



**PEFC
PROCEDURE
DOCUMENT**

Endorsement and Mutual Recognition of Certification Systems and their Revision

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Contents

1.	Scope	5
2.	Normative references	5
3.	Definitions	6
4.	Principles of the endorsement and mutual recognition process	8
5.	PEFC Sustainability Benchmark	9
6.	The assessment process	10
6.1.	Steps in the assessment process	10
6.2.	General assessment elements	17
6.3.	Types of assessment	18
7.	The endorsement	22
7.1.	General	22
7.2.	Endorsement decision	22
7.3.	Maintaining the endorsement	22
7.4.	Suspension and termination of endorsement	24
7.5.	Transition of revised applicant system	24
7.6.	Communication of the endorsement decision	25
7.7.	Complaints and appeals	25
	Appendix 1: Appointment of independent PEFC Registered Assessors	26
	Appendix 2: The assessment report	28
	Appendix 3: Regional Systems	33
	Appendix 4: Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) Template for Regional Systems	37

Foreword

The PEFC Council (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification) is a worldwide organisation promoting sustainable forest management through forest certification and labelling of forest-based products. Products with the PEFC claim and / or label deliver confidence to customers and end consumers that the raw material originates in sustainably managed forests.

The PEFC Council provides endorsement of national forest certification systems which are required to comply with the PEFC Council's requirements subject to regular evaluations.

Introduction

PEFC claims made on forest management and on forest-based products provide information relating to sustainably managed forests and the origin of those forest-based products from which originate in sustainably managed forests and recycled sources and other non-controversial sources.

Purchasers and potential purchasers can use this information in choosing the product based on sustainability, as well as other considerations.

PEFC strictly follows a bottom-up approach; forest certification systems are developed at the regional, national or sub-national level and represented by a National Governing Body (NGB).

To enable the PEFC claims to be used on a worldwide basis the endorsement and mutual recognition process ensures the consequent implementation of PEFC International Standards and Guidelines at regional, national or sub-national levels.

The goal of the PEFC Endorsement and Mutual Recognition process is to provide stakeholders with accurate and verifiable information on the reliability of PEFC certification systems worldwide.

This guideline has been developed in an open, transparent, consultative and consensus-based process covering a broad range of stakeholders.

This guideline has two appendices:

Appendix 1: Appointment of independent PEFC Registered Assessors

Appendix 2: The assessment report

The PEFC Standard and System Requirements Checklist is available separately. The completed checklist is part of the application for endorsement and can be used as a supportive tool in the assessment. The latest version of this checklist is available at the PEFC Council Secretariat.

1. Scope

This document describes the requirements for the endorsement and mutual recognition process of new, reviewed, revised and/or amended systems and refers to PEFC Standards and Guidelines. The process consists of an independent assessment and an endorsement decision.

The endorsement of a system means that the members of the PEFC Council have determined that the system meets the requirements of the PEFC Council. The endorsement procedure ensures that the members vote on each other's systems. Therefore, the member of the PEFC Council recognise each other's systems under the PEFC Council mutual recognition umbrella.

Rules for endorsement of forest certification and chain of custody standards and systems guide the assessment and decision-making in the process. The rules harmonise the documentation of the system and applications, as well as the assessment processes, carried out by independent assessors.

They also set the framework for the endorsement decision-making process in the PEFC Council and thus provide fairness and equity for all applicants.

This document is normative for National Governing Bodies seeking endorsement and mutual recognition of their applicant system by the PEFC Council.

2. Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. Any dated references are the particular original documents. For the purpose of the application of this Guide, the current version of referenced documents is relevant.

PEFC ST 1001, *Standard Setting – Requirements* (available from www.pefc.org)

PEFC ST 1003, *Sustainable Forest Management – Requirements* (available from www.pefc.org)

PEFC ST 1002, *Group Forest Management Certification – Requirements* (available from www.pefc.org)

PEFC ST 2002, *Chain of Custody of Forest Based Products – Requirements* (available from www.pefc.org)

PEFC ST 2003, *Requirements for Certification Bodies operating Certification against the PEFC International Chain of Custody Standard*

PEFC GD 1004, *Administration of PEFC scheme*, chapter 8 (available from www.pefc.org)

Annex 6 (Certification and Accreditation Procedures) (available from www.pefc.org)

PEFC ST 2001, *PEFC Trademarks Rules – Requirements* (hereinafter PEFC Trademarks standard) (available from www.pefc.org)

PEFC GL7/2007, *PEFC Council procedures for the investigation and resolution of complaints and Appeals* (available from www.pefc.org)

3. Definitions

For the purposes of this guide, the relevant definitions given in ISO/IEC Guide 2 and ISO 9000 apply, together with the following definitions:

1.1 Amendment to a system

Any alteration of the wording of a **system documentation** of:

- a) an **endorsed system**
- b) an **applicant system** which was submitted for assessment.

1.2 Applicant system

- a) a national or subnational **forest certification system** submitted for assessment against PEFC requirements by, or on behalf of, the relevant NGB.
- b) a regional, i.e., supranational, **forest certification system** submitted for assessment against PEFC requirements by, or on behalf of, the NGB of the country where the PEFC authorised body responsible for the system's administration is located.

1.3 Editorial changes

Changes to a system that do not alter the technical content.

Note: This can include clarifications, guidance and grammatical changes.

1.4 Endorsed system

An **applicant system** that received **endorsement and mutual recognition** from the PEFC Council.

1.5 Endorsement and mutual recognition

The endorsement of a system means that the members of the PEFC Council have determined that the system meets the requirements of the PEFC Council. The endorsement procedure ensures that the members vote on each other's system. Therefore the members of the PEFC Council recognise each other's systems under the PEFC Council mutual recognition umbrella.

1.6 Forest certification system

The set of standards and related procedures necessary to carry out forest certification activities.

Note: A forest certification system consists of one or more forest management standards, a chain of custody standard and all other standards and documents necessary to carry out certification activities such as certification and accreditation procedures, standard development requirements etc.

1.7 National Governing Body

The National Governing Body (NGB) member of the PEFC Council.

1.8 PEFC Sustainability Benchmark

The PEFC Council standards and documents including the requirements, with which an **applicant system** seeking **endorsement and mutual recognition** needs to comply.

1.9 Review date

The date by which the **review of a system** shall have started (see PEFC ST 1001, Chapter 8). The review date is five years from the approval date included in the forest management standard of the **endorsed system**.

1.10 Review of a system

The activity of identifying whether a system meets the demands and requirements of the system owner, stakeholders, customers etc. The review of a system can result in a **revision of a system**.

1.11 Revision of a system

An **amendment to a system** following a **review of a system**.

1.12 System documentation

The technical documents of an **applicant system** or an **endorsed system**, relevant for PEFC assessment and endorsement.

4. Principles of the endorsement and mutual recognition process

The process is governed by the following basic principles:

- a) The PEFC Council Standards, setting out the requirements for regional, national or sub-national systems, are transparent and widely communicated.
- b) The application for **endorsement and mutual recognition** is made by, or on behalf of, a NGB.
- c) The **endorsement and mutual recognition** of **applicant systems** and standards relies on their independent assessment.
- d) The assessment process is transparent and consultative.
- e) Assessment results and the assessment reports are made publicly available by the PEFC Council.

