

Report

SYNOPSIS REPORT

Consultation on the briefing note regarding the
implementation of Motion 23/2022 on IFL Protection



**FORESTS
FOR ALL
FOREVER**TM

Title: Synopsis Report

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INTRODUCTION

At the FSC General Assembly in 2022, Motion 23/2022 Use landscape-wide approaches adapted to local conditions and strengthen Standard Development Groups (SDGs) to improve protection of Intact Forest Landscapes (General Assembly, 2020) and the associated Implementation Note was passed. This motion asks FSC to review and revise the current approach to achieving effective IFL conservation and enable and guide SDGs to identify and recommend improvements to FSC's normative framework, to strengthen approaches for the identification, protection, maintenance and/or enhancement of HCV2s, including IFL conservation at landscape level in National/Regional Standards.

While this review and revision process is ongoing and until a comprehensive global approach has been developed and agreed, FSC was requested to develop an Advice Note indicating criteria for an interim rule. In December 2022, the Advice Note was revised to reflect the interim rule and resulting in ADV-20-007-018 V2-0. In July 2024, this interim rule was extended by the FSC Board of Directors until June 30, 2026, resulting in ADV-20-007-18 V2-3.

At its meeting in August 2023 (BM96) the Board of Directors (BoD) approved the implementation plan of "major process" according to <FSC-PRO-01-001 V4-0 Development and Revision of FSC Requirements>. The plan is based on a piloting approach and consists of four phases:

1. Development of draft guidance: *Landscape approach to Intact Forest Landscapes*.
2. Development of draft procedure: *Development of Forest Stewardship Standard indicators for the protection of IFLs considering the landscape level*.
3. Pilots in key IFL countries of the draft guidance and procedure.
4. IFL indicators are incorporated into Forest Stewardship Standards, and the learnings are integrated into the normative framework.

At BM96, the BoD also approved the Focus Forest Advisory Group to act as working group in the revision process.

FSC developed a Briefing Note on the Implementation of Motion 23/2022 on IFL protection. The Briefing Note provides an overview on the set of guidance aimed at supporting FSC Standard Development Groups (SDGs), the workplan, and pilot approach to implement Motion 23/2022. Through a questionnaire, FSC reached out to members and interested stakeholders to gather feedback on fundamental concepts that will guide the implementation of Motion 23. The questionnaire was open from 10 November until 3 December 2023.

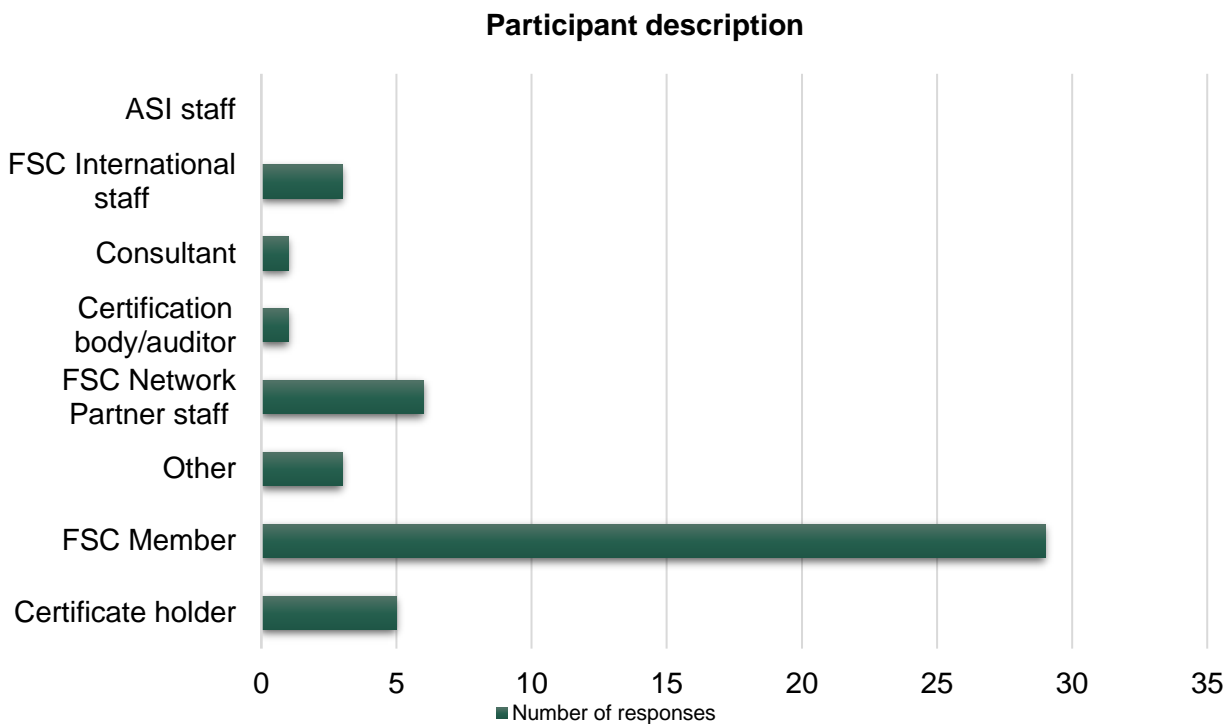
This report presents a summary of the feedback received. The feedback received has been considered in the development of the draft guidance and procedure described above.

