



VIETNAM FOREST CERTIFICATION SCHEME

VFCS/PEFC ST 1002:2024

QUY TRÌNH XÂY DỰNG TIÊU CHUẨN CỦA HỆ THỐNG CHỨNG CHỈ RỪNG QUỐC GIA

*Procedures for standard setting
for the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme*

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The official version of this document is presented in Vietnamese. In case there is a discrepancy in the content of the translation into another language, the original in Vietnamese shall be the basis for comparison.

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Contents

Introduction	3
1 Scope	4
2 Normative references	4
3 Terms and definitions	4
4 Implementation of standard setting	6
4.1 Standardizing body	6
4.2 Working group	6
4.3 Drafting committee	6
5 Information documentation and management	7
5.1 General	7
5.2 Procedure for maintaining and providing documented information	7
6 Handling of complaints and appeals	7
6.1 General	7
6.2 Procedure for handling complaints and appeals	8
7 Standard-setting process	8
7.1 General	8
7.2 Sequence of activities	8
8 Procedures for periodic review of standards	15
8.1 General	15
8.2 Process	15
9 Revision of standard	16
9.1 Normal revision	16
9.2 Editorial revision	16
9.3 Time-critical revision	16
9.4 Application and transition of revised standards	16
10 Adoption of standards	16
Annex A (normative) Procedure for storage and provision of documented information	18
Annex B (normative) Procedure for handling complaints and appeals	20

Introduction

The implementation of the 2017 Law on Forestry led to the establishment of the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme (VFCS) to promote sustainable forest management and enhance legality, transparency and accountability in forest management, forest utilization, and forest product supply chains in Viet Nam.

VFCS was endorsed by the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) in 2020. The scheme operates through a set of standards, normative documents and guidance documents, which comprise three categories: (i) standards and normative documents governing the operation of the scheme; (ii) standards applicable to certification bodies; and (iii) standards and guidance for scheme users, including forest owners, wood processing enterprises and other relevant stakeholders.

To ensure that the development and review of VFCS standards comply with the requirements of PEFC ST 1001:2017, *Standard-setting – Requirements*, and the applicable legislation of Viet Nam, this document has been revised and supersedes VFCS/PEFC ST 1002:2019.

1 Scope

This document specifies the procedures for the development, review, revision and adoption of standards within the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme (VFCS).

This document does not apply to standards, regulatory documents or technical requirements issued by PEFC or under the management of PEFC International that the organization responsible for operating VFCS is authorized to implement, manage or apply in Vietnam.

NOTE: Standards managed by PEFC International and applied uniformly at the international level, e.g. the chain of custody standard, are not within the scope of development, review or revision under this regulation.

2 Normative references

The following cited documents are essential for the application of this document. For cited documents stating the year of publication, the cited version shall apply. For cited documents without the year of publication, the latest version, including amendments (if any) shall apply.

VFCS/PEFC ST 1001, *Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme – Description of the Scheme and Operation*

VFCS/PEFC ST 1010, *Procedure for the Resolution of Complaints and Appeals*

PEFC ST 1001:2017, *Standard-setting – Requirements*

PEFC ST 1007, *Endorsement and Mutual Recognition of National Systems and their Revision*

ISO/IEC Guide 2, *Standardization and related activities – General vocabulary*

TCVN 1-2, *Standard setting – Part 2: Rules for the drafting and presentation of national standards*

3 Terms and definitions

In addition to the definitions stated in this section, the terms and definitions given in ISO/IEC Guide 2 are applicable for the purposes of this document.

3.1 VFCS standards

Standards related to forests and non-forest trees are developed or accepted for application in the VFCS by the standardizing body (3.15).

3.2 Consensus

General agreement characterized by the absence of sustained opposition to substantial issues by any important part of the concerned interests and by a process that involves seeking to consider the views of all parties concerned and to reconcile any conflicting arguments.

NOTE: Consensus need not imply unanimity.

3.3 Editorial changes

Changes to a normative document that do not alter the technical content.

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

3.4 Enquiry draft

A proposed document that is available for public consultation.

3.5 Final draft

A proposed document that is available for formal approval.

3.6 Normative document

A document that provides rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results.

NOTE 1: The term “*normative document*” is a generic term that covers such documents as standards, technical specifications, codes of practice and regulations.

NOTE 2: “*A document*” is to be understood as any medium with information recorded on or in it.

NOTE 3: The terms for different kinds of normative documents are defined by considering the document and its content as a single entity.

3.7 Publicly available

Generally accessible to the interested public in any form and without the need for a request.

NOTE 1: When information is available by request only, this is indicated explicitly in the document as available on request.

NOTE 2: Special consideration might be needed for disadvantaged stakeholders to ensure their access, for example, providing hard copies to stakeholders identified as having no access to electronic media.

3.8 Revision

Introduction of all necessary changes to the substance and presentation of a normative document.

NOTE: The results of the revision are presented by issuing a new edition of the normative document.

3.9 Review

Activity of checking a normative document to determine whether it is to be reaffirmed, changed or withdrawn.

3.10 Stakeholder

A person, group, community or organization with an interest in the subject of the standard.

3.11 Affected stakeholder

A stakeholder who might experience a direct change in living and/or working conditions caused by implementation of the standard, or a stakeholder who might be a user of the standard and therefore is subject to the requirements of the standard.

