



**HCV Resource Network Steering Group Meeting: Oxford, 5-6 February
2009**

Summary of Main Discussion Points

1. Introduction

The HCV Resource Network's Steering Group (SG) held its annual physical meeting in Oxford, UK on 5th - 6th February 2009.

Attendance

The SG was represented by: Forest Peoples Programme (Marcus Colchester, SG co-chair); Mondi (Peter Gardiner, SG co-chair), World Business Council for Sustainable Development (Sustainable Forest Products Industry working group represented by Antti Marjokorpi of Stora Enso); Tetra Pak (Lena Dahl), and WWF International (Geri Steindlegger), who were present for the duration of the meeting. FSC (Andre de Freitas), Greenpeace (Christoph Thies), The Nature Conservancy (Fran Price), and "Climate for Ideas.org" (Jim Ford, on Day 1) were able to participate in key discussions and contribute to decisions taken, via teleconferencing facilities. Jim Ford was able to attend physically on Day 2 of the meeting.

Members of the Secretariat (represented by ProForest) involved were: Ruth Nussbaum (Director) Christopher Stewart, (Associate Director), and Nilofer Chaffar (Network co-ordinator).

The meeting was chaired by Peter Gardiner and Marcus Colchester.

Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance were received from: International Tropical Timber Organization (Eduardo Mansur); World Bank (Andrey Kushlin), and World Conservation Union/IUCN (Guido Broekhoven).

Objectives

Primary objectives for the meeting were to:

- Discuss key elements of a strategic plan to guide future Network activities
- Discuss current Network structure and management, and proposed changes to support agreed priorities
- Review of financial situation and Network budget

The main points of discussion and decisions taken at the meeting are summarised below.

2. Discussion summary

2.1 Strategic Direction and Priority Activities for the Network

The Secretariat presented a proposal (see document "[Network Strategy Outline](#)", d2 February 2009) for discussion with the SG, outlining the achievements of the Network to date, and progress required in order to realise key strategic aims of the Network:

1. To provide a credible central point of reference on the HCV concept
2. To support the development and implementation of the HCV concept across all its current applications
3. To provide a governance and quality control function for HCV assessment
4. To promote the use of HCV in emerging and potential applications

The Secretariat presented a summary of the opportunities, priorities and operational challenges for the HCV concept identified by members of the Network Technical Panel and from a wider consultation process ([HCV Resource Network strategic planning 2009 - Request for input](#)). These were discussed as priority issues for the Network to consider when developing future activities and projects (see summary report "Priority Issues for HCV RN," February 2009, based on feedback on request for input to strategic planning", in development).

The broad outlines of the Network Strategy prepared by the Secretariat were accepted with a few modifications:

- Under the heading of 'Development and implementation of the HCV concept', refinement of methodologies for HCVs 5 and 6 should be considered as a key element
- Emphasising the importance of developing tools and methodologies to meet the needs of different users (e.g. from within and outside of certification; financial institutions and investors; governments and land use planners)
- Emphasising the need to demonstrate the practical value and measurable benefits of using the HCV approach, and of the services provided by the HCV Network (in particular the added value of the Technical Panel (TP) and TP Peer review service).

Following a review of the Network Strategy Outline, the SG discussed priority activities for the Network, highlighting the need for different actors in the Network (i.e. the SG organizations, the TP, the Secretariat and Network participants) to work in concert towards common aims, and the potential for a differentiation of roles and appropriate responsibilities as the Network develops its work plan. The priorities discussed by the SG are reported according to broad topic headings, below.

SAFEGUARD DISCUSSION

The SG stressed the critical importance of safeguards around the use of HCV, including the key topics of customary rights, legality, tenure and consent, and, fundamentally, the appropriate use of HCV where land is designated for conversion. Establishing clarity on these issues is a key concern of a number of SG organizations, and the need for a safeguard framework is a Charter commitment of the Network. The SG agreed to take this forward as a top priority (see section 2.2 below for more details on the actions proposed to establish a common platform on the safeguard framework).

COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH STRATEGY

This should explicitly include:

- **awareness raising/lobbying**, including promoting regional engagement (USA forestry sector is a priority), and outreach to current HCV stakeholders (e.g. RSPO, RTRS, RSB, etc)
- **information provision** by developing and expanding a range of practical case studies/ applications which demonstrate good practice; case studies and documents should consider social issues, ensure a balance of geographical representation (also to include countries with good governance, currently underrepresented in the Network's information resources), and demonstrate how HCV guidance may be aligned with existing operational practices and legal requirements (e.g. legal compliance, SEIAs, industry best practice guidelines etc.).

Furthermore, development of expertise and links with existing initiatives and institutions were strongly encouraged for the key issues of:

- **HCV 5 and 6**: outreach to rights holders and to social experts, to help balance participation in the Network improve its technical expertise.
- **ecosystem services**: e.g. through the WBCSD's Ecosystem Focus Area, and other links to be developed
- **land use planning processes**: e.g. through proactive engagement with land use planning authorities, building on the institutional influence of SG and participant organizations and members.

The fundamental need for the Network to maintain its reputation as a neutral technical centre of expertise was reiterated.

TRAINING

The SG highlighted the need for training and suggested that in developing a programme, the Network should consider both who provides training and capacity building for the use of HCV (e.g. appropriate use of TP members) and how this is best achieved (e.g. exploring the possibility of web-based training). Training for certification bodies was identified as being of particular importance.

NETWORK ORGANIZATION

The SG discussed various aspects of Network organisation that required strengthening, both through specific activities and as a result of improved communication and direct engagement with different stakeholders. The need for the Network to encourage balanced participation amongst the wider membership base, the SG and the TP, to include key stakeholders and experts from social organizations and industry (including the agribusiness sector), and to cover a wider geographical range, was highlighted.

Developing work programmes for the Network

It was recognised that the priorities highlighted by the SG overlapped with and complemented the Network Strategy Outline previously reviewed, and that these should be combined and developed into a more detailed work plan for the Network. To successfully develop and implement a proactive Network strategy, it was agreed that the existing Network structure would need to be strengthened by enhancing the roles of the Steering Group, Technical Panel and Secretariat as proposed in the strategy outline paper (also see section on Network Structure & Management).

Agreed Actions
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Secretariat to combine the Network Strategy Outline with priority topics identified by SG, and develop a draft document for SG to review.2. SG to comment and exchange ideas by email to consolidate the Network Strategy and corresponding work plan.3. Secretariat to formulate programmes of work and activities to support agreed priorities, including consideration of which actors in the Network will be responsible for specific actions.

2.2 Safeguards Discussion

a) Safeguards around conversion

The SG considered the issue of safeguards for the use of HCV where land is designated for conversion, using a [presentation](#) provided by Geri Steindlegger (WWF) as a basis for initial discussion. The HCV Network [Charter](#) explicitly recognises the value of non-HCV areas in its Guiding Principles. However, in the context of conversion, concern was expressed by some SG members that the focus on HCVs might be interpreted to mean that responsible management is limited to maintaining HCV areas, and thus permitting the conversion of any non-HCV areas.

The SG agreed that it is not the HCV Network's intention to sanction conversion of non-HCV areas, and that the wording of the Network's Charter is sufficiently robust to support this position. The Network needs to move forward urgently with the development of a safeguard framework that addresses concerns about the

appropriate use of HCV as part of responsible land management, where land is designated for conversion (see agreed actions below). Any communication by the Network in future should take care to support the position of the Network on non-HCV areas, as expressed in the Charter.

b) Promoting additional safeguards

Using the paper formulated by Marcus Colchester and the Forest Peoples Programme ("[Putting safeguards into the 'HCV approach' – a discussion paper](#)") as a starting point, the SG also considered the broader safeguards which need to be developed to support the use of the HCV approach outside the certification context. It was suggested that this involve: identification of the key missing safeguards, a comparison of selected standards highlighting existing safeguard policies, and review of various options for applying a safeguard framework. The issue is to now to be discussed further by the SG (see below).

