

PEFC General Assembly Minutes

Wednesday 15 May 2024

Paris, France

13:30-16:00 (CET)

30th General Assembly

PRESENT:

National Governing Bodies from:

Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia Herzegovina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malaysia, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Republic of South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, Turkey, United Kingdom, USA, Vietnam.

By Proxy:

Argentina, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, New Zealand, Switzerland, Ukraine, Uruguay.

International Stakeholder Members:

APP Timber, ATIBT/IFIA, CEPF, ICFPA, IFFA, Metsä Group, Mondi, Purinusa Ekaperinusa (APP), Sappi, Stora Enso, Suzano, UPM Kymmene, WestRock.

By proxy:

CEPI, European Panel Federation, HS Timber, Mercer International Inc., Weyerhaeuser.

Members of the Board

Sara El Kadri, Guy Gleysteen, Arun Kumar Bansal, Fatimah Mohammad, Eva Mueller, Gerald Pfiffinger, Kurt Ramskogler, Scott Robertson, Eduardo Rojas Briaes, Suzette Weeding.

APOLOGIES:

National Governing Bodies:

Ghana, Hungary, Lithuania, Myanmar, Russian Federation, South Africa.

International Stakeholder Members:

APRIL, Bioenergy Europe (formerly AEBIOM), BWI, CEETTAR, Celulosa Arauco, Double A, ETS, ETTF, European Pulp Industry Sector, Mayr-Melnhof Holz Holding AG, Olam, Precious Woods, Recoftc, Smurfit Kappa, USSE.

Members of the Board:

David Ford, Lena Ek, Dradjad Wibowo.

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Michael Berger - Secretary General and CEO- 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 142 eligible votes, 121 votes were present (85%)

The Chair gave a warm welcome and thanked PEFC France for hosting this event. He also welcomed special guests: former Chair Mike Clarke, former Chair Peter Latham, former Acting Chair Sheam Satkuru former Vice-Chair Natalje Hufnagel-Jovy, Thomas Hausman, Vice-Chair of CEPF Luc Bouvarel, also Board and PEFC International staff, Esa Härmälä. He then went through all apologies. Voting ground rules were clarified.

1. AGENDA

Unanimously Agreed:

- To approve the Agenda of the 30th General Assembly.

85 votes "For"

2. MINUTES OF THE 29TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Agreed:

- To approve the minutes of the 29th General Assembly held in Vancouver on 15 November 2023.

92 votes "For" and 1 vote "Abstain" (PEFC Luxembourg)

3. PEFC UPDATES

The Chair reflected on the past General Assemblies (GA) and on the social (COVID, economy, etc) and staff circumstances (changes, etc).

Notable budget increase in the last five years. He highlighted the significant reserves too.

Growth in hectares in CoC with positive developments.

More ISMs and 56 NGBs, and potential to increase, i.e., Greece.

We have significantly increased our external resource mobilisation, amounting to 800'000CHF a year.

Locations of Board meetings were mentioned, with an outward perspective (non-EU). France was the ideal location for this PEFC Forest Forum (FF) due to the 25th anniversary. Same process for GAs. He highlighted the success of online meetings, also resulting in less postal ballots recently, so flexibility. Two GAs a year

allow a smooth follow-up. One in-person/one online meeting is a good alternative which helps reduce costs. Potential upcoming venue: BoD meeting in Brussels in February 2025. Southeast Asia, Southeast Europe / Turkey and Congo Bassin are also alternatives for upcoming GA meetings. PEFC's presence will be strongly beneficial.

PEFC Strategy 2030, incredible work done, no consultant was contracted for this work.

Regional hubs consolidated and active under the guidance of the MCA. One for Africa is desired.

New recruitment in Brussels: tasked to have contacts with EU region NGBs and engage the Board in absence of EU elected leaders. Thanks to Germany to help fund this second position.

Trees Outside the Forest (ToF): 3 countries (India, the Netherlands and Portugal).

EUDR, carbon and REDII: positive developments.

New accounting system to increase efficiency. New software for smoother operational work.

Fundraising & Development Committee up and going led by Eva Mueller. Twofold aim: Resources to strengthen NGBs, some of which being underfunded. Focus on plurinational organisations and standards. We must align them to overcome and avoid further bottlenecks, so PEFC is stronger globally.

Further to other talk during that morning, focus on tropical forests to be linked to indigenous peoples. Issue with NGBs to activate our leaders to act upon these issues.

The Chair listed all the countries he visited during his tenure so far and the benefits from his presence there, in terms of operational knowledge but from people's perspectives.

The Chair acknowledged the commitment of the Board, Executive Committee and the staff.

The Chair reiterated the need to expand countries, hectares and CoCs, settle the fee issue and, in the meantime, consider what new projects can bring to PEFC, i.e., REDII, etc.

