29th General Assembly

PRESENT:

National Governing Bodies from:
Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Gabon, Ghana, Germany, Guyana, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uruguay, USA, Vietnam.

International Stakeholder Members:

Members of the Board

APOLOGIES:

National Governing Bodies:
Cameroon, Congo.

International Stakeholder Members:
Members of the Board:

Richard Ali and Nurudeen Iddrisu.

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 – Chair of the PEFC SFM Working Group

Of a total of 140 eligible votes, 119 votes were present (85%)
Mr Eduardo Rojas Briales, PEFC Board Chair, opened the 29th General Assembly with a few words of greeting and housekeeping items. He introduced the National Governing Body (NGB) candidate, the two International Stakeholder Member (ISM) candidates, the Board member candidate, and the Chair of the Nominations Committee. He went on to list the NGB and ISM apologies.

The voting system procedure was then explained to all participants.

1. **AGENDA**

   **Unanimously Agreed:**
   - To approve the Agenda of the 29th General Assembly.

   96 votes “For” and 2 votes “Abstain” (Ireland and ICFPA)

2. **MINUTES OF THE 28TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

   **Agreed:**
   - To approve the minutes of the 28th General Assembly held in Vancouver on 15th May 2023.

   97 votes “For” and 2 votes “Abstain” (Russia, ICFPA)

   The PEFC Chair acknowledged the work undertaken during the May 2023 joint conference of SFI and PEFC in Vancouver.

3. **PEFC UPDATES**

   These updates took place in the shape of a conversation between the PEFC Board Chair and the Secretary General (SG): the principles that the PEFC SG was eager to implement were highlighted. Collaboration and respect are key for successful joint global work and development. Work with PEFC’s working groups, various colleagues and stakeholders, and new projects were mentioned. The Secretariat, NGBs, ISMs, and Board all work towards the same goal. Relations with Hub Chairs also enhances this.

   The PEFC Board Chair recollected his travels over the past two years since the inception of his mandate as Chair, and the various meetings he had, which helped strengthen the Alliance and allowed outreach to other countries. Through the recent difficulties, it is important that the members should own the Strategy and help the work of the Secretariat be consistent, priority-focused, and fully supported.

   The SG confirmed that the internal reorganisation of the Secretariat, including the ERP system, would be done by the end of the year, as adjustments are still ongoing, some of them following the input of some members.

   The SG’s priorities for 2024 will be bigger international discussions between the Secretariat and the Alliance. Need to work on a systematic stakeholder engagement concept. Need for a smart system to include members in the Secretariat activities for enhanced efficiency, perception, and cooperation, much more valuable than any CRM tool. The work on Raising the Bar is to be sustained with members.

   The Chair reiterated PEFC’s mandate related to Carbon, EUDR, Trees outside Forests, etc. He encouraged members to keep strengthening the regional and global relations, further develop the outreach and influence potential. PEFC is not just about certification. Need to work on the social and environmental dimensions of the forests.

   Q&A: Lack of attendance of ISMs was flagged. The GA may have some formal issues to be solved. ISMs may have more time and interest for in-person meetings. It raised the issue of what ISMs want from PEFC, and how can we work better. A concern was expressed regarding the implementation of the EUDR, and its bureaucratic burden, leading to forest owners’ demotivation. The Chair confirmed that work was ongoing on the matter, including REDII. He invited countries with similar agricultural commodities issues to step forward and cooperate with PEFC.

4. **PEFC INTERNATIONAL WORK PLAN 2024**

   PEFC’s new COO, Ms Siti Mustapha took the floor to introduce the work plan. She gave a thorough and detailed overview and explained the purpose of the plan for the Secretariat and the members against the 2030 Strategy, including the ERP system and the budget...
integration and staff accountability, showing cross-cutting and transversal work throughout all units. She indicated what our core activities and responsibilities will be.

Q&A: On Trees outside Forests (TOF): there is a need for improvement and the TOF TF has met and will continue to meet to streamline all different requirements and standards. Is the work plan too broad? More advocacy details requested. A memorandum towards politics of different parties and the preparation of a document related to the elections of the European Parliament of next year were suggested. The Chair suggested a position paper with stakeholders, and hoped that the EU Parliament will approach this favourably too. Digitalisation concerns were also expressed. The COO mentioned that it was managed under the integrity programme.

5. FINANCES

Board Member and Chair of the Management Accounts Committee (MAC) introduced the following motions in detail.

Q&A: How will communication with members take place? What about review / evaluation? The MAC Chair highlighted the urgent need to recruit a dedicated person. Mention was made to be informed at the next GA on the efficiency of this new resource and clarification of what their objectives will be. The MAC Chair confirmed that EU based members would be part of the project, together with the EU WG, ultimately aiming at working with government decision-makers.