NOTE 1: Affected stakeholders include neighboring communities, indigenous people, workers, etc. However, having an interest in the subject matter of the standard (e.g. NGOs, scientific community, and civil society) is not equal to being affected.

NOTE 2: A stakeholder who might be a user of the standard is likely to become a certified entity, e.g. a forest owner in the case of a forest management standard, or a wood processing enterprise in the case of a chain of custody standard.

3.12 Disadvantaged stakeholder

A stakeholder who might be financially or otherwise disadvantaged by participating in the standard-setting process.

3.13 Key stakeholder

A stakeholder whose participation is critical to the outcome of the standard-setting process.

3.14 Standard

A document, established by consensus and approved by a recognized body that provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results, aimed at the achievement of the optimum degree or order in a given context.

NOTE: Standards should be based on the consolidated results of science, technology and experience, and aimed at the promotion of optimum benefits.

3.15 Standardizing body

Body that has recognized activities in standardization.

NOTE: The standardizing body in this document is the organization assigned to operate the Vietnam Forest Certification Scheme (VFCS) in accordance with the provisions of VFCS/PEFC ST 1001.

3.16 Working draft

Proposed document that is available generally for feedback or voting within a working group.

4 Implementation of standard setting

4.1 Standardizing body

4.1.1 The standardizing body shall be responsible for the development, review, revision, assessment, approval and publication of VFCS standards in accordance with VFCS/PEFC ST 1001, this document and the relevant PEFC requirements.

4.1.2. The standardizing body shall:

- a) prepare and publish the standard development proposal or the standard review and revision plan;
- b) identify stakeholders and stakeholder groups, and provide appropriate opportunities for their participation;
- c) establish the working group and the drafting group;
- d) organize the drafting of the standard, conduct public consultation, carry out pilot testing of the standard where necessary, and address comments received;
- e) organize the consensus process for the draft standard;
- f) arrange for the approval of the draft standard or submit the standard for publication in accordance with the applicable procedures;
- g) receive and resolve complaints and disputes related to the standard development, review and revision process;
- h) make information on the standard development, review and revision process publicly available;
- i) maintain documented information and make it publicly available in accordance with this procedure.

4.2 Working group

4.2.1 The working group shall be established or designated by the standardizing body to support the development, review or revision of the standard.

4.2.2 The working group shall:

- a) review the technical content of the draft standard;
- b) discuss and resolve outstanding issues on which differing views remain;
- c) review the results of public consultation and the disposition of comments;
- d) review the results of pilot testing, where applicable;
- e) review the draft standard and determine whether consensus has been achieved prior to submission for approval;
- f) carry out other tasks assigned by the standardizing body.

4.3 Drafting committee

4.3.1 The drafting committee shall be established by the standardizing body from among the members of the working group and may be supplemented by independent experts, where necessary, to prepare the draft standard.

4.3.2 The drafting committee shall:

- a) prepare the draft standard;
- b) prepare the supporting documentation and explanatory report;
- c) compile comments and propose their disposition;
- d) propose revisions to the draft standard based on the results of public consultation and pilot testing, where applicable;
- e) provide technical support to the working group;

f) finalize the documentation for submission for assessment and approval.

4.4 Stakeholders

4.4.1 Stakeholders shall have the right to participate in the standard development, review and revision process in accordance with their interests or the extent to which they are affected.

4.4.2 The standardizing body shall identify and categorize stakeholders and provide balanced opportunities for their participation.

4.4.3 The standardizing body shall make appropriate arrangements to facilitate the participation of disadvantaged stakeholders and key stakeholders.

4.4.4 Stakeholders shall participate in the consultation process in good faith, provide constructive comments and submit them within the specified time frame.

5 Information documentation and management

5.1 General

5.1.1 The standardizing body shall keep documented information relating to the standard-setting and review process. Evidence of compliance with the requirements of this document and the standardizing body's own procedures includes:

- a) standard-setting procedures;
- b) stakeholder identification mapping;
- c) contacted and/or invited stakeholders;
- d) stakeholders involved in standard-setting activities including participants in each working group meeting;
- e) feedback received and a synopsis of how feedback was addressed;
- f) all drafts and final versions of the standard;
- g) outcomes from working group considerations;
- h) evidence of consensus on the final version of the standard(s);
- i) evidence relating to the review process; and
- j) final approval by the standardizing body.

5.1.2 Documented information shall be kept until completion of the next review or revision of the standard to which they refer. Otherwise, the documented information must be kept for a minimum of five years after publication of the standard.

5.1.3 Documented information shall be available to interested parties upon request.

5.2 Procedure for maintaining and providing documented information

The procedure for maintaining and providing documented information is specified in Annex A.

6 Handling of complaints and appeals

6.1 General

6.1.1 The standardizing body shall establish procedure(s) for dealing with any substantial and process complaints and appeals relating to its standard-setting activities. It must make procedure(s) accessible to stakeholders. Upon receipt of a complaint or appeal, the standardizing body shall:

- a) acknowledge receipt of the complaint or appeal to the complainant;
- b) gather and verify all necessary information to validate the complaint or appeal, evaluate the subject matter of the complaint or appeal impartially and objectively, and make a decision regarding the complaint or appeal; and

- c) formally communicate the decision on the complaint or appeal to the complainant and describe the handling process.