The CEO has a twofold message:

Formal address:

An electronic postal ballot on the EUDR CoC module will be sent soon and he encouraged

all to vote. Another postal ballot will be sent at a later stage as mentioned in the meeting on REDII scheme. A members consultation, vis-à-vis a key proposal to amend current composition of the Nominations Committee election procedure for the PEFC Council members will also be sent in late May. The CEO explained what the process would entail and the regulations inherent to this process.

Informal address:

The CEO went on to the 25th anniversary and meaningfully went back to the roots of PEFC history and the evolution over the years up to now. He shared a couple of success stories. He asked Members to tell their success stories: India, Chile, Australia, Italy, USA volunteered.

The CEO made an announcement, highlighting the following two points: 1) the upcoming consideration does not arise from frustration or pessimism. It comes from the strength gathered from all attending participants and beyond, over the past 25 years and for the future, and 2) he did not suggest a new PEFC Strategy (no new or revised one), or maybe a few added elements.

He tried to recall his 25th birthday and could not. He drew a parallel with PEFC's 25th anniversary, which on the other hand must be memorable and a turning point towards innovation and constructive challenge. He acknowledged the fact that PEFC during this time had not changed much overall (little innovation, outdated standards, growth rate, etc.). He listed all our successes and positive actions and contributions, challenged our global position. Good practices on the ground must be more visible and shared. How can we change for the better and he referred to the PEFC vision. He recalled the global cooperation on the drafting of the Strategy. Transformational disruption was explained through the blockbuster/Netflix example, with the morale to ponder on. Now is the time to make a change, as we grow in terms of NGBs and ISMs and projects. The evolution of the Board, in its nature and work, was acknowledged. What type of impact do we want to achieve in each area of our work? And how? Need to rethink now: regionalisation, regional hubs, representation on the Board, finance, fee project, etc. Changes required in view of maintaining sustainability.

The Chair then took the floor. He shared thoughts on how similar we, as human beings, may be in our respective cultures and societies. He highlighted the need to improve the positive outcome of what forest work and forest management can bring.

4. FINANCE: AUDITED YEAR-END ACCOUNTS 2023

The Management Accounts Committee Chair presented the accounts and addressed three items:

2023 budget account overview. In the year prior, a significant deficit was approved, i.e., 327'000CHF deficit anticipated and we finished 2023 at a 44'000CHF deficit. The gap was not about controlling expenses. PEFC was able to generate more income. He acknowledged the work of PEFC Council Board and staff to achieve this.

Clean audit for 2023 account year. No comments from the auditor. Implementation of the new financial system did not allow, as anticipated, to change auditor. It will now be possible.

Tender offer for that purpose soon.

Agreed:

- To approve the audited year-end accounts for 2023.

83 votes "For"

5. NEW STANDARD: REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION BODIES OPERATING CERTIFICATION AGAINST PEFC ENDORSED FOREST MANAGEMENT STANDARDS (PEFC ST 1004)

Issue was discussed and presented on 14 May at a meeting on that subject.

Agreed:

- To approve requirements for certification bodies operating certification against PEFC endorsed forest management standards (PEFC ST 1004)

91 votes "For" and 4 votes "Abstain" (IFCC, APP)

6. ELECTION OF THE PEFC COUNCIL BOARD

The Chair of Nominations Committee explained that an eNGO from Africa was originally sought. No suitable candidate was nominated. Scope enlarged to a candidate from the Southern Hemisphere. Gender balance taken into account. The search for an African candidate is only postponed, so all regions are represented to have a balance representation on the Board. He briefly introduced Dr. Gustavo Andrés Zurita.

Agreed:

- To appoint one Board member:
 - Gustavo Andrés Zurita 2024-2026

86 votes "For" and 5 votes "Abstain" (PEFC Netherlands, PEFC Poland)

Dr. Zurita could not join and wrote an acknowledgement letter which the Chair read to all members.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ms. Basmatee Mohabeer, Assistant Commissioner of Forests, Guyana Forestry Commission, joined the Chair on stage. She was provided with the Certificate Ceremony for Endorsement of Forest Certification System of Guyana. The Chair acknowledged this success.

8. DATE AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

- Wednesday 13 November 2024: PEFC General Assembly online with other global meetings.
- 12-16 May in Vietnam, exact location and dates to be confirmed.

There was a presentation film on Vietnam and forest statistics. Mr. Dong Lam Tram (VAFS) introduced this upcoming event. He explained briefly how the NGB started and how they were endorsed by PEFC. The Chair expressed his support for this venue. The Chair referred to an FAO Report (2016) to prepare participants for this trip.

The Second Vice-Chair made some general meeting announcements.

PEFC France National Secretary explained briefly what the following day would consist of, including the morning meeting and the logistics related to the excursion from lunchtime onwards at Chantilly Forest.

Final words from the Chair and members' photo.

Signed:

Eduardo Rojas Briales, Chair

Michael Berger, Secretary General