5.1 Budget and Membership Fees 2024

This section is three-fold:
- To approve the 2024 budget, including an inflation adjustment of membership fees of 3% in Rate per Hectare, Subscription Fee Rate, Rate per CoC and ISM Membership Fees and in the cap:
- To approve one-off expenditure totalling 600,000 CHF over three years from reserves for the PEFC Development and Fundraising Strategy implementation
- To approve one-off expenditure totalling 150,000 CHF over three years from reserves for the extension of PEFC’s Brussels representation

Agreed:
- To approve the 2024 budget, including an inflation adjustment of membership fees of 3 % in Rate per Hectare, Subscription Fee Rate, Rate per CoC and ISM Membership Fees and in the cap:
  - 93 votes “For”, 1 vote “Against” (Bulgaria) and 6 votes “Abstain” (Ukraine, Russia, Romania, ATIBT, ICFPA, Suzano)

Agreed:
- To approve one-off expenditure totalling 600,000 CHF over three years from reserves for the PEFC Development and Fundraising Strategy implementation:
  - 91 votes “For” and 4 votes “Abstain” (Netherlands, Russia, Slovak Republic, ICFPA)

Agreed:
- To approve one-off expenditure totalling 150,000 CHF over three years from reserves for the extension of PEFC’s Brussels representation:
  - 91 votes “For” and 7 votes “Abstain” (Russia, Slovak Republic, UK, ICFPA)

5.2 Appointment of the Auditor

The MAC Chair indicated that PEFC’s current auditor has been unchanged since 2010, and that the standard of good financial management implies the appointment of a new auditor shortly.

Agreed:
- To approve the appointment of Interexperts SA” as the PEFC Council Auditor for the year end accounts (as at 31 December 2023), in accordance with the PEFC Council Statutes, Article 5, Chapter 10, section V
  - 91 votes “For” and 2 votes “Abstain” (Russia, ICFPA)
6. ELECTION OF THE PEFC COUNCIL BOARD

The PEFC Chair announced that Mr Nurudeen Iddrisu will end his second three-year mandate as Board Member.

Mr Esa Härmälä, Chair of the PEFC Council Nominations Committee, presented the Nominations Committee report for 2023.

He explained in detail what the Nominations Committee tasks and mandate were, what the various candidate categories were, the selection requirements and how the process was implemented. He highlighted that Board Member Richard Ali was not available for re-election. He introduced all Board Member candidates.

A question was asked about the lack of brand owner category seat available. Background information for this situation was given.

Agreed:
- To appoint one Vice Chair:
  - Suzette Weeding as second Vice Chair - 2023-2026
- To appoint two Board members:
  - Lena Ek - 2023-2026
  - A.K Bansal – 2023-2026

95 votes “For” and 5 votes “Abstain” (Russia, ATIBT, ICFPA)

Newly elected Board Member Mr A.K. Bansal took the floor to introduce himself. Re-elected Vice-Chair Ms Suzette Weeding and re-elected Board Member Ms Lena Ek took the opportunity to reintroduce themselves.

The Chair officially welcomed them to the PEFC Board of Directors.

7. MEMBERSHIP

7.1 NGB Membership application – CUPFOA (Croatia)

Agreed:
- To approve CUPFOA (Croatia) as a PEFC National Governing Body

89 votes “For” and 3 votes “Abstain” (Russia, ATIBT, ICFPA)

7.2 ISM Membership application – HS Timber Group

Agreed:
- To approve HS Timber as a PEFC International Stakeholder Member.

87 votes “For” and 4 votes “Abstain” (Belgium, Russia, ICFPA, Mercer International Inc.)

7.3 ISM Membership application – Precious Wood

Agreed:
- To approve Precious Wood as a PEFC International Stakeholder Member.

91 votes “For” and 2 votes “Abstain” (Russia, ICFPA)

Mr. Županić (CUPFOA), Mr. Proschek (HS Timber) and Mr. Pfannkuch (Precious Wood) said a few words.

The Chair then went on to the new nominations procedure policy, and confirmed that it would be addressed in the February 2024 Board meeting. Once discussed, it will be open for members’ consultation before being finalised.

He expressed his concern related to the lack of Board Member representing Africa. Members were asked to think of potential candidates. And also, related to a Board representative from an ENGO from the global South (Latin America).

Ms. Degawan’s departure from her role as Nominations Committee Member, was also a point of concern for him. As to Mr. Härmälä, members’ opinion will be sought to approve an exceptional extension of the Chair of the Nominations Committee until the next GA in May 2024.
In around March 2024, Members will also receive a substantive review on the nomination process policy.

8. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was none.

9. **DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING**

- May 2024, dates to be confirmed – Paris, France
- 13 November 2024: PEFC General Assembly online.

Signed:

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Eduardo Rojas Briales, Chair

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Michael Berger, Secretary General