RESPONDENTS PROFILE

FSC received responses from 28 countries: mostly from Canada (5), Sweden and the United States (4), but also from Germany, Denmark and Brazil (3), Switzerland, Netherlands, Malaysia and Australia (2). Russia, Nigeria, South Africa, Luxembourg, Serbia, Papua New Guinea, Bolivia, Mexico, Rwanda, Latvia, Portugal, United Kingdom, Senegal, Guatemala, Chile, Vietnam, Gabon and Peru (1).

Forty-eight (48) participants joined the consultations platform to provide feedback to the questionnaire. Additionally, four (4) participants sent their responses via email. Thirteen (13) participants provided empty responses. A total of thirty-nine (39) contributions were received.

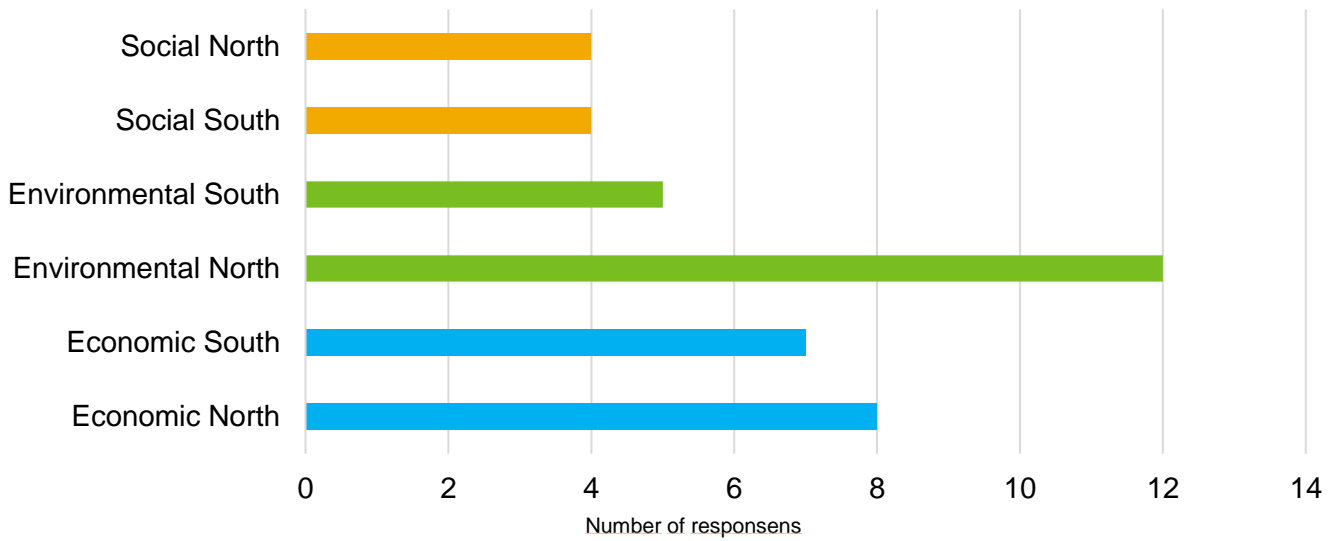
FSC members were most active in participating, with 29 respondents, followed by FSC Network Partner staff with 6 respondents, and certificate holders with 5 respondents. Answers were also received from certification bodies, consultants and FSC International staff.



Graphic 1. Participant description

The participation per chamber was as follows: 12 participants representing environment north, 8 participants representing economic north, 7 representing economic south, 5 representing environmental south, 4 representing social north and 4 representing social south.