5. PEFC Sustainability Benchmark

The objective of the endorsement process is to determine whether an **applicant system** meets the **PEFC Sustainability Benchmark**. The **applicant system**, submitted for PEFC Council **endorsement and mutual recognition** shall demonstrate conformance with the following PEFC requirements:

- a) The content of the (regional, national or sub-national) forest management certification standard(s) shall meet the requirements of PEFC ST 1003, *Sustainable Forest Management – Requirements*.
- b) Standard setting procedures and the standard setting process that was carried out shall meet the requirements of PEFC ST 1001, *Standard Setting – Requirements*.
- c) Where group certification of forest management is part of the system, the group certification model shall meet the requirements of PEFC ST 1002, *Group Forest Management Certification – Requirements*.
- d) Any system specific chain of custody standard(s) shall meet the requirements of PEFC ST 2002, *Chain of Custody of Forest Based Products – Requirements*.
- e) The system's administrative procedures shall meet the following requirements:
 - i. for notification of certification bodies: PEFC GD 1004, *Administration of PEFC scheme*, chapter 5
 - ii. for PEFC logo licensing: PEFC GD 1004, *Administration of PEFC scheme*, chapter 6
 - iii. for complaints and dispute resolution: PEFC GD 1004, *Administration of PEFC scheme*, chapter 8
- f) The procedures for certification and accreditation shall meet the requirements of:
 - i. TD Annex 6 (PEFC ST 1004), *Certification and Accreditation Procedures, for forest management certification*
 - ii. PEFC ST 2003, *Requirements for Certification Bodies operating Certification against the PEFC International Chain of Custody Standard, for chain of custody certification*

The **endorsement and mutual recognition** of an **applicant system** is limited to those system documents that can be assessed against (a part of) the **PEFC Sustainability Benchmark**.

6. The assessment process

6.1. Steps in the assessment process

This chapter describes the steps of the assessment process. Figure 1 provides a chronological overview of a typical assessment process. The actual assessment scope and process depend on the nature of application submitted by the NGB and are specified for each assessment type in chapter 6.3.

Figure 1: (Estimated) Duration (in weeks) and order of the steps in assessment process.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Pre-check																						
International public consultation																						
Call for tenders																						
Assessor selection																						
Assessment contract																						
Assessment start*																						
Stakeholder survey																						
Draft report																						
Commenting period																						
Final Draft Report																						
Internal review																						
Final Report																						

* After payment of the assessment fee by the NGB Time defined in GD 1007 Time not defined in GD 1007

6.1.1. Roles and responsibilities

The different activities in the process are carried out by various actors. Table 1 describes the most important aspects of the roles/tasks of particular actors.

Table 1: Role / main tasks of actors in the endorsement process.

Actor	Description of the role / the main tasks
PEFC Council General Assembly	The PEFC Council's highest decision making authority is responsible for the first endorsement decision on applicant systems .
PEFC Council Board of Directors	Responsible for ensuring the assessment is sound and completed according to PEFC requirements, and that the recommendations are logical and consistent. On being satisfied, makes a recommendation to the General Assembly with regard to the first endorsement of an applicant system . Responsible for the decision on suspension or termination of the endorsement of an endorsed system .
PEFC Council Secretary General	Responsible for confirming that the NGB has met the milestones in order to keep their endorsement.
National Governing Body	Preparation of the applicant system documentation . Application for endorsement. Ensuring the endorsed system remains in compliance with the PEFC Sustainability Benchmark .
PEFC Registered Assessor	Solely responsible for the independent assessment of the system with regard to the compliance with the PEFC Sustainability Benchmark . Making a recommendation to the PEFC Council Board of Directors concerning the endorsement of a system.
PEFC Council Secretariat	Coordination of the involved actors. Managing the international consultation including the invitation of stakeholder to provide comments. Quality assurance of the overall endorsement process. Training of the PEFC Registered Assessors. Evaluation and verification of (evidence demonstrating) compliance with the endorsement milestones.
Stakeholders	Stakeholders have the opportunity to provide comments on the applicant system during the 60-day international consultation. Stakeholders involved in the development of the applicant system are encouraged to respond to the assessor's "stakeholder involvement survey".

6.1.2. Scope

The assessment may consist of the following elements:

- a) A general analysis of the structure of the **applicant system**
- b) An assessment of the standard setting procedures against PEFC ST 1001, *Standard Setting – Requirements*
- c) An assessment of the standard setting process, including a stakeholder survey, against PEFC ST 1001, *Standard Setting – Requirements*
- d) An assessment of the forest certification standard(s) against PEFC ST 1003, *Sustainable Forest Management – Requirements*
- e) An assessment of the group certification model against PEFC ST 1002, *Group Forest Management Certification – Requirements*
- f) An assessment of any system specific chain of custody standard(s) against PEFC ST 2002, *Chain of Custody of Forest Based Products – Requirements*
- g) An assessment of the procedures for notification of certification bodies against PEFC GD 1004, *Administration of the PEFC scheme*, chapter 5
- h) An assessment of the procedures for logo licensing against PEFC GD 1004, *Administration of PEFC scheme*, chapter 6
- i) An assessment of the complaints and dispute resolution procedures against PEFC GD1004, *Administration of PEFC scheme*, chapter 8
- j) An assessment of the forest management certification and accreditation procedures against TD Annex 6 (Certification and Accreditation Procedures)
- k) An assessment of the chain of custody certification and accreditation procedures against PEFC ST 2003, *Requirements for Certification Bodies operating Certification against the PEFC International Chain of Custody Standard*
- l) Any other aspects affecting the applicant system's compliance with the **PEFC Sustainability Benchmark**.

The assessment does not cover any other documents from the **applicant system** for which no PEFC benchmark exists.

6.1.3. Application

The application for the **endorsement and mutual recognition** of the **applicant system** shall be submitted to the PEFC Council Secretariat in electronic format, and shall include the English translations of the following documents if applicable (see Chapter 6.3):

- a) Written request for assessment from the NGB. In case of a regional **applicant system** proof of support from the NGB of any other country where the system is operating.
- b) System description.
- c) Standard setting procedures.

- d) Development report, including:
 - i. A summary of the standard setting process with timetable.
 - ii. List of stakeholders identified in the stakeholder mapping (contact details, preferably email addresses, shall be available to the assessor).
 - iii. Information on the announcement of the process and the invitation to stakeholders.
 - iv. Synopsis of comments from the public consultation(s).
 - v. Evidence on the consensus, including a summary of presented oppositions and their resolution.
 - vi. A summary of major changes and justification (for revised standards).
- e) Certification criteria for forest certification (Forest Management Standard(s) and related documents).
- f) Group certification model description.
- g) Requirements for chain of custody certification (chain of custody standard).
- h) Administrative procedures concerning:
 - i. PEFC logo licence issuance
 - ii. notification of certification bodies
 - iii. dealing with complaints
- i) Description of certification and accreditation procedures with relevant references to international standards defining the competence requirements for auditors and certification bodies.
- j) Completed PEFC Standard and System Requirements Checklist.