6.1.2 The standardizing body shall establish at least one contact point for enquiries, complaints and appeals relating to its standard-setting activities. The contact point shall be easy to access and readily available.

6.2 Procedure for handling complaints and appeals

The procedure for handling complaints and appeals is specified in Annex B.

7 Standard-setting process

7.1 General

7.1.1 The standard-setting process is governed by the key principles of:

- a) Stakeholder engagement – an opportunity for meaningful participation in the process that is open to all stakeholders through participation in working groups and public consultations.
- b) Balanced representation – no single stakeholder group should dominate or be dominated in the process. While each party is free to decide on its participation, the standardizing body makes an effort to ensure that all relevant stakeholder groups are represented and considers an appropriate gender balance.
- c) Consensus – standards are approved by consensus. Any sustained opposition to specific issues is resolved by means of dialogue whenever possible.
- d) Improvement – periodic review of a standard seeks continual improvement and to ensure the standard continues to meet expectations of stakeholders.
- e) Transparency – relevant documents are publicly available so interested parties can follow developments during and after the process.

7.1.2 The implementation of these principles shall be demonstrated through appropriate documented information throughout the standard-setting process.

7.2 Sequence of activities

The standard-setting process shall consist of the following steps (Figure 1):

7.2.1 Standard development proposal

7.2.1.1 For the creation of a new standard, the standardizing body shall develop a proposal including:

- a) the scope of the standard;
- b) justification of the need for the standard;
- c) a clear description of the intended outcomes;
- d) a risk assessment of potential negative impacts arising from implementing the standard, such as
 - factors that could affect the achievement of the outcomes negatively;
 - unintended consequences of implementation;
 - actions to address the identified risks; and
- e) a description of the stages of standard development and their expected timetable.

NOTE: Guidance for development of a proposal and justification is given in ISO Directives, Part 1, Annex C and Annex SL (Appendix 1).

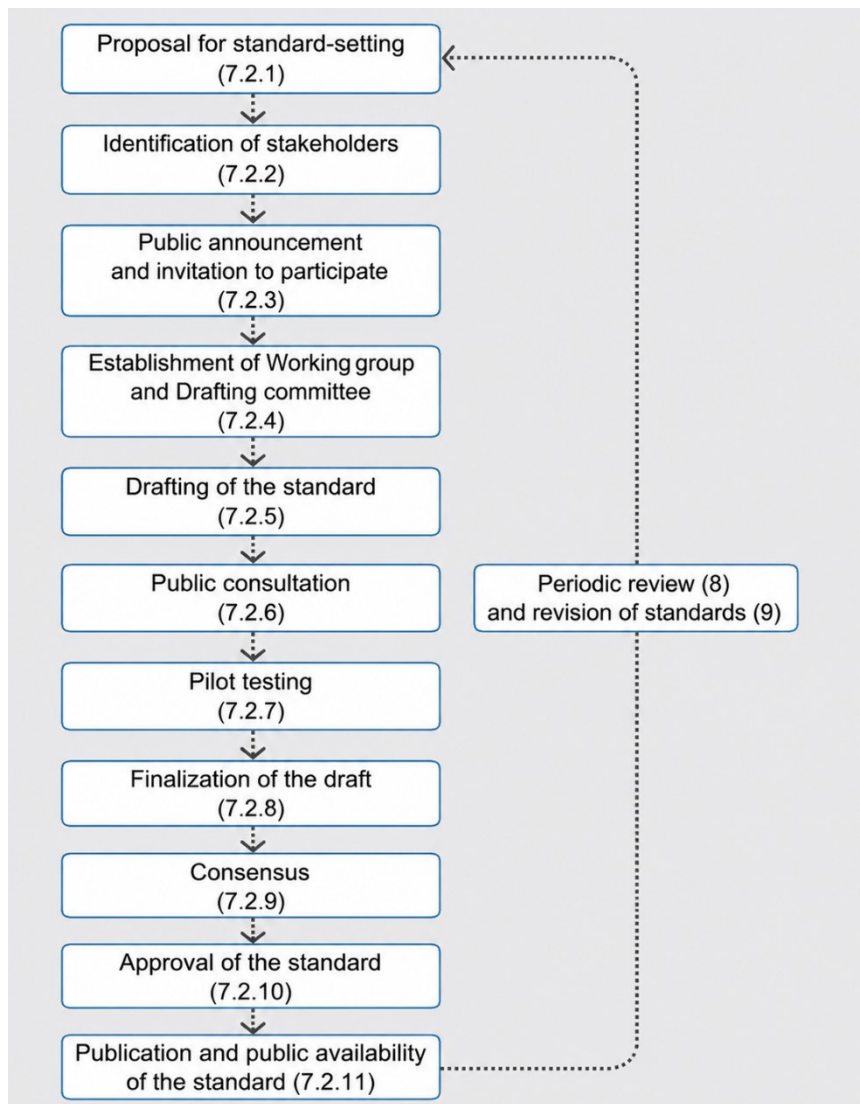


Figure 1. Sequence of steps to develop standards

7.2.1.2 For the revision of a standard the proposal shall cover at least 7.2.1.1 a) and 7.2.1.1 e).

7.2.1.3 The standardizing body shall review the proposal and decide whether to include it in the programme for the development or revision of standards.

