; the partnership between both entities was still uncertain. If approved, the Strategy would help steer PEFC to review and further improve our activities. It acts as pure inspiration and a worthwhile goal for all of us involved.

On this positive note, the Vice-Chair opened the floor to a Q&A session with Members.

**Chairs of the Regional Hubs:**

- APAC chaired by Simon Dorries: NGBs are varied, long-established and newer ones, in developing / developed countries. Explore growing opportunities with new NGBs but also challenges. Focus on collaboration and resource sharing. Joint cross-border, centralised work, and collective voice for higher efficiency. Fastest developing region. Development of fit-for-purpose systems. Major receiver of donor funding. Smallholders’ role is crucial. How do we stand with FSC.
Outreach work to non-PEFC countries. Regional approach and outlook are key to help grow, be strategic and innovative.

- South America chaired by André Laroze: Regional meetings since 2015, including MCA and regular taskforces. Strong common understanding of forestry issues and collaboration. Coordinated criteria related to ABs and CBs, processes, communication, and technical cooperation. All countries are going through a re-endorsement process, moving forward at the same pace. Recent successful activities were highlighted. Reaching out to civil society, taking pride in being PEFC certified, providing strong service, and raising awareness nationally and internationally. Focus on the role of planted forests. Brand recognition related to growth in the region.

- North America chaired by Jason Metnick (SFI): Due to the nature of its structure, there is no official regional hub there but communication on core matters is strong. Pursuing relevance of forest certification is key, as are ESG and outreach with customer markets. Highlight on how SFI’s task groups collaborate with PEFC International to increase global relevance.

North America chaired by John Dunford (PEFC Canada): Relationship based on communication. Cohesive small team.

North America chaired by Angela Wells (ATFS): Current focus on finalising their corrective actions on their endorsement and streamlining their certification programme. Importance of delivering a pathway to third party certification whenever possible. Outreach and support to smallholders. Challenges were expressed (escalation of standards and requirements and the value-added of certification for smallholders, etc.) as well as opportunities (group certification model, various collaborations, etc.).

- Europe chaired by Samuel Oldenhove: Originally the European marketing and Communication Group (EMCG), then the MCA creation resulted in the European hub. Two-chair system for continuity purposes. The main objectives were highlighted: share information, foster collaboration on MCA, discuss technical developments with the alliance and address governance and finance. Quarterly meetings. Finding consensus on common positions on certain topics despite distinct diversity amongst NGBs. Challenges and priorities are numerous and finding a common denominator is key. Sharing good practice amongst regional hubs may be a good idea. Strong points were highlighted as well as turning points.

4. FINANCES

4.1 Audited Accounts for Year-End 2021

Agreed:
- To approve the audited accounts for the period 01 January to 31 December 2022, as prepared by Interexperts SA.

96 votes “For” and 4 votes “Abstain” (Guyana, Turkey, ICFPA, Suzano)

4.2 Budget for the new Accounting System

Agreed:
- To approve the budget for the Accounting System

93 votes “For” and 9 votes “Abstain” (Bosnia Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Poland, Slovenia, ICFPA, Suzano, Westrock)

5. PEFC STATUTES

Agreed:
- To approve the amended statutes.

100 votes “For” and 2 votes “Abstain” (ICFPA, Suzano)
6. PEFC ALLIANCE 2030 STRATEGY

Agreed:
- To approve the Strategy 2030.

92 votes “For” and 5 votes “Abstain”
(Poland, ICFPA, Suzano)

7. MEMBERSHIP

7.1 ISM application: Mayr-Melnhof Holz Holding AG

Agreed:
- To approve Mayr-Melnhof Holz Holding AG as a PEFC International Stakeholder Member.

104 votes “For” and 2 votes “Abstain”
(ICFPA, Suzano)

7.2 ISM application: Mercer International Inc.

Agreed:
- To approve Mercer International Inc. as a PEFC International Stakeholder Member.

104 votes “For” and 2 votes “Abstain”
(ICFPA, Suzano)

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

9. DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 15 November 2023 – Virtually