Note: For an efficient assessment, the NGB should also consider providing other relevant minutes, contracts, etc. verifying information in the **system documentation**. These records can be submitted in the native language. The assessor can request translations of specific parts of records necessary for the assessment decision.

6.1.4. Acceptance of an application

Once an application has been received, the PEFC Council Secretariat shall check the application for completeness and verify whether the NGB's membership is financially in good standing, before accepting the application.

6.1.5. International consultation

Once an application has been accepted, PEFC Council Secretariat will start an international consultation.

The start of the consultation is announced on the PEFC Council's website.

The minimum time for the international consultation is 60 days.

At the start of the consultation the PEFC Council Secretariat shall organise a webinar in which the NGB will present the **applicant system**. This webinar shall include at least a summary of the standard setting process, the general system structure and functioning and an overview of the major changes in case of a revision.

The PEFC Council Secretariat encourages all **National Governing Bodies**, other national and international stakeholders with an interest, to provide comments to the assessors on the **applicant system**.

PEFC Council Secretariat's current stakeholder map (including all stakeholders in the PEFC system) shall also be used to directly invite participation in the consultation.

The assessor shall report on the participation of stakeholders in the consultation.

The results of the international consultation shall be evaluated by the assessor carrying out the assessment, and their consideration included in the final assessment report.

6.1.6. Stakeholder involvement survey

As part of the assessment of the standard setting process, the assessor shall conduct a stakeholder survey to check the basic contents of the development report about the involvement of stakeholders in the standard setting process.

The survey shall be sent to all stakeholders who participated in the standard development process and at least a representative number of stakeholders from stakeholder groups identified in the stakeholder mapping by the standardising body.

6.1.7. Preparation of the Draft Report

The input for the preparation of the Draft Report consists of the submitted **system documentation** and the comments and/or feedback from the international consultation and stakeholder involvement survey.

Based on the input the assessor shall determine the compliance of the **applicant system** with the requirements of the **PEFC Sustainability Benchmark**, providing clear assessment decisions against all applicable requirements.

The development of the Draft Report should not exceed a period of 5 weeks and the structure of the report shall follow the structure as described in appendix 2.

The Draft Report shall be forwarded to the NGB and the PEFC Council Secretariat.

6.1.8. Comments and amendments by the NGB

Based on the Draft Report the NGB can provide additional information and comments. The NGB can also make necessary changes to the **applicant system documentation** during the assessment process if these changes do not affect the time scale of the assessment. If more time is necessary, the NGB can request an interruption as outlined in clause 6.1.13.

The PEFC Council Secretariat can also provide comments to the assessor and the applicant within the comment period.

The comment period should not exceed three weeks, with any variation subject to agreement between the NGB, the PEFC Council Secretariat and the assessor.

If the Final Draft Report or Final Report contains new nonconformities not presented in the Draft Report, the NGB shall have opportunity to provide additional comments and evidence. The PEFC Council Secretariat will notify the NGB and agree on a timeline for commenting.

6.1.9. Field Assessment

A visit to the system's region of operation to gather information about the **applicant system** and interview the NGB, and relevant stakeholders, shall be required in the case of the initial assessment of a system. In other assessments, a field assessment can be requested by the NGB or the PEFC Council Secretariat, or recommended by the assessor in the tender proposal.

The PEFC Council Secretariat shall decide on including a field assessment in assessments other than initial assessments.

Note: The field assessment should take place during the comment period (see 6.1.8)

6.1.10. Preparation of the Final Draft Report

The Draft Report shall be developed into a Final Draft Report.

The input for the preparation of the Final Draft Report consists of evidence, comments or clarification received from the NGB, the findings from the field assessment and any comments from the PEFC Council Secretariat.

Based on the input the assessor shall review the assessment decisions in the Draft Report and include any revised assessment decisions in the Final Draft Report

The development of the Final Draft Report should not exceed a period of three weeks. The Final Draft Report follows the structure described in Appendix 2.

The Final Draft Report shall be forwarded to the PEFC Council Secretariat.

The PEFC Council Secretariat shall forward the Final Draft Report to the NGB.

6.1.11. Internal Review

The PEFC Council Secretariat shall review the Final Draft Report for quality assurance. The internal review period should not exceed two weeks.

6.1.12. Preparation of the Final Report

The Final Draft Report shall be developed into a Final Report.

The input for the preparation of the Final Report consists of the comments from the internal review. The assessor shall respond to the comments from the internal review by clarifying the issue in question or revising the report accordingly. The assessor shall include the comments of the internal review and the responses in an appendix to the assessment report that will be publicly available when the report is published.

The preparation of the Final Report should not exceed a period of two weeks. The Final Report follows the structure described in Appendix 2.

The Final Report shall be forwarded to the PEFC Council Secretariat.

The PEFC Council Secretariat shall forward the Final Report to the NGB.

6.1.13. Interruption of the assessment process

On request of the NGB, or by its own decision, the PEFC Council Secretariat can interrupt the assessment process.

The assessment process can be interrupted after the submission of the Draft Report or the Final Draft Report. It allows the NGB to make necessary changes to the **system documentation** or to submit additional evidence in cases where this would significantly affect the time scale of the assessment process

The assessment process can continue after a confirmation by the PEFC Council Secretariat based on submission of the revised documents and/or other evidence.

Upon receipt of revised documents and/or other evidence, the assessor may determine the additional assessment time required for the consideration of the documentation.

Any additional assessment fee resulting from the interruption shall be agreed upon by the PEFC Council Secretariat and the assessor and shall be covered by the NGB.



6.2. General assessment elements

6.2.1. PEFC Registered Assessors

Assessments shall be carried out by an independent, PEFC Registered Assessor. Procedures for the selection and appointment of an assessor are described in Appendix 1.

Note: An evaluation of **editorial changes** is carried out by the PEFC Council Secretariat.

6.2.2. Assessment decisions

The independent assessor checks the available documentation of the **applicant system** against the applicable requirements of the **PEFC Sustainability Benchmark** and makes an assessment decision against each requirement. The assessor can make three different decisions:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Major nonconformity: | The nonconformity against a specific PEFC requirement has a high impact on achieving the intended outcome of the PEFC Sustainability Benchmark . |
| Minor nonconformity: | The nonconformity against a specific PEFC requirement has a low impact on achieving the intended outcome of the PEFC Sustainability Benchmark . |
| Conformity: | A procedure described by the system documentation fully meets the particular requirement of the PEFC Sustainability Benchmark . |

All assessment decisions shall be clearly justified.

Note: An assessment decision is based on the intended outcome of the applicable document from the **PEFC Sustainability Benchmark**. For example, achieving balanced representation in standard setting (ST 1001), or carrying out independent and impartial conformity assessment (ST 2003).

6.2.3. Recommendation by the assessor

The final result of an assessment is the assessor's recommendation whether to endorse, or maintain the endorsement of, the **applicant system**.