Participation per chamber



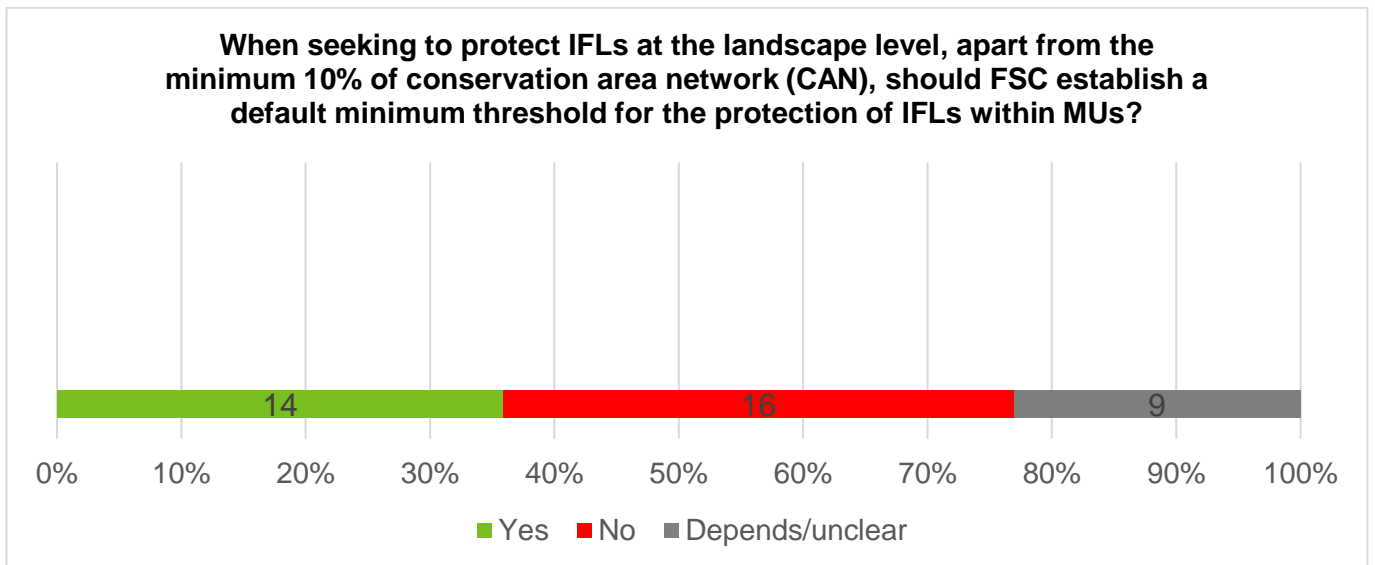
Graphic 2. Participation per chamber

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Participants were asked six open questions. The following section presents an analysis per question.

Question 1: When seeking to protect IFLs at the landscape level, apart from the minimum 10% of conservation area network (CAN), should FSC establish a default minimum threshold for the protection of IFLs within MUs?

A total of 39 answers were received to this question 14 answered 'yes', 16 answered 'no' and 9 answers seemed unclear or dependent on different factors.



Graphic 3. Question 1

The analysis reveals contrasting opinions regarding the establishment of a default minimum threshold by FSC.

The table below summarizes the reasons given for responses of yes, no, and depends/unclear:

Yes	No	Depends/unclear
Same as current threshold in International Generic Indicators (IGIs), treat IFLs as High Conservation Value (HCV) 2.	No specific threshold but maximum restriction of management.	Depending on the context, certain ecosystems
More than business as usual	Not lowering below 80%	Maximum restriction management
Combination of landscape ecology science and regional contexts	Defined by SDGs based on the context (type of forests, HCV and management practices).	Presence of Indigenous Peoples or Indigenous Cultural Landscapes (ICLs).
Context based but with a minimal threshold.	Introduce decision rules and forest management level decisions. Follow International Organization for Standardization (ISO) principles.	
In line with European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR)	Allow a range of protection thresholds based on risk-based approaches	

Table 1. Question 1: Summary of reasons given for the responses of yes, no and depend/unclear.

By analysing the responses to this question, it becomes evident that the disagreement arises from various reasons. One clear suggestion from some respondents who provided a general answer of yes, no, or unclear, is that they believe it is important to take into account the ecological and social context of each landscape.

Question 2: If so, what do you consider this minimum threshold should be?

Response	Number of answers
95%	1
80%	3
50%	3
30%	3
20%	2
10%	2
More than business as usual	1

Table 2. Question 2: what do you consider this minimum threshold should be?

