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PEFC General Assembly Minutes

(Virtual meeting with online voting)

Wednesday 13 November 2024

11:00 - 14:00 (CET)

31st General Assembly

PRESENT:

National Governing Bodies from:

Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Guyana, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Myanmar, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Slovenia, Slovakia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States and Uruguay.

By proxy:

Bosnia Herzegovina, Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Macedonia and New-Zealand.

International Stakeholder Members:

APRIL, ATIBT/IFIA, BWI, CEPF, ICFPA, IFFA, Mayr-Melnhof Holz Holding AG, Mercer International Inc., Metsä Group, Mondi, Precious Woods, Sappi, Storaenso, Suzano, UPM Kymmene.

By proxy:

EPF and Weyerhaeuser.

Members of the Board

Eduardo Rojas, David A. Ford, Suzette Weeding, Arun Kumar Bansal, Dradjad Hari Wibowo, Eva Ursula Mueller, Fatimah Mohammad, Gustavo Zurita, Guy Gleysteen, Sara El Kadri, Scott Robertson.

APOLOGIES:

National Governing Bodies:

Belarus, Ghana and India.

International Stakeholder Members:

APP Timber, Bioenergy Europe (formerly AEBIOM), CEETTAR, Celulosa Arauco, CEPI, Double A, ETS, ETTF, European Pulp Industry Sector, HS Timber, Olam, Purinusa Ekaperinusa (APP), Recoftc, Smurfit Kappa, USSE, WestRock.

Members of the Board:

Gerald Pfiffinger, Kurt Ramskogler and Lena EK.

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Michael Berger - Secretary General and CEO- PEFC International
- PEFC International Staff
- Esa Härmälä – Chair of the Nominations Committee

The Chair and Secretary General certify that the Assembly was regularly convened according to the Statutes and that, of a total of 143 eligible votes, 124 votes were present (87%).

Therefore, the Assembly may validly vote.

The Chair introduced the meeting agenda, invited guests, house rules and voting procedures were outlined. Updates were given celebrating PEFC's 25th anniversary, recognizing the organization's founders, and highlighting the high attendance at the previous in-person meeting.

1. AGENDA

Agreed:

- To approve the Agenda of the 31st General Assembly.

*75 votes "For" and 2 votes "Abstain"
(Luxembourg, ICFPA)*

2. MINUTES OF THE 30TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Agreed:

- To approve the minutes of the 30th General Assembly held virtually on Wednesday 15th May 2024, in Paris.

*88 votes "For" and 4 votes "Abstain"
(Lithuania, Russia, Switzerland, ICFPA)*

3. PEFC UPDATES

The Chair discussed the organization's recent developments and future plans. They highlighted the green light received from the Commission for the Red II certification, the sustainable growth observed in Africa, and the strengthening of staff capacity in Brussels. They also discussed the progress in the Turkish standard and the potential for expansion into Africa and Latin America. PEFC International to continue developing the carbon strategy under the carbon task force.

The Secretary General (SG) reviewed the organization's internal structure, with a focus on the five pillars of lead and coordination, advocacy and EU affairs, market engagement, integrity, and forest and conservation. The conversation ended with an open floor for questions and comments.

On the 25+ initiative and plans for a think tank around it, the SG stated that the first milestone is the Board meeting in Brussels in early February, where they will decide on the details of how to move forward. After that,

they will come back to the members with more information. Members congratulated the Secretariat on the growth and new capacities being added.

4. PEFC INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT WORK PLAN 2025

- To note the PEFC International Secretariat work plan for 2025.

The Head of Market Engagement outlined the overall 2025 work plan, highlighting consolidation and innovation, with a focus on strengthening the Alliance through investment in systems and structure.

The Head of Finance and Admin discussed plans for the finance team to finalize internal rules, update financial reporting, and develop an HR framework, while also investing in innovative reporting using AI/BI.

The Head of Standards and Integrity provided an overview of the team's plans around RED II, the EU Deforestation regulation alignment, agroforestry expansion, ecosystem services projects, and modernizing data systems.

The Head of Member Services discussed opening a new office in the Congo Basin, adding new members like Greece and Eswatini, and regional focus areas like Argentina, Southeast Europe, and increasing Asia-Pacific cooperation.

The Market Engagement team will strengthen sectoral programs while scaling down textiles, relaunch the Sustainability Impact study, roll out a new CRM, and look at harmonizing promotional trademark use.

Finally, the SG covered the lead and coordination team's plans around indigenous engagement, advocacy, partnerships, EU affairs and project funding opportunities. PEFC International to launch the development and fundraising strategy, in addition to the recruitment of a Manager in this capacity.

The Head of Market Engagement opened the floor for questions about the 5 work scopes presented. On the downscaling of the textiles program, she explained that it was due to the natural end of a 6-year partnership.

The SG also addressed a Member's concern about PEFC's potential membership in ISEAL, stating that no decision has been made and a

process will be initiated with the membership from February 2025.

5. FINANCE

5.1 Budget and Membership Fees 2025

The 2025 budget and membership fees topic were presented by the Chair of the Management Accounts Committee (MAC). The budget, totalling CHF6'363'000, was built from the ground up and is a balanced budget, with a slight increase from the 2024 budget. The budget includes a significant increase in IT expenditures due to the many important changes taking place in the IT infrastructure.