7.2.2 Stakeholder identification

7.2.2.1 The standardizing body shall:

- a) identify stakeholders relevant to the objectives and scope of the standard-setting activity through stakeholder mapping;
- b) identify stakeholder groups relevant to the subject of the standard and the rationale for including each group in the standard-setting process;
- c) for each stakeholder group, identify the likely key issues, key stakeholders, and which means of communication would be best to reach them.

7.2.2.2 Identification of stakeholder groups shall be based on nine major stakeholder groups as defined by Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. At least the following groups shall be included in the stakeholder mapping:

- forest owners;
- business and industry;

- indigenous people;
- non-government organizations;
- scientific and technological community;
- workers and trade unions.

Other groups shall be added if relevant to the scope of standard-setting activities.

NOTE: The full list of nine major stakeholder groups defined by Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development consists of: (i) business and industry, (ii) children and youth, (iii) forest owners, (iv) indigenous peoples, (v) local authorities, (vi) non-government organizations, (vii) scientific and technological community, (viii) women, and (ix) workers and trade unions.

7.2.2.3 The standardizing body shall ensure the balanced representation of stakeholder groups throughout the standard-setting process. Balanced representation shall meet the following requirements:

- a) all stakeholder groups relevant to the objectives and scope of the standard shall have the opportunity to participate in the standard-setting process;
- b) no stakeholder group shall be excluded from, or unreasonably restricted in, participating in the standard-setting process;
- c) no stakeholder group shall dominate, or be dominated, in the standard-setting process or decision-making.

7.2.2.4 The standardizing body shall identify disadvantaged stakeholders and key stakeholders and address any constraints to their participation in standard-setting activities.

NOTE: A stakeholder can be both a disadvantaged and a key stakeholder at the same time.

7.2.2.5 The stakeholder list shall be reviewed and updated, as necessary, throughout the standard-setting process to ensure that it continues to reflect all relevant stakeholders.

7.2.3 Public announcement of process and invitation to participate

7.2.3.1 The standardizing body shall make a public announcement of the start of the standard-setting process and include an invitation to stakeholders to participate in the process in order to give stakeholders an opportunity for meaningful contributions.

The announcement shall be made at least four weeks before the first standard-setting activity through the VFCS website and by e-mail and/or letter to the identified stakeholders. In addition, the announcement may be disseminated through press releases, newsletters, social media or other appropriate communication channels.

7.2.3.2 The announcement and invitation shall include:

- a) overview of the standard-setting process;
- b) access to the proposal for the standard;
- c) information about opportunities for stakeholders to participate in the process;
- d) requests to stakeholders to nominate their representative(s) or themselves to the working group (refer to 7.3). The request to disadvantaged stakeholders and key stakeholders shall be made in a manner that ensures that the information reaches intended recipients and in a format that is easy to understand;
- e) explicit invitation and clear instruction on how to submit feedback on the scope and standard-setting process; and
- f) access to the standard-setting procedures.

7.2.3.3 In order to implement the balanced representation mechanism specified in 7.2.2.3, the standardizing body shall take appropriate measures to encourage the participation of all identified stakeholder groups.

7.2.3.4 The standardizing body shall make reasonable efforts to encourage the participation of key stakeholders and disadvantaged stakeholders through appropriate means, such as e-mail, telephone, meeting invitations, direct engagement or other appropriate means of communication.

7.2.3.5 Where an imbalance or insufficient representation of one or more stakeholder groups is identified, the standardizing body shall take one or more appropriate measures to enhance the participation of those stakeholder groups before establishing the working group or during the standard-setting process.

NOTE: Where a stakeholder group is not represented and its key stakeholders cannot be engaged, the standardizing body may consider alternative forms of consultation or other means of obtaining input to ensure that the views of that stakeholder group are taken into account during the standard-setting process.

7.2.3.6 The standardizing body shall review the standard-setting process based on feedback received in response to the public announcement.

7.2.4 Establishment of working group and drafting group

7.2.4.1 The standardizing body shall establish or appoints a permanent or temporary working group and a drafting group to support the standard-making process. Where necessary, the standardizing body may adjust the composition of an already existing working group based on nominations it received.

Acceptance and refusal of nominations shall be justified in relation to the requirements for balanced representation of the working group, considerations of an appropriate gender balance, relevance of the organization, an individual's competence, an individual's relevant experience and resources available for standard-setting.

7.2.4.2 The working group shall:

- a) have balanced representation and decision-making by stakeholder categories, relevant to the subject matter and geographical scope of the standard as prescribed in 7.2.2.3;
- b) where no single concerned stakeholder group can dominate, nor be dominated in the process, and
- c) include stakeholders with expertise relevant to the subject matter of the standard, those that affected by the standard, and those that can influence implementation of the standard. The affected stakeholders shall be represented in an appropriate proportion among participants.

7.2.4.3 The roles and responsibilities of the working group and the drafting group shall be in accordance with 4.2 and 4.3.

7.2.4.4 Activities of the working group shall be organized in an open and transparent manner where:

- a) working drafts shall be available to all members of the working group;
- b) all members of the working group shall be given meaningful opportunities to contribute to the development or revision of the standard and to provide feedback on working drafts; and
- c) feedback and views given by any member of the working group shall be considered in an open and transparent way where the outcome of these considerations is recorded.

7.2.4.5 The list of members and the representation structure of the working group and the drafting group shall be kept as part of the standard development records.