The endorsement recommendation can include conditions for endorsement. Such conditions shall be clear with regard to content and date for implementation (whether before or subsequent to endorsement).

Depending on the type of nonconformity, the following conditions apply:

- a) A major nonconformity does not allow endorsement and shall be corrected before the endorsement of the system.
- b) For a minor nonconformity, the assessor recommends appropriate corrective action. A minor nonconformity should be corrected within 6 months. The assessor may recommend a longer period where justified by particular circumstances.
- c) Multiple minor nonconformities can result in a recommendation that minor nonconformities shall be corrected before the endorsement of the **applicant system**.

6.3. Types of assessment

The scope and process of the assessment depends on the nature of the application submitted by the NGB. The steps of the assessment process are described in detail in chapter 6.1. There are five different assessment types:

1. Assessment of a new system (Chapter 6.3.1)
2. Assessment of a revised system (Chapter 6.3.2)
3. Assessment of a reaffirmed system (Chapter 6.3.3)
4. Assessment of amendments (Chapter 6.3.4)
5. Evaluation of **editorial changes** (Chapter 6.3.5)

Based on the nature of the application the PEFC Council Secretariat determines the applicable assessment type.

The following chapters 6.3.1 – 6.3.5 explain the general process and specific scope and application requirements for each assessment type. Table 2 further specifies which steps of the assessment process of chapter 6.1 are applicable for each assessment type.

Table 2: Applicable steps in the assessment process for each assessment type.

	New System	Revised System	Reaffirmed System	Amendments	Editorial Changes
Pre-check	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
International consultation	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Stakeholder survey	Yes	Yes	Yes	If applicable	No
Draft Report	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Comment period	Yes	Yes	Two weeks	Two weeks	No
Field assessment	Yes	If requested	No	No	No
Final Draft Report	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Internal Review	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Final Report	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Interruptions	Yes	Yes	No	No	No

6.3.1. Assessment of a new system

This assessment type applies to an **applicant system** or (new) standard submitted for a first endorsement. It is considered as a “full assessment” and it includes the all items of the assessment scope and all elements of the assessment process.

Scope

The assessment includes all elements of clause 6.1.2.

Application

The application includes all elements of clause 6.1.3.

6.3.2. Assessment of a revised system

This assessment type applies to **applicant systems** that have been revised as a result of the periodic review (see PEFC ST 1001, Chapter 8, 9). In case the scope of the system was extended with a new standard, the new standard shall be assessed following the assessment of a new system (see 6.3.1).

This assessment can be limited to an assessment of the changes, rather than assessing the **applicant system** against the full **PEFC Sustainability Benchmark**. In that case, for the other parts of the documentation, the comparison with the previously **endorsed system** will confirm the absence of any non-reported changes.

Scope

There are two options for the assessment of a revised system:

1. An assessment against the full benchmark, including all elements of clause 6.1.2.
2. An assessment of the changes introduced in the revision of the application, consisting of:
 - An assessment of changes in the revised **applicant system** against the applicable parts of the **PEFC Sustainability Benchmark** as described in 6.1.2

With additionally,

- An assessment against specific (official PEFC interpretations of) requirements of the **PEFC Sustainability Benchmark** introduced after the previous assessment if applicable.
- A comparison of all submitted documents with the previously endorsed version to exclude non-reported changes.

The NGB may apply for an assessment against the full benchmark or an assessment of changes. The PEFC Council Secretary General can decide, in specific cases, that the assessment is carried out against specific parts of the **PEFC Sustainability Benchmark** and not limited to an assessment of changes.

Application

The application includes all elements of clause 6.1.3.

In case of an assessment of changes, for each revised document a version with marked changes compared to the previously endorsed version shall be included. The changes shall be highlighted in the PEFC Standard and System Requirements Checklist.

6.3.3. Assessment of a reaffirmed system

This assessment type applies to **applicant systems** that have been reaffirmed (i.e., no changes in the **system documentation**) as a result of the periodic review (PEFC ST 1001, Chapter 8).

The reaffirmed system shall be submitted by the NGB for assessment.

This assessment is focused on the assessment of the review process (development report) as no changes were made to the **applicant system**. An important element is the comparison of the reaffirmed system documents with the previously **endorsed system**. This comparison has the purpose to confirm that there are no changes, and it will identify any changes that were not reported.

Scope

The assessment of a reaffirmed system includes:

- a) An assessment of the development report and standard review process (see 6.1.2, c)

With additionally:

- b) An assessment against specific (interpretations of) requirements of the **PEFC Sustainability Benchmark** introduced after the previous assessment
- c) A comparison of all submitted documents with the previously endorsed version to identify non-reported changes

Application

The application includes all elements of clause 6.1.3.

6.3.4. Assessment of amendments

This type of assessment applies to the following situations occurring between periodic reviews:

- a) Revisions resulting from a system specific review.
- b) Evidence/revisions to comply with changes in the **PEFC Sustainability Benchmark**.

The revised standards or documents shall be submitted by the NGB for assessment.

Note: “between periodic reviews” also includes the period between the first publication of a new standard and the first required periodic review.

Scope

The assessment of amendments includes:

- a) An assessment of amendments and/or a verification of specific system documents against the applicable elements of clause 6.1.2.
- b) If applicable, an assessment of the standard setting process (according to the applicant systems procedures for amendments).

Application

The application includes all amended documents in both a clean version and a version with marked changes.

In case of an assessment of changes in the **PEFC Sustainability Benchmark** the PEFC Council Board of Directors will determine specific assessment procedures using the applicable elements of the assessment process.

6.3.5. Evaluation of editorial changes

This assessment type applies to **editorial changes** in the **applicant system**. The NGB shall submit the changed or amended documentation to the PEFC Council Secretariat.

The PEFC Council Secretariat will assess the documentation against the PEFC requirements and determine whether the changes are **editorial changes** or amendments.

Where the PEFC Council Secretariat is of the opinion that the changes do not have editorial character but amend or change the meaning of existing standards and procedures, the changes will be assessed according to the “assessment of amendments” (see 6.3.4).

Scope

The evaluation of **editorial changes** includes:

- a) A verification of the nature of the change (editorial or amendment)
- b) A verification of **editorial changes**

Application

The application includes all changed documents in both a clean version and a version with marked changes.

7. The endorsement

7.1. General

After finalising the assessment of an **applicant system**, based on a first application for endorsement, the **applicant system** can be endorsed by the PEFC Council. The endorsement is subject to compliance with the requirements for standard setting and ongoing compliance with the **PEFC Sustainability Benchmark**. Non-compliance with these conditions results in the suspension or termination of the endorsement.

7.2. Endorsement decision

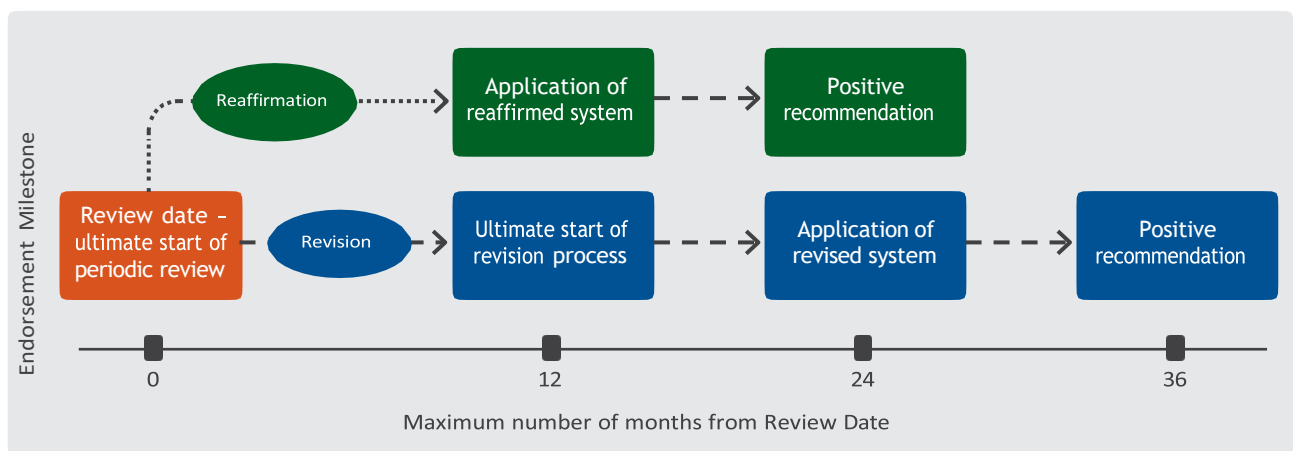
Based on the result of the external assessment and the recommendation by the assessor, the PEFC Board of Directors recommends the endorsement of the system to the PEFC General Assembly. The PEFC General Assembly decides on the endorsement following the PEFC Council Statutes.

If the vote is negative, the NGB can make an appeal to the PEFC Council Board of Directors to have the system reconsidered at the next General Assembly.

7.3. Maintaining the endorsement

After being endorsed, the NGB shall keep the **endorsed system** in conformance with the **PEFC Sustainability Benchmark**. There are several endorsement milestones that the NGB shall meet to keep the endorsement. The milestones are specific dates and relate to the **review date**, see Figure 2.

Figure 2: The relation of the review date with the endorsement milestones



The PEFC Council Secretariat shall inform the NGB on the deadlines of applicable milestones without delay.

7.3.1. Endorsement milestones

7.3.1.1. Periodic review

Providing evidence of the start of the periodic review: At the latest by the **review date**, the NGB shall have started the periodic review. As proof the NGB shall provide evidence that the public announcement was made.

Note: The NGB or standardising body may decide to directly start a revision process by the date of the periodic review.

7.3.1.2. Reaffirmed System

- a) Submitting the reaffirmed system: If the periodic review results in the reaffirmation of the system, the NGB shall submit the reaffirmed system for assessment within 12 months after the **review date**.
- b) Positive recommendation within 24 months after the **review date**.

7.3.1.3. Revised System

- a) Providing evidence of the start of a revision process: If the periodic review results in the start of a revision process, the NGB shall provide proof of evidence for having started the revision process within 12 months after the **review date** (the evidence is the public announcement of the process).
- b) Submitting the revised system: the NGB shall submit the **applicant system** for assessment within 24 months after the **review date**.
- c) Positive recommendation within 36 months after the **review date**.

7.3.1.4. Amendments and editorial changes

Provision of any amendments and/or **editorial changes** in the **system documentation** (between periodic reviews) without delay after approval by the NGB/standardising body and at least 4 weeks before putting into force of the document on national level.

7.3.2. Evaluation of endorsement milestones

The evidence is assessed by the PEFC Council Secretariat and confirmed by the PEFC Council Secretary General. For the assessment, the procedures in chapter 6 of this guide apply.

If an endorsement milestone is not met, the PEFC Council Secretary General shall initiate the suspension process.

7.3.3. Suspension process

While the endorsement remains valid during the suspension process, the **endorsed system** is in state of pending suspension. In case the NGB does not take appropriate action, it shall ultimately result in the suspension of the endorsement. The process consists of the following steps:

1. Reminder

The PEFC Council Secretariat may send the NGB a reminder about the upcoming expiry of an endorsement milestone. The reminder should be sent 20 working days before the expiry of the milestone.

2. Warning

When the endorsement milestone expired, the PEFC Council Secretariat shall send the NGB a formal written warning, requesting a response from the NGB within 10 working days.

3. Suspension

If the NGB did not take appropriate action within the specified time, the PEFC Council Secretary General confirms the non-compliance with the endorsement milestones. The suspension of the endorsement shall take effect as of the date of confirmation by the PEFC Council Secretary General.

7.4. Suspension and termination of endorsement

The PEFC Council Board of Directors can either suspend (with immediate effect) and/ or terminate (with three months prior notice) the endorsement of (parts of) the system on behalf of the PEFC Council if evidence exists that the system or the relevant NGB is not complying with the PEFC Council requirements, rules and procedures and the violation continues after a written warning has been issued by the Board of Directors.

The suspension of the system's endorsement will result in certificates issued against the system after the date of suspension not being considered as PEFC recognised.

The termination of the system's endorsement will result in certificates issued against the system not being considered as PEFC recognised. To regain endorsement an endorsement decision by the PEFC Council General Assembly is required following an assessment of a new system (see 6.3.1).

7.5. Transition of revised applicant system

An **applicant system** is not covered by **endorsement and mutual recognition** until a positive endorsement decision has been made. This also applies to revised systems/standards. In some situations, the application date (see PEFC ST 1001, 9.4) of the revised system lays before the finalisation of the assessment process. To allow the transition from the currently **endorsed system** to the revised system in the region/country where it is implemented, the revised system may be covered by a temporary endorsement under the following conditions:

1. The NGB shall apply for the temporary endorsement by submitting a written request to the PEFC Council Secretariat.
2. The NGB shall submit the request at the latest one month before the application date of the revised forest management standard.
3. The request for temporary endorsement includes an overview of all changes, including a self-assessment how these changes affect compliance with the **PEFC Sustainability Benchmark**.
4. The application for the assessment of the revised system is submitted in accordance with the endorsement milestone (see 7.3.1.3)

Based on the submitted overview of changes and the self-assessment, the PEFC Council Secretary General decides on granting the temporary endorsement to the revised system/standard until the assessment process for the revised system has been finalised. The temporary endorsement should not exceed a period of one year.

The PEFC Secretary General decision shall be communicated to the PEFC Council members and published on the PEFC Council web page.

7.6. Communication of the endorsement decision

Endorsement decisions shall be communicated to the PEFC Council members and announced and published on the PEFC Council web page. The information on the PEFC web page shall include at least:

- a) The endorsement decision including a brief scope listing the applicant system's documents and standards that are covered by the endorsement and clearly listing the ones that are not covered.
- b) The Final Report from the assessor
- c) The complete documentation of the **endorsed system** (the final versions of all documents shall be delivered by the NGB after endorsement)
- d) The next **review date**

7.7. Complaints and appeals

The NGB that issues a complaint and/or appeal against decisions made by the PEFC Council Secretary General and/or Board of Directors, shall follow requirements of PEFC GL7/2007, *PEFC Council procedures for the investigation and resolution of complaints and Appeals*.