Agreed Actions
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The SG is to conduct a further meeting to discuss safeguards, both specifically around the issue of conversion and more broadly around the use of HCV outside of certification.2. The meeting will be organised by Geri Steindlegger (WWF), and is scheduled to take place in May 2009 in Vienna (second, third or fourth week – dates to be confirmed).3. All members of the Quality Control Sub-committee, are to be invited to attend the meeting (Andrey Kushlin, Antti Marjokorpi, Fran Price, Geri Steindlegger, Jim Ford, Peter Gardiner, Marcus Colchester)4. Andre de Freitas (FSC) and Christoph Thies (Greenpeace) to be co-opted to join the QC sub-committee for the purposes of further discussions on developing a safeguard framework.5. Secretariat to facilitate initial email exchange of ideas amongst the SG on guidance for developing and applying a safeguard framework, and provide technical input as required.

2.3 External Presentation and Discussion of Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool (IBAT)

The IBAT is a mapping and information portal which has been widely discussed as a potential source of information for HCV assessments (see [summary of SG telecon](#), December 2008). Following concerns expressed by some SG members regarding the use of IBAT, Leon Bennun (Director of Science & Policy at BirdLife International) was invited to make a [presentation](#) to demonstrate the use of the tool, and discuss the possible alignment of the IBAT with the HCV concept.

The SG appreciated the continued interest that the IBAT sponsors have expressed in collaborating with the Network, and recognised that the underlying data sets and the IBAT tool itself have significant potential to support some elements of HCV assessment (notably HCV 1); proposals to incorporate additional data layers into the IBAT (e.g. ecosystem services) were also welcomed.

The SG suggested that cross-linking the HCV Network with IBAT would be useful and that opportunities for developing collaboration should be investigated. Some remaining reservations were expressed:

- IBAT only addresses some elements of the HCV approach (i.e. principally HCV 1) and use of IBAT maps does not amount to an HCV assessment.
- For HCV 1 assessment, the IBAT provides a valuable indication of the biodiversity issues that may be a concern, but due to the global nature of the database this will necessarily be somewhat coarse and may not be suited to site-level planning. The data need to be examined and refined as necessary on a case by case basis.
- There remains a concern in the use of IBAT as regards potential misuse by industry to screen areas and make selections for potential development prior to any consideration of rural communities and indigenous peoples' needs. The SG requested that IBAT review the transparency issues to take account of community consultation (e.g. guidelines for the use of the tool).

Agreed Action
To strengthen the collaboration and maintain a constructive dialogue / discussion between the organisations involved in developing IBAT and the HCV Resource Network.

2.4 Network Structure and Management

a) Co-chair re-election

The majority of the members representing NGOs on the SG expressed their preference for Marcus Colchester to continue as co-chair and thanked him for having done an excellent job in this position. Marcus Colchester accepted the nomination with the caveat that he is going to be on sabbatical for the next 3 months, and will need another SG member to cover his role.

Agreed Actions
1. Marcus Colchester and Peter Gardiner to continue as co-chairs for the coming year
2. Geri Steindlegger (WWF) to act as co-chair from the NGO caucus for the duration of Marcus Colchester's forthcoming sabbatical.

b) SG composition

The current composition of the SG was reviewed, and a number of options considered which would reflect some of the Network priorities discussed. The SG noted that there were still gaps in representation from various geographical regions (notably Africa and Latin America) and with certain key stakeholder groups (social organisations, indigenous peoples, and agribusiness); the current gender imbalance within the SG was also mentioned. There was a general consensus that it would not be desirable to extend the SG to more than 14 organisations (currently there are 12 member organisations).