The Chair confirmed that PEFC International would review its membership fee structure in the coming years.

Agreed:

- To approve the 2025 budget (including the membership fees and CAP)

*88 votes "For" and 6 votes "Abstain"
(Russia, Spain, Mondi)*

5.2 Appointment of Auditor

Agreed:

- To approve the appointment of Forvis Mazars as auditors for the PEFC International financial statements for the period of 5 years (2024 –2029) thereafter any re-appointment will be reviewed.

*93 votes "For" and 3 votes "Abstain"
(Russia, ICFPA, Mondi)*

6. STANDARDS

6.1 Approval of the revised Sustainable Forest Management Benchmark (PEFC ST 1003)

The proposed changes to the Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) standard, which aligns with the EUDR, was tackled. The Board decided to proceed with implementing the revised Sustainable Forest Management Benchmark standard (PEFC ST 1003), despite uncertainties in the EU's political decision-

making process. The changes were reviewed by the SFM Working Group, and adjustments were made to ensure compliance with the EUDR. The meeting also discussed the potential impact of the expected EU's decision to postpone the EUDR application on the SFM standard, with some Members expressing concerns about the timing of the vote. Discussions and interventions from Members went on. The Board committed to review any changes to the EUDR and bring them to a postal ballot if necessary.

PEFC International to monitor EU Parliament decisions on EUDR and make any necessary adjustments to standards.

Agreed:

- To approve of the revised PEFC benchmark standard for Sustainable Forest Management - PEFC ST 1003:2024

*87 votes "For" and 12 votes "Abstain"
(Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Russia, Switzerland, ICFPA)*

6.2 PEFC RED II System

The system, which is part of the European framework for sustainable energy production, was presented by the Certification Programme Senior Manager, who explained its purpose and the process of its implementation.

PEFC International to prepare submissions for RED 3 by end of 2025.

Agreed:

- To approve the PEFC RED II standards:
 - PEFC ST 5002, Additional requirements for organisations sourcing forest biomass – REDII
 - PEFC ST 5003, Additional requirements for certification bodies providing certification against PEFC ST 5002 - RED II
 - PEFC ST 5004, Requirements for the Development of Level A Risk Assessments and its Recognition by PEFC as per Article 29 (6a) and (7a) of the RED II Directive

100 votes "For", 1 vote "Against" (Russia) and 2 votes "Abstain" (Lithuania, ICFPA)

7. ELECTIONS OF THE PEFC COUNCIL BOARD

The Chair of the Nominations Committee presented the nominations. The committee proposed Eduardo Rojas Briaies as the new Chair of the Board, and four other Members, each for a three-year term.

The board members congratulated Eduardo on his re-election as Chair and thanked the Members for their trust. The Chair outlined his goals to strengthen PEFC's bottom-up approach globally while focusing on local communities and improving forest communication. Re-nominated Members spoke. Ms. Fatimah Mohammad highlighted the need for PEFC to adopt living wage standards based on an ILO agreement. Ms. Sara El Kadri looked forward to promoting sustainable forest management across the globe. The Board recognized the Chair of the Nominations Committee's long service in this capacity as he steps down.

Mr. Gerald Pfiffinger, whose second term as a Board Member has ended, will leave the PEFC Council Board of Directors.

They welcomed the newly nominated Board Member, Mr. Thomas Schenker.

As of 13 November 2024, the new Board composition is therefore as follows:

- Arun Kumar Bansal
- David A. Ford
- Dradjad Hari Wibowo

- Eduardo Rojas
- Eva Ursula Mueller
- Fatimah Mohammad
- Gustavo Zurita
- Guy Gleysteen
- Kurt Ramskogler
- Lena EK
- Sara El Kadri
- Scott Robertson
- Suzette Weeding
- Thomas Schenker

Agreed:

- To appoint one Chair:
 - Eduardo Rojas Briaies

88 votes "For" and 12 votes "Abstain" (China, Germany, Russia, ICFPA)

Agreed:

- To appoint four Board members:
 - Dradjad Hari Wibowo
 - Fatimah Mohammad
 - Sara El Kadri
 - Thomas Schenker

103 votes "For", 3 votes "Abstain" (Russia, ICFPA, Mondj)

The Chair had acknowledged the work undertaken by Mr. Esa Härmälä for his leadership as Nominations Committee Member then Chair.

8. MEMBERSHIP: NGB MEMBERSHIP TRANSFER FOR NORTH MACEDONIA

Agreed:

- To approve the transfer of the NGB membership for North Macedonia from The Council for SFM in Republic of Macedonia to the Regional Centre for Forestry and Rural Development (REFORD)

96 votes "For" and 4 votes "Abstain" (Brazil, ICFPA, Mondj)

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair expressed his thanks to the departing Board Member, Mr. Gerald

Pfiffinger, who had been PEFC's ENGO representative over the past six years, and his deep appreciation for his enduring commitment and dedication.

10. PEFC COUNCIL MEETING DATES AND VENUE OF NEXT MEETING

- Wednesday 07 May 2025 – Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam
- Wednesday 12 November 2025 - Online

Signed:

Eduardo Rojas Briaies, Chair

Michael Berger, Secretary General