Appendix 1: Appointment of independent PEFC Registered Assessors

1. Introduction

The objective of this Informative Guide is to provide procedures governing the appointment and work of the independent assessors assessing the systems within the process of the **endorsement and mutual recognition of forest certification systems**.

2. Role and tasks of independent assessors

The assessment of the **applicant system** as described in chapter 6 of guide 1007 is carried out by an independent assessor. The assessor has to carry out all necessary activities to cover the scope of the assessment as described in chapter 6.

3. Independent assessors register

The PEFC Council Secretariat maintains a register of PEFC Registered Assessors, which forms the basis for the appointment of the assessor for a specific task. The register consists of assessors who are registered by the PEFC Council Secretariat, as meeting the qualification and/or expertise in the following categories:

- a) Experience within the forestry sector, on criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, chain of custody, certification, accreditation and auditing.
- b) Competence on the PEFC framework and assessment of certification standards and systems.
- c) Methodological know-how (criteria, standard setting, implementation arrangements, chain of custody, accreditation), data collection, verification procedure, a variety of other methods and their relevance in the assessment process.
- d) Participation in the PEFC Registered Assessor Training. Information on the PEFC Registered Assessors is publicly available.

4. Appointment of assessors

4.1. Tender selection

4.1.1. Assessment of new and revised systems

The PEFC Council Secretariat will issue an invitation to tender after accepting the application for **endorsement and mutual recognition**.

Upon receipt of the invitation to tender, the assessor shall confirm within one week (five working days) whether they will submit a tender proposal.

The assessor shall submit their proposal within three weeks after receiving the invitation to tender. The PEFC Council Secretariat will appoint the assessor after having considered the tender proposals.

4.1.2. Assessment of amendments

In case of an assessment of amendments, if not required otherwise by the PEFC Council Board of Directors, the PEFC Council Secretariat may appoint the assessor directly without starting a tender process.

4.2. Tender selection

The PEFC Council Secretariat will base the selection of assessors on the consideration of:

- a) The quality of the tender proposal in terms of:
 - i. company experience,
 - ii. the assessment team
 - iii. the proposed scope and method of work
- b) The proposed assessment fee

The PEFC Council Secretariat can also take into account feedback from the NGB of the **applicant system** on a specific assessor.

4.2.1. Tender quality

The qualities of tenders are defined as follows:

- a) **Experience:** within forestry sector, on criteria and indicators for SFM, certification and auditing. Knowledge of the regional/national context would be desirable.
- b) **Assessment team:** specific competence of team members on the PEFC framework and assessment of certification standards and systems.
- c) **Scope and method of work:** Scope of the assessment (criteria, standard setting, implementation arrangements, chain of custody, accreditation), data collection, verification procedure, a variety of other methods and their relevance in the assessment.

4.2.2. Tender eligibility

Minimum requirements for any eligible tender are the following:

- a) **Language:** language skills of team members in view of the language skills needed in the assessment. English is always the reporting language.
- b) **Impartiality:** conflicts of interests, vested interests, etc. Any indication of a conflict of interest would lead to exclusion of the tender.

A basic requirement to ensure impartiality is that the assessor is from a country other than the **applicant system**. If the assessor has acted as advisor in the design of the **applicant system**, she/he would not qualify for its assessment.

- c) **Other:** the relevance and implications of other restrictions are assessed on a case-by-case basis on the views of the applicant and the PEFC Council Secretariat. Contextual understanding can be an advantage.

Appendix 2: The assessment report

1. Introduction

This document provides guidance on the scope and minimum elements of the reports on the assessment of **forest certification systems** to ensure a threshold level of report quality is achieved.

This Appendix is part of the contractual agreements with the appointed independent assessors.

2. Elements of the assessment report

2.1. Overview about the structure

1. Introduction
2. Recommendation
3. Summary of the findings
4. Structure of the system of the proposed **applicant system**
5. Standard setting procedures
6. Standard setting process
7. Forest Management Standard
8. Group Certification Model
9. Chain of Custody standard
10. Procedures for logo licensing
11. Certification and accreditation arrangements
12. Detailed assessment of the complaints and dispute resolution procedures
13. Annexes
 - a. PEFC Standard and System Requirements Checklist
 - b. Results of stakeholder involvement survey
 - c. Results of international consultation
 - d. Internal review comments
 - e. Report on the field assessment
 - f. Any other relevant information

The main body of the assessment report (items 5 - 12 above, or 2.2.5 - 2.2.12 below) shall describe for each applicable item the basic strengths and weaknesses and important requirements. Nonconformities shall be explained in detail.

The PEFC Standard and System Requirements Checklist shall include the full assessment results including clear justification for each assessment decision.

2.2. Contents in detail

2.2.1. Introduction

The report shall include a description of the scope of assessment (including the system documents covered by the assessment and the type of assessment according to Chapter 6.4), assessment processes, the methodology adopted, a time table of the assessment, a list of all reference documents and other material and their sources used in the assessment as well as the list of personnel involved in the assessment process.

2.2.2. Recommendation to the PEFC Council Board of Directors

The report shall include an explicit statement on the system's compliance or non-compliance with the PEFC Council requirements together with the assessor's recommendation whether to, in the assessor's independent opinion, endorse, or maintain the endorsement of, the **applicant system**.

The recommendation shall include a list of all identified nonconformities.

2.2.3. Summary of the findings

A summary of the report shall include a summary of the assessment findings with an explicit statement of the overall system compliance or non-compliance(s) with the PEFC Council requirements, and separate statements of compliance for the following applicable parts of the assessment scope:

- a) Structure of the system of the proposed **applicant system** (i.e., national PEFC **forest certification system**).
- b) Standard setting procedures and process (PEFC ST 1001, *Standard Setting – Requirements*)
- c) Forest certification standard(s) (PEFC ST 1003, *Sustainable Forest Management – Requirements*).
- d) Group certification model (PEFC ST 1002, *Group Forest Management Certification – Requirements*)
- e) Chain of custody standard(s) (PEFC ST 2002, *Chain of Custody of Forest Based Products – Requirements*)
- f) Logo Usage
- g) Complaints and dispute resolution procedures (PEFC GD1004, Administration of PEFC scheme, chapter 8)
- h) Forest management certification and accreditation procedures (Annex 6 of the PEFC Technical Document)
- i) Chain of Custody certification and accreditation procedures (PEFC ST 2003, *Requirements for Certification Bodies operating Certification against the PEFC International Chain of Custody Standard*)
- j) Any other aspects which can affect the applicant system's compliance with the **PEFC Sustainability Benchmark** (e.g., critical information from stakeholder consultation, survey and other annexes).

For any non-compliance whether major or minor, the consequences for the recommendation to the Board of Directors have to be explained.

2.2.4. General analysis of the structure of the applicant system

The report shall contain a summary of organisations and their functions in the assessed system.

In case of a revised system the summary shall also contain an overview of the major changes and improvements (based on the information provided in the application).