Answers to the question “What do you consider this minimum threshold should be?” reveal that one respondent is in favour of a 95% protection threshold which is a higher than the existing default

protection threshold for IFLs in FSC requirements. Three respondents favour an 80% protection threshold, which is the same percentage as the existing default protection threshold. Three respondents favour a 50% protection threshold, which is allowed under the existing FSC requirements in certain scenarios/exceptions to the 80% protection threshold.

Additionally, seven respondents favour a lower protection threshold than what is allowed in the existing requirements. Three respondents favour a 30% protection threshold, while 2 respondents favour a 20% threshold. Finally, two respondents favour a 10% protection threshold, and one respondent favours a threshold higher than “business as usual”.

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Question 3: What factors should FSC consider in regulating the placement and extent of IFL core areas with a lower threshold than 80%, particularly when considering protection at the landscape level?

The following list summarizes the topics brought up by respondents in response to this question:

- Same as in ADVICE-20-007-18.
- HCV assessments (or similar).
- Threat of deforestation.
- Same as in existing standards.
- The concept of core area applies differently to each IFL.
- Suggests following FSC Canada’s six step approach.
- Use the forest specialist index.
- Follow Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), and consider views and needs of forest peoples.
- Socio-economic aspects.
- Fire, social, and economic risks.
- Status of the IFL in the wider landscape.
- Landscape connectivity and occurrence of endangered species.
- Ecological conditions, differentiate tropical from boreal forests.
- Science-based methods to indicate core areas in the landscape.
- Field information (below the canopy approach).

Some respondents suggested that FSC should consider the same factors as in the current normative framework, also the landscape in which IFLs are located. It was mentioned that ecological conditions, landscape connectivity and socio-economic aspects should be considered. New approaches such as the Canadian six-step approach were mentioned. The importance of following FPIC was also highlighted.

The list of topics above reflects a multifaceted approach of factors, considering ecological, social, economic aspects while advocating for specific methodologies and considerations tailored to the unique characteristics of each landscape.

Question 4: What conditions should FSC consider to allow a lower level of IFL protection than +50% within MUs based on the situation in the landscape?

The following list summarizes the topics brought up by respondents in response to this question:

- Ensure Principle 3 and Principle 4 are respected.
- Deforestation risk: the higher the deforestation risk around the management unit (MU), the lower threshold for management of IFL inside the MU.
- None, only conformance with existing IGLs and Annex H, and low impact management practices.
- This should be extremely rare or non-existent.
- Only if the MU is a small or low, intensity managed forests (SLIMF).
- Traditional land uses and practices.
- Based on a chamber balanced committee at the IFL area.
- Protection should be outcome oriented.
- Occurrence of endangered species.
- Fire and social risk.
- Size and extent of the IFL within and outside the MU.
- Where there are abundant and well protect IFLs adjacent to the MU.
- Where IFLs have effective long-term, legal protection across the broader landscape at levels that exceed 50%, relative to the threshold year of 2017.
- Robustness of conservation initiatives.

While some respondents considered that going below the existing minimum threshold of +50% protection should either not be possible or very rare, other respondents brought up various factors, including environmental, social and economic considerations. Additionally, governance factors of the IFLs were also mentioned.

Question 5: How should SDGs consider dialogue results (i.e. input and agreements from stakeholders) from the Landscape Conference?

The following list summarizes the topics brought up by respondents in response to this question:

- Unclear about reference to Landscape Conference in Briefing Note.
- Mirror FSC Canada requirements in engaging key stakeholders (including new tools for ICLs).
- As data point and crucial input.
- To establish IFL protection thresholds and indicators.
- On a case-by-case basis.
- As any other consultation tool/input. Any decision on indicators and normative documents should be restricted to the SDG.
- As an agreement to be respected.
- Add peer review/quality assurance to SDG results.
- SDGs should be realistic about their sphere of influence. Particularly with governments.

The responses encompass various suggestions on how SDGs should consider the results of the dialogue. Some respondents found the question and reference to the landscape conference unclear. Others believe that the dialogue results should be used to establish thresholds and indicators for IFL protection, while some see it as a data point and emphasize that SDGs are ultimately responsible for setting IFL protection thresholds.

Question 6: Please provide any additional feedback or recommendations

The following list summarizes the topics brought up by respondents in response to this question:

- Respect Indigenous Cultural Landscapes (ICLs).
- Simplify IFL requirements.
- Implement Motion on time.
- Flexibility is needed to accommodate cultural, social and economic differences.
- FSC should ensure that the landscape approach to IFLs does not create barriers for existing certificate holders to continue with their certification.
- Consider releasing consultation results in full.
- Definition of IFL used (Potapov) does not reflect intent of IFL Motion 65.
- Existing default threshold should prevail except in some cases.
- Keep in mind FSC's goal is to certify more forests.
- Concerns about different levels of understanding according to each SDG.