7.2.5 Draft standard

7.2.5.1 The drafting group shall prepare the draft standard based on relevant documents, information and research findings. During this process, the drafting group may undertake one or more of the following activities:

- collect and compile relevant standards, technical documents, research results, testing results and other relevant information;
- conduct surveys and testing, where necessary;

- develop the draft standard, seek input within the drafting group and revise the draft standard accordingly;
- organize meetings, workshops, expert consultations or other forms of exchange, where necessary;
- finalize the draft for submission to the working group for consideration prior to public consultation.

The presentation of the standard shall follow TCVN 1-2 and other relevant requirements.

7.2.5.2 During the development of the draft standard, the drafting group shall cooperate with the working group and stakeholders to consider differing views, clarify issues where divergence exists, and facilitate consensus on significant issues of the draft standard.

7.2.6 Public consultation

7.2.6.1 The standardizing body shall organize public consultation on the enquiry draft and shall ensure that:

- a) the start and the end dates of public consultation are announced in a timely manner on the VFCS website and/or by other appropriate methods;

NOTE: *In a timely manner* means (at the latest) the day before the start of public consultation.

- b) a direct invitation to comment on the enquiry draft is sent to each stakeholder identified by stakeholder identification mapping (refer to 7.2.2) aiming for a balanced participation of stakeholder groups;
- c) invitations are sent to disadvantaged and key stakeholders by methods that ensure they reach recipients and are easy to understand;
- d) the enquiry draft is made publicly available;
- e) public consultation is for at least 60 days;
- f) all feedback is considered by the working group in an objective manner.

7.2.6.2 The drafting group shall compile the comments received for each material issue and propose their disposition for consideration by the working group. For each comment, the working group shall determine one of the following dispositions:

- a) accepted;
- b) partially accepted;
- c) not accepted.

Where a comment is not accepted or is only partially accepted, the reasons shall be provided based on technical, legal or practical considerations.

NOTE: The summary of comments may be organized either by subject or by individual comment, so that each stakeholder is able to identify its own comments.

7.2.6.3 The summary of comments shall be made publicly available on the VFCS website and provided to the stakeholders who submitted comments. The publication of the summary of comments shall comply with the applicable requirements on confidentiality and the protection of personal data, where applicable.

7.2.6.4 For new standards the standardizing body shall organize a second round of public consultation lasting at least 30 days.

7.2.7 Pilot testing

7.2.7.1 The standardizing body shall organize pilot testing of new standard(s) to assess the clarity, auditability and feasibility of the requirements. The working group shall consider the outcome of pilot testing.

NOTE: Pilot testing is not required for revision of an existing standard when experience from its usage can substitute for pilot testing.

7.2.7.2 The drafting group shall compile the results of the pilot testing, the comments received and any outstanding issues, and submit them to the working group for consideration when finalizing the draft standard.

7.2.8 Finalization of the draft standard

7.2.8.1 After completion of the consultation and pilot testing processes, where applicable, the drafting group shall review and finalize the draft standard based on the comments received, the results of pilot testing, and any other relevant information collected during the standard-setting process.

7.2.8.2 The finalization of the draft standard shall include:

- updating the draft based on the disposition of comments and the results of pilot testing, where applicable;
- reviewing the consistency, clarity, structure and coherence of the draft; and
- verifying the conformity of the draft with PEFC requirements and applicable legal requirements, where relevant.

7.2.8.3 Where comments relate to significant issues or may have a substantial impact on the scope, requirements or applicability of the standard, the drafting group shall review and revise the draft or provide additional justification before its finalization.

7.2.8.4 The finalized draft standard shall serve as the basis for the working group to review and determine consensus in accordance with 7.2.9.

7.2.9 Consensus

7.2.9.1 After finalization of the draft standard, the working group shall review whether consensus has been achieved on the draft standard prior to proposing the final draft for formal approval. The review of consensus shall be based on:

- a) results of public consultation;
- b) results of pilot testing, where applicable;
- c) comments received, including their disposition and justification.

7.2.9.2 The consensus review may be conducted through one or a combination of the following methods:

- a) face-to face meeting(s) where there is a verbal yes/no vote, a show of hands for a yes/no vote; a statement on consensus from the chair when there are no dissenting voices or hands (votes); a formal ballot or other appropriate voting methods;
- b) telephone conference meeting(s) where there is a verbal yes/no vote;
- c) e-mail request to the working group for agreement or objection where the members provide a formal (written) response (vote).

7.2.9.3 Where voting is used to support the consensus assessment, the level of consensus shall be determined on the basis of:

- a) at least two-thirds (2/3) of the members participating in the vote approving the draft standard; and
- b) the number of negative votes not exceeding one quarter (1/4) of the total number of valid votes.

7.2.9.4 Voting results shall only be one of the bases for determining the level of consensus and shall not be used to override sustained objections relating to significant issues of the draft standard.

NOTE: A sustained objection is an objection to a significant issue of the draft standard that is maintained by one or more members of the working group after it has been fully considered, discussed and justified in accordance with this procedure. The chair of the working group shall be responsible for determining the existence of a sustained objection based on the substance of the objection and the course of discussions.

7.2.9.5 When there is sustained opposition to a substantial issue, the issue shall be resolved using the following methods:

- a) finding a compromise through discussion and negotiation on the disputed issue within the working group,
- b) finding a compromise through direct negotiation between the stakeholder(s) making the objection and other stakeholders with different views on the disputed issue,
- c) additional round(s) of public consultation (if necessary) where further stakeholder input can help to achieve consensus on unresolved issues. The standardizing body determines the scope and duration of any additional public consultation.

7.2.9.6 When a substantial issue cannot be resolved and sustained opposition persists, the standardizing body shall apply the dispute resolution procedure specified in VFCS/PEFC GD 1010 to ensure impartiality and fairness.

7.2.9.7 The results of the consensus assessment shall be documented and kept as part of the standard development records. The documented information on the consensus assessment shall include, as a minimum:

- a) summary of comments received and their disposition;
- b) outstanding issues and the way they were addressed;
- c) conclusion on the level of consensus achieved on the draft standard.

7.2.10 Approval

7.2.10.1 After the working group has achieved consensus on the draft standard in accordance with 7.2.9, the drafting group shall submit the draft standard for formal approval in accordance with the established authority.

7.2.10.2 The approval documentation shall include, as a minimum:

- a) draft standard proposed for approval;
- b) report on the standard-setting process;
- c) documented evidence of the working group consensus;
- d) any other relevant documents, where applicable.

7.2.10.3 Formal approval shall be granted by the highest decision-making authority of the standardizing body in accordance with the VFCS rules.

7.2.10.4 The approval decision shall specify, as a minimum, the following information:

- a) name and title of the standard;
- b) version or edition;
- c) issuance date;
- d) application date;
- e) any transition period, where applicable.

7.2.10.5 The formal approval records shall be kept as part of the standard development records.

7.2.11 Publication and availability of the standard

7.2.11.1 The standardizing body shall publish and make the standard freely available on the VFCS website and/or through other appropriate means within 14 days of approval, or as otherwise defined by the standardizing body.

7.2.11.2 The standard shall include the following information:

- a) identification information and contact details of the standardizing body;
- b) official language of the standard;
- c) a note that when there is inconsistency between versions, the English version of the standard as endorsed by the PEFC Council is the reference;

d) the approval date and the date of next periodic review.

NOTE: The date of the next periodic review may be set at an interval shorter than five years, based on factors such as stakeholder expectations or other anticipated changes.

7.2.11.3 The standardizing body shall provide printed copies of the standard upon request, at a cost not exceeding administrative costs, where applicable.

7.2.11.4 The standardizing body shall make the standard-setting report publicly available (see 7.1.3 d) PEFC GD 1007).

8 Procedures for periodic review of standards

8.1 General

8.1.1 The standard(s)/normative document(s) shall be reviewed at intervals that do not exceed a five-year period.

8.1.2 The review shall be based on consideration of feedback received during the standard's implementation and a gap analysis. If necessary, a stakeholder consultation shall be organized to obtain further feedback and input.

8.2 Process

8.2.1 Receipt and consolidation of feedback

8.2.1.1 During the validity period of the standard, the standardizing body shall establish and maintain a mechanism for receiving feedback on the standard. Information on the feedback mechanism and guidance for submitting feedback shall be made publicly available on the VFCS website.

NOTE: Feedback may include comments, recommendations, requests for clarification or interpretation, complaints, and other inputs related to the standard.

8.2.1.2 All feedback collected through meetings, workshops, training sessions, certification assessments or other forms of communication shall be compiled, kept and considered during the periodic review of the standard.

8.2.2 Gap analysis

8.2.2.1 At the start of a review, the standardizing body shall compare the current standard with relevant PEFC international standards, applicable Vietnamese legal requirements and other relevant standards to identify provisions that require revision, supplementation or updating.

8.2.2.2 The gap analysis shall consider research findings, the latest scientific knowledge and emerging issues relevant to the scope of the standard.

8.2.3 Stakeholder consultation

8.2.3.1 Where feedback and the results of the gap analysis are not sufficient to determine the need for revision, the standardizing body shall conduct stakeholder consultation to identify the need for revision. The results of the gap analysis shall be provided as input for the consultation process.

8.2.3.2 At the beginning of the review process, the standardizing body shall review and update the stakeholder list (see 7.2.2).

8.2.3.3 The standardizing body shall carry out one or both of the following forms of consultation:

- a) public consultation for a minimum period of 30 days (as specified in 7.2.6); or
- b) meeting(s) with stakeholders.

8.2.3.4 The standardizing body shall promptly make information on the standard review process publicly available in accordance with 7.2.3.

8.2.3.4 Standards-making organizations must promptly disclose information on the review of standards as prescribed in 7.2.3.

8.2.4 Decision-making

8.2.4.1 Based on the feedback received during the period of a standard's implementation, the outcome of the gap analysis and the consultations, where applicable, the standardizing body shall decide whether to reaffirm the standard or whether a revision of the standard is necessary.

8.2.4.2 The decision must be made at the highest decision-making level of the standardizing body.

8.2.4.3 Where the decision is to reaffirm a standard, the standardizing body shall provide a justification for the decision and make the justification publicly available.

8.2.4.4 Where the decision is to revise the standard, the standardizing body shall specify the type of revision (normal or editorial revision).

9 Revision of standard

9.1 Normal revision

Procedures for revision of standard(s)/normative document(s) shall conform to those stated in section 6.

A normal revision can occur at the periodic review, or between periodic reviews, but does not include editorial revisions and time-critical revisions.