2.2.5. Detailed assessment of the standard setting procedures against PEFC ST 1001, Standard Setting – Requirements

The report shall contain a detailed assessment of the standard setting procedures compliance or non-compliance with the PEFC Council requirements as set out in PEFC ST 1001.

2.2.6. Detailed assessment of the standard setting process against PEFC ST 1001, Standard Setting – Requirements

The report shall contain a detailed assessment of the forest management and, if relevant, chain of custody standard setting processes together with evidence, including the results from the stakeholder survey, of compliance or non-compliance(s) of the standard setting process with the PEFC Council requirements as set out in PEFC ST 1001.

2.2.7. Detailed assessment of the forest certification standard(s) against PEFC ST 1003, Sustainable Forest Management – Requirements.

The report shall include a short description of the structure of a forest management standard(s) and detailed description, including the assessor's findings and evidence on the compliance of the standard(s).

2.2.8. Detailed assessment of the group certification model against PEFC ST 1002, Group Forest Management Certification – Requirements

The report shall include a short description of the group certification model including the assessor's findings and evidence on the compliance of the standard(s).

2.2.9. Detailed assessment of the chain of custody standard(s) against PEFC ST 2002, Chain of Custody of Forest Based Products – Requirements

The report shall include a short description of the structure of the chain of custody standard and a detailed description of, including assessor's findings and evidences of the compliance or non-compliance with PEFC ST 2002.

2.2.10. Detailed assessment of the logo licensing procedures against PEFC GD 1004, Administration of PEFC scheme, chapter 6

The report shall include a short description of the procedures for logo licensing of the **National Governing Bodies** (for the PEFC Logo only) including structure and level of logo usage fees if applied.

2.2.11. Detailed assessment of certification and accreditation procedures, as defined in Annex 6 (Certification and Accreditation Procedures)

The report shall include a short description of the organisations and their functions involved in accreditation. The report shall provide a short description of a developed accreditation model and the usage of ISO Guides and other ISO normative and system specific documents. The report shall provide findings and evidence of the compliance or non-compliance with Annex 6.

2.2.12. Detailed assessment of the complaints and dispute resolution procedures against PEFC GD1004, Administration of PEFC scheme, chapter 8

The report shall include a short description of the complaints and dispute resolution procedures provide findings and evidence of the compliance or non-compliance with the requirements in PEFC GD1004, *Administration of PEFC scheme*, chapter 8.

2.2.13. Annexes

PEFC Standard and System Requirements Checklist

The report shall include the PEFC Council Standard Requirements Checklist, which provide the assessor's explicit statement on the system compliance for all the questions (YES, NO, N/A), including clear justification of the assessment decisions. The checklist shall include the relevant quotes from the **system documentation** and references to the main part of the assessment report where major or minor non-compliances have been reported.

Note: Including (only) the relevant quotes from the **system documentation** together with a clear justification on the assessment decision ensures that the assessment report can be read and understood without the need to access the **system documentation** itself.

Results of stakeholder involvement survey

As part of the general analysis of the **applicant system** the assessor has to conduct a stakeholder survey to check the basic contents of the development report about the standard setting process.

The survey shall at least cover all stakeholders who participated in the standard development process and a representative number of stakeholders from stakeholder groups identified in the stakeholder mapping by the standardising body

The stakeholders covered, the questionnaire, results and the consequences with regard to the overall assessment decision shall be documented in an annex to the report. A list of considered stakeholders shall be included, taking into account confidentiality and the privacy of individuals.

Note: in case the assessor has identified additional stakeholders which are not listed in the stakeholder mapping, these can be added to the stakeholder survey.

Results of international consultation

The report shall include a list of all parties who submitted comments and summary of the comments made during the consultation period as well as a summary of assessor's responses to the submitted comments.

Internal review comments

The report shall contain the comments from the internal review as well as the assessor's responses.

Report on the field assessment

The report shall include a summary of the field visit undertaken including individuals and organisations interviewed and summary of issues and concerns covered.

Any other relevant information

If any additional information is necessary to as proof of evidence for the assessor's recommendation it should be added into one or several annexes.

Appendix 3: Regional Systems

1. Scope

This normative appendix defines the requirements for the establishment, endorsement, and management of Regional Systems along with its participating standards and participating **National Governing Bodies** (NGBs) within the PEFC framework. The Regional System framework is based on the PEFC principle that one NGB per country is established.

A PEFC Regional System is a cooperative framework established by two or more NGBs operating in countries that share comparable forestry legislation and objectives, similar tradition or emerging frameworks in forest management practice, regulatory contexts and are located in the same geographical area or region, upon PEFC Council approval. Within this framework, participating NGBs jointly develop, maintain, and manage selected components of their PEFC certification systems based on their mutual agreement.

Any reference to “SFM standard” within this appendix covers all documents developed by the NGBs and/or Regional Systems related to the PEFC ST 1003 benchmark standard (i.e., including TOF and plantations guidelines, where applicable).

Participation in a Regional System is voluntary. An NGB participating in a Regional System can, at any point, leave the Regional System and apply for the individual endorsement, according to GD 1007 requirements.

Roles and responsibilities set out in document GD 1007 are also valid and applicable within the context of Appendix 3.

2. Establishment of a Regional System

- 2.1. A Regional System may be proposed for endorsement to the PEFC Council by one or more NGBs interested in sharing documents and procedures, in line with the scope of this appendix.
- 2.2. A Regional System shall establish and maintain written procedures applicable to all participating NGBs covering, as a minimum, requirements of PEFC ST 1001:2017 *Standard Setting Requirements*, PEFC ST 1004:2024 *Requirements for CBs operating SFM*, and being in compliance with this appendix.
- 2.3. Within a Regional System, the participating NGBs shall collectively establish and document the SFM framework to be applied within the region. This may consist of:
 - a) a single common SFM standard applicable to all Regional System members, supported by individual and mandatory national implementation procedure(s); or
 - b) individual national SFM standards; or
 - c) a combination of both the approaches.
- 2.4. All the NGBs applying to be part of a Regional System shall adopt the PEFC International Chain of Custody standard and related rules for Certification Bodies.
- 2.5. The participating NGBs must sign a formal agreement covering as a minimum all the items of the Appendix 4 Template to this document. This agreement among NGBs participating in the Regional System is called the Regional System agreement.

- 2.6.** The establishment of a Regional System shall be notified to the PEFC Council, together with the list of participating NGBs and the signed agreement described in 2.2. PEFC Council Board of Directors approval shall be obtained prior to the official establishment of the Regional System.

3. Development of Regional System Documents

- 3.1.** The participating NGBs shall establish and document a committee responsible for developing and periodically reviewing all the regional documents.
- 3.2.** The regional and national standards, including national interpretation procedures, shall be developed in line with PEFC ST 1001 Standard Setting Requirements.