The responses indicate that respondents are seeking transparency by requesting to access consultation results. It was emphasized that it is important to ensure compatibility between the landscape approach to IFLs and existing certified forests. Additionally, there was a general call for increased flexibility within the system.

FEEDBACK SUMMARY

- There are contrasting opinions among respondents regarding the establishment of a default minimum threshold by FSC. Some respondents advocate for more flexibility, while others argue against lowering it below +50%
- In line with the Motion request, respondents widely support the need to consider the economic, ecological, and social context of each landscape.
- New approaches, such as the Canadian six-step approach, were mentioned.
- The importance of FPIC was emphasized.
- Concerning the use of the results from the landscape dialogue, some believe they should be used to establish thresholds and indicators for IFL protection, while others view it as a data point and emphasize that the SDGs may ultimately be responsible for setting IFL protection thresholds.
- It was emphasized that ensuring compatibility between the landscape approach to IFLs and existing certified forests is crucial.

COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

Comments	PSU's response
Allow for greater flexibility in determining the minimum protection threshold for IFLs within a Management Unit (MU).	The current draft procedure and draft guidance to be piloted do not establish a minimum protection threshold for IFLs within a Management Unit. However, the procedure establishes the requirements that SDGs shall follow when developing draft IFL-related indicators and specifying protection thresholds for IFLs. Once the piloting phase is concluded the

	<p>learnings will be incorporated into the final guidance and procedure and a minimum protection threshold may be established.</p>
<p>Do not lower the current protection threshold for IFLs below +50% within a Management Unit.</p>	<p>Same as above.</p>
<p>Take into account the economic, ecological, and social context of each landscape.</p>	<p>The current draft procedure and draft guidance to be piloted require the SDG to consider ecological, social and economic processes during the landscape engagement process.</p>
<p>Explore alternative approaches, such as the Canadian six-step approach.</p>	<p>The current draft procedure and draft guidance to be piloted incorporate the concept of sphere of influence by the Organization. The documents allow SDG to customize their approach to the landscape's circumstances, provided it meets the requirements established in the draft procedure and guidance.</p>
<p>Follow Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).</p>	<p>When identifying the presence of Indigenous Peoples and traditional peoples in the landscape, the SDG shall follow <FSC-GUI-30-003 FSC Guidelines for the Implementation of the Right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC)>.</p> <p>Moreover, the SDG is expected to take into account provisions of FPIC agreements when developing IFL-related indicators.</p>
<p>Landscape Dialogue results should be used to establish the threshold and indicators for IFL protection.</p>	<p>According to the current draft procedure and draft guidance, SDGs are expected to organize a landscape engagement process to consult identified stakeholders on different topics, including the draft IFL-related indicators. The draft guidance expands on four stakeholder groups, including drivers/beneficiaries, subjects, context setters, and bystanders. The SDGs should assess the feedback collected from the landscape engagement process and prepare the final draft of IFL-related indicators for submission to FSC.</p>

Ensure compatibility between the landscape approach to IFLs and existing certified forests.

According to the current draft procedure and draft guidance, it is expected that SDGs will describe the landscape and conduct a risk analysis to assess the future of IFLs in that landscape. The risk analysis should also include consideration of existing certified forests. Moreover, the identification and engagement process with stakeholders shall include the identification of existing certified forests.

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS TAKEN TO ADDRESS FEEDBACK RECEIVED

- The current draft procedure and draft guidance will be piloted in key IFL countries. Once the pilots are concluded, the lessons learned will be incorporated into a new version of the procedure and guidance. This will be followed by a public consultation on the guidance and procedure before being submitted for formal approval.
- The current draft procedure and draft guidance to be piloted do not establish a minimum protection threshold for IFLs within a Management Unit. However, the procedure establishes the requirements that SDGs shall follow when developing draft IFL-related indicators and specifying protection thresholds for IFLs. Once the piloting phase is concluded the learnings will be incorporated into the final guidance and procedure and a minimum protection threshold may be established.

ABBREVIATIONS

FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
CAN	Conservation Area Network
EUDR	European Union Deforestation Regulation
FPIC	Free, Prior and Informed Consent
HCV	High Conservation Value
ICL	Indigenous Cultural Landscapes
IFL	Intact Forest Landscape
IGI	International Generic Indicators
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
MU	Management Unit
SDG	Standard Development Group
SLIMF	Small or Low, Intensity Managed Forests



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