9.2 Editorial revision

Editorial revisions can be made without triggering the normal revision process. The standardizing body shall approve the editorial changes formally and publish an amendment or a new edition of the standard.

9.3 Time-critical revision

9.3.1 A time-critical revision is a revision between two periodic reviews using a fast-track process.

9.3.2 A time-critical revision can be conducted only in the following situations:

- a) change in national laws and regulations affecting compliance with PEFC International requirements;
- b) instruction by PEFC International to comply with specific or new PEFC requirements within a timescale that is too short for a normal revision.

9.3.3. The standardizing body shall carry out a time-critical revision in accordance with the following steps:

- a) draft the revised standard;
- b) consult stakeholders, but it is not mandatory;
- c) approve formally at the highest appropriate decision-making level of the standardizing body;
- d) explain the justification for the urgent change(s) and make the justification publicly available.

9.4 Application and transition of revised standards

9.4.1 When issuing a revised standard or normative document, the standardizing body shall determine its application date and transition period.

9.4.2 An application date shall not be more than one year after the publication of the standard. This allows time for endorsement of the revised standard(s)/normative document(s), introduction of change(s), information dissemination and training.

9.4.3 The transition period shall not exceed one year. The standardizing body may determine a longer period when justified by exceptional circumstances.

10 Adoption of standards

10.1 The standardizing body may consider the adoption of national, international or regional standards for application within VFCS. The adoption shall not modify the content of the adopted

standard. Where modification is required, the standardizing body shall apply the standard-setting or revision procedures specified in this document.

10.2 The adoption of standard(s) shall be carried out as follows:

10.2.1 Identify the standard proposed for adoption based on the needs of VFCS and its functions and responsibilities.

10.2.2 Assess the suitability of the proposed standard for adoption, including:

- a) assessing the conformity of the standard development or review process with the requirements specified in this document; and
- b) assessing the conformity of the content of the standard with the requirements of VFCS and the corresponding PEFC standard, where applicable.

10.2.3 Where the proposed standard meets the requirements specified in this document, the standardizing body shall submit it to the working group for consensus in accordance with 7.2.9.

10.2.4 Approval, publication and availability of the standard shall be carried out in accordance with 7.2.10 and 7.2.11.

Where access to the original adopted standard is restricted or the original standard does not meet the PEFC requirements for public availability, the standardizing body may issue a VFCS standard that is technically identical to the adopted standard. In such cases, the VFCS standard shall not modify the technical content of the original standard.

10.2.5 Once approved for adoption, the standard shall become a VFCS standard and shall be applied in accordance with VFCS requirements.

Annex A
(normative)
Procedure for storage and provision of documented information

A.1 Purpose and scope

This procedure specifies the requirements for the retention, management, retrieval and provision of documented information relating to VFCS standard-setting activities.

Documented information includes paper records, electronic records, e-mails, minutes, reports, forms, images and other documents that can be kept and retrieved.

A.2 Documented information to be kept

For each standard-setting activity, the standardizing body shall establish and keep, as a minimum, the following documented information:

- the standard-setting procedure, including the versions applicable at each stage of the process;
- records of stakeholder identification and categorization, including the identification methodology, stakeholder groups, the rationale for their identification, and information relating to ensuring balanced participation;
- records of stakeholders who have been contacted, invited to participate or have participated in the standard-setting process, including invitation lists, notices, e-mails, information published on the VFCS website, and evidence of distribution or publication;
- records of stakeholder participation in the standard-setting process, including the membership of the working group and the drafting group, attendance lists for each meeting, and records of changes in membership, where applicable;
- comments received and records of their disposition, including comments received through public consultation, comments from the working group, expert comments, consolidated comment matrices, and responses to individual comments;
- all draft and final versions of the standard;
- records of the deliberations of the working group, drafting group or an equivalent technical mechanism, including meeting agendas, meeting documents, minutes, conclusions, recommendations, voting records where applicable, differing views and their disposition;
- records demonstrating consensus on the final version of the standard, including meeting minutes, the consensus determination, records relating to the identification and resolution of sustained objections, confirmations by working group members, or equivalent evidence;
- evidence relating to the review process, including review decisions or plans, results of periodic reviews, assessments of the need for revision, review notices, feedback received, review reports, and decisions to reaffirm, revise or replace the standard;
- final approval records, including the approval submission, minutes or resolutions of the competent authority, the approval decision, the effective date, and records of publication of the standard; and
- any other relevant records necessary to demonstrate conformity with applicable requirements and VFCS procedures, including standard-setting reports, records relating to complaints and requests for reconsideration, independent assessment reports, or records of expert consultation.

A.3 Establishment, management and record keeping

A.3.1 At the start of each standard-setting, review or revision activity, the standardizing body shall designate a person or organizational unit responsible for managing the records.

A.3.2 Records shall be kept separately for each standard and for each standard-setting, review or revision process, and shall be organized to ensure ease of search, retrieval and verification.

A.3.3 Each document shall be identified, as a minimum, by its title, date of preparation or receipt, version or document status, and storage location.

A.3.4 Draft standards shall be kept by version.

A.3.5 Records may be kept in paper form, electronic form or both. Electronic records shall be backed up periodically and subject to appropriate access controls.

A.3.6 The person responsible for records management shall maintain a register of standard development records, which shall include, as a minimum, the record title, record identifier, retention period, storage location, record status and the person responsible.

A.3.7 Documented information shall be kept until completion of the next review or revision of the standard to which it relates. In all other cases, documented information shall be kept for a minimum of five years from the date of publication of the standard.

A.3.8 Where legal or other applicable requirements prescribe a longer retention period, the longer period shall apply.

A.3.9 Records shall only be destroyed after the applicable retention period has expired and with the approval of the authorized person. The destruction of records shall be documented.

A.4 Provision of documented information to interested parties

A.4.1 Documented information relating to standard-setting activities shall be made available to interested parties upon request.

A.4.2 Requests for documented information shall be submitted to the VFCS contact point in writing, by e-mail or by other appropriate means.

A.4.3 Within five (5) working days of receiving a request, the contact point shall acknowledge receipt and inform the requester of the documented information that can be provided, the means by which it will be provided, and the expected timeframe for its provision.

A.4.4 Documented information shall be provided within a reasonable period. Where all or part of the requested documented information cannot be provided due to confidentiality requirements, personal data protection, commercially sensitive information, intellectual property rights or legal requirements, the standardizing body shall inform the requester of the reasons.

A.5 Responsibilities

A.5.1 The standardizing body shall implement this procedure and ensure that records are kept in a complete, secure and retrievable manner.

A.5.2 The records management contact point shall be responsible for receiving, organizing, updating, maintaining and facilitating the retrieval of records.

A.5.3 The working group, the drafting group, experts, and other individuals and organizations participating in standard-setting activities shall provide relevant documents, minutes and other information to the records management contact point in a timely manner.

Annex B
(normative)
Procedure for handling complaints and appeals

B.1 Purpose and scope

This procedure establishes the requirements for receiving, reviewing and resolving complaints and appeals relating to the content and procedures of VFCS standard-setting activities.

This procedure does not apply to:

- a) civil, commercial, labour or other disputes falling within the jurisdiction of competent state authorities or other competent bodies in accordance with applicable law; or
- b) complaints relating to certification activities, certification decisions or the activities of certification bodies.

B.2 Complaints and appeals

B.2.1 A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction by an organization, individual or stakeholder alleging that the standardizing body, or any organization or individual participating in standard-setting activities, or the standard-setting process itself, has failed to comply with applicable requirements, procedures or regulations.

B.2.2 An **appeal** is a request submitted by an organization, individual or stakeholder for reconsideration of a specific decision made during the development, review, revision, approval or publication of a standard.

B.2.3 A **complainant** is an organization, individual or stakeholder submitting a complaint or an appeal.

B.2.4 Complaints and appeals may be submitted in writing, by e-mail or by any other appropriate means that allows the information to be kept.

B.3 Contact point

B.3.1 The standardizing body shall establish at least one contact point for receiving enquiries, complaints and appeals relating to standard-setting activities.

B.3.2 The contact details of the contact point, including the e-mail address, postal address, telephone number or electronic submission form, shall be made publicly available on the VFCS website and shall be readily accessible to stakeholders.

B.3.3 The contact point shall provide guidance to the complainant regarding the information and supporting documents required to clarify the matter but shall not refuse to receive a complaint or appeal solely because the information provided is incomplete.

B.4 Receipt and handling

B.4.1 Within five (5) working days of receiving a complaint or appeal, the contact point shall acknowledge receipt to the complainant and inform them of the proposed handling process.

B.4.2 The standardizing body shall collect, examine and verify the necessary information and supporting documents, and shall assess the complaint or appeal objectively, impartially and free from conflicts of interest.

B.4.3 A person or organization directly involved in the matter under complaint or in the decision under appeal shall not be the sole person responsible for evaluating or deciding the matter.

B.4.4 Where necessary, the standardizing body may request the complainant or other relevant parties to provide additional information, supporting documents or explanations to clarify the matter.

B.4.5 Based on the results of the verification and assessment, the competent authority shall decide on the outcome of the complaint or appeal, including upholding it in whole or in part, rejecting it, or taking corrective action, making amendments, or reconsidering the relevant decision.

B.5 Notification of the outcome

B.5.1 The standardizing body shall formally notify the complainant of the outcome of the complaint or appeal in writing or by e-mail.

B.5.2 The notification of the outcome shall include, as a minimum:

- a) the subject matter of the complaint or appeal;
- b) the steps taken to receive, verify and assess the complaint or appeal;
- c) the outcome, the basis for the decision, and the decision taken; and
- d) any follow-up actions or corrective actions, where applicable.

B.5.3 Complaints and appeals shall be handled within a reasonable period. Where additional time is required, the standardizing body shall inform the complainant of the reasons for the delay and the expected completion date.

B.6 Timeframes

B.6.1 Complaints and appeals should normally be resolved within thirty (30) working days from the date on which all necessary information and supporting documents have been received.

B.6.2 For complex cases requiring additional verification, expert consultation or dialogue with relevant parties, the timeframe may be extended once for a period not exceeding thirty (30) working days. The complainant shall be informed of the extension.

B.6.3 The time taken by the complainant to provide additional information or supporting documents shall not be included in the handling period.

B.7 Record retention and publication of the procedure

B.7.1 The standardizing body shall keep records relating to the receipt and handling of complaints and appeals in accordance with the procedure for the retention and provision of documented information.

B.7.2 This procedure and the contact details for submitting complaints and appeals shall be made publicly available, readily accessible and available to stakeholders.