4. Endorsement assessment of Regional Systems

- 4.1.** The endorsement assessment of a Regional System shall follow all the applicable requirements described under section 6 of GD 1007.
- 4.2.** Where an SFM standard is applicable to more than one country member of the Regional System, it shall be supported by national implementation procedure(s) adapting or describing the requirements applicability at the national level. National implementation procedures shall be considered normative and be assessed as complementary elements to the Regional SFM standard(s) for endorsement.
- 4.3.** The endorsement milestones for shared and national developed documents shall be confirmed by PEFC at the time of application for endorsement.

5. Regional System management

- 5.1.** The responsibility for maintaining the shared documents, including monitoring and management of milestones and endorsement stages, shall be defined, and documented in the Regional System procedure (see also Appendix 4, clause 2 d).
- 5.2.** Participating NGBs are all equally responsible for the regular revision of the national standards and supporting documents (national implementation procedures), unless specified differently in the MoU of the regional scheme.

6. Modifications to existing Regional System scope

6.1. Adding a new NGB to an existing Regional System

- 6.1.1.** The Regional System agreement (2.2) shall specify when, how and under which circumstances and procedures an NGB may join the Regional System.

Note: The Regional System agreement cannot conflict with or reduce the PEFC eligibility requirements defined in PEFC GD 1007.

- 6.1.2.** When an NGB wants to join an existing Regional System, the following requirements apply:
- a) The requesting NGB shall already be established in the country and be an official PEFC member.
 - b) The NGB shall request from the Regional System existing members whether they would support the

- c) NGB's proposed admission. The outcome shall be documented (a letter or email is acceptable).
- d) If step b) above confirms the Regional System support, the NGB shall then submit a formal request to the PEFC Council asking for joining the Regional System. The request will be submitted to the PEFC Council Board of Directors. The PEFC Council reserves the right to interrupt or reject the application, upon justification.
- e) In case of a PEFC Council Board of Directors rejection, the rejected NGB may apply for the endorsement of an independent national system.
- f) If the PEFC Council Board of Directors approval is granted, the NGB can join the Regional System. The Regional System agreement (2.2) shall be updated to the new configuration and signed by all participants, including the new one. If the addition of the new NGB implies a need to amend any of the endorsed regional documents, the revised documents shall be submitted to PEFC Council for assessment.
- g) The NGB added to the Regional System shall then submit to the PEFC Council the set of documents developed at country level for assessment (e.g., SFM standard and / or national implementation procedure), according to paragraph 4 of this appendix.
- h) If the endorsement is recommended by the assessor, the endorsement decision shall be subject to the PEFC Board of Directors recommendation and PEFC GA approval for the first endorsement.

6.1.3. If the NGB added to the Regional System already had an endorsed SFM standard in place before joining the Regional System and wishes to keep it as a national standard within the Regional System, in case of PEFC acceptance (6.1.2 e)), the updated Regional System agreement shall also specify the effective date of the entering into force of the Regional System requirements in the country. Moreover, in this case, clause 6.1.2 g) does not apply. Instead, the re-endorsement of the national SFM standard under the Regional System can be confirmed by the PEFC Secretariat.

6.2. Removal or suspension of a NGB from a Regional System

6.2.1. The Regional System agreement (2.2) shall specify when, how and under which circumstances and procedures a NGB may leave or be removed from a Regional System.

Note: The Regional System Agreement cannot conflict with or reduce the PEFC eligibility requirements defined in PEFC GD 1007.

6.2.2. The PEFC Council's right to suspend or terminate the endorsement of a system or a standard part of a Regional System, as defined in GD 1007 clause 7.4, supersedes the provisions of the Regional System agreement.

6.2.3. The Regional System participating NGBs shall collectively notify the PEFC Council in case a NGB is requested or decide to leave the Regional System. The excluded/departing NGB may apply for independent endorsement, according to GD 1007 requirements and shall provide leaving and transition plan to the PEFC Council for approval.

6.3. Modifications of the geographical applicability of a Regional SFM standard

- 6.3.1.** This paragraph 6.3 applies to those Regional Systems where one SFM standard is deemed applicable to more than one country, supported by national interpretation procedures.
- 6.3.2.** The modification of the geographical scope of a shared SFM standard may happen when:
- a) a new member joins the Regional System and the shared SFM standard scope shall be extended to the new member; or
 - b) a member leaves the Regional System and the existing SFM standard scope shall stop being relevant to that member.
- 6.3.3.** The Regional System shall notify the PEFC Council and the Regional System members of the proposed geographical scope modification. It is mandatory to notify the PEFC Council at the early stage of the modification proposal, including a justification and the list of documents to be amended and/or developed.
- 6.3.4.** If the scope modification is due to an extension of applicability to a new Regional System member (6.3.2 a) **in between two revisions** of the shared SFM standard, then the joining member shall develop a national interpretation procedure following the steps described below. Such document will be subject to an assessment as described in paragraph 4:
- a) National stakeholder mapping.
 - b) Stakeholder invitation to nominate the members of the Working Group.
 - c) Creation of a balanced working group (according to the Regional standard setting procedures).
 - d) Development of the national implementation procedure to the Regional SFM standard.
 - e) Public consultation.
 - f) Final draft of the national implementation procedure to be approved by the Regional System committee.
- 6.3.5.** If the scope modification is due to an extension of applicability to a new Regional System member (6.3.2 a) **at the time of a regular revision** of the shared SFM standard, the national interpretation procedure for the joining member can be developed by the Regional Working group, as part of the shared SFM standard revision process.
- 6.3.6.** The modification of the geographical scope of a regional SFM standard cannot be considered completed until the PEFC Council confirms the completion of the process.

Appendix 4: Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) Template for Regional Systems

1. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) shall be established among all the members of a Regional System.
2. The minimum content of the MoU shall cover the following items:
 - a) **Scope of the Regional System:** This section shall list all the NGBs participating in the Regional System, their respective countries of operation, and the dates when they joined the Regional System (see also Appendix 3, clause 6.1.3). It shall also include a description of the establishment process and the justification for creating the Regional System.
 - b) **Governance structure of the Regional System:** this section shall describe the governance of the Regional System, including details of the appointed committee (see Appendix 3, clause 3.1).
 - c) **Regional System documents' structure:** this section shall describe the structure of the Regional System documents, including administrative documents, standards, guidance, national interpretation procedures (where applicable). Regarding the SFM standard/s, this section shall describe the approach used, according to Appendix 3 clause 2.3.
 - d) **Responsibilities of the signatories:** This section shall describe the responsibilities of the signatories including:
 - i. participation in the establishment and/or maintenance of the Regional System
 - ii. commitment to follow the Regional System requirements
 - iii. management and maintenance of Regional and National documents
 - iv. commitment to maintain the PEFC NGB status
 - e) **Rules for joining and leaving the Regional System:** this section shall describe when, how and under which circumstances and procedures a NGB may join or leave or be removed from the Regional System (see Appendix 3, clauses 6.1.1 and 6.2.1).
 - f) **Costs and fees:** This section shall describe how costs and fees for the maintenance of the Regional System and the due assessments (both of Regional and National documents) are managed within the Regional System.
 - g) **Complaint and dispute mechanism** to manage and resolve disputes related to the Regional System participation.
3. The MoU shall be signed by all the NGBs part of the Regional System.

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