Agreed Action
SG members / Secretariat should suggest organisations, and nominate suitable individuals within, to fill some of the identified gaps in composition.

c) SG Roles

The role of the current SG sub-committees was reviewed. In light of the need to develop a communications strategy for the Network, it was decided that this was an appropriate time to activate the Communications and Outreach sub-committee as discussed in 2008. Membership of the Finance & Fundraising sub-committee, and Quality Control sub-committees was confirmed; additional sub-committees would continue to be convened on an ad hoc basis depending on individual SG member strengths and interests (e.g. project / document review roles). Additionally, the SG highlighted the current FSC P&C review and the importance of maintaining a dialogue between the FSC review working group and the Network, particularly with respect to the wording of P9, and glossary definitions of HCV.

Agreed Action
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Communications and Outreach sub-committee to be activated with initial participation from Lena Dahl (Tetra Pak) and Fran Price (The Nature Conservancy)2. Secretariat to formulate a communications strategy for discussion with Communications and Outreach sub-committee.3. Geri Steindlegger agreed to join Finance and Fundraising sub-committee (replacing Ken Creighton).4. It was agreed that Antii Marjokorpi should take on the role of liaising with the current FSC P & C review working group on behalf of the HCV Resource Network, and providing feedback on any potential dissonance which may emerge.

d) Technical Panel

In light of previous discussions on the composition of the Technical Panel, the SG confirmed the need to have greater representation from the forestry industry and social experts.

Agreed Actions
1. Quality Control sub-committee to consider two applications from industry experts
2. Secretariat to invite Robin Barr (TFT), previously suggested by Fran Price as a social expert, to submit CV / application

e) Secretariat role and independence

The SG discussed the current functioning of the Secretariat, and agreed that in order to meet the strategic aims previously outlined, the Network needs to enhance the Secretariat's capacity by appointing a dedicated Network manager (in addition to the existing Network coordinator, currently Nilofer Ghaffar). For the time being, this role will be fulfilled by Christopher Stewart, who has been providing input to activities and representing the Network at key events since 2006, though in the longer term (see below) the SG indicated that Network posts should be advertised.

The SG also discussed a proposed separation between the HCV Network and ProForest and reiterated the desirability of the HCV Resource Network operating as an independent entity, whilst thanking the Secretariat for their important contribution to date in developing the Network. The SG requested that the Secretariat present a plan for a phased transition to an independent operation sooner rather than later. However, given the uncertain financial outlook for 2009 the SG indicated that this should in no way jeopardise the continued existence and stability of the Network, should only happen after financial security has been assured for a reasonable period, and also should take into account the personnel needs and aspirations of Secretariat staff engaged with the Network. Options for a phased transition will now be explored further with the Secretariat/ ProForest.

Agreed Action
SG co-chairs, Secretariat and ProForest Director to discuss phased approach to separation of the Network, and present options for further consideration by the rest of the SG.

2.5 Financial Reporting and Budget

The Secretariat reported back on the previous year's (2008) income and provided a detailed description of expenditure on specific activities. The secured budget for the

coming year (2009) was examined, and an expanded budget (to include a larger Secretariat) was accepted. It was noted that current funding covers the current baseline operation of the Network, but that additional funds will be needed to maintain the proposed strengthening of the Secretariat's capacity and Technical Panel operation. Some potential sources of funding were identified but the Secretariat needs to make fundraising and securing the financial future of the Network an immediate priority.

Additionally, a guidance note on financial contributions to the HCV Network, prepared by Marcus Colchester (based on FSC guidance), was discussed and minor amendments proposed. It was agreed that the financial sub-committee would be initially responsible for scrutinising any potentially sensitive contributions.

Agreed Action
HCV Resource Network policy for accepting contributions to be finalised, and posted on website.

3. Next Meeting

In view of the important new developments in the Network's strategic plan for 2009 and onwards, it was suggested that the SG hold a second physical meeting in September this year to review progress. In order to fulfil some of the priorities for reaching out to existing users of the HCV concept, it was proposed that that this should be combined with a regional meeting in the US. An option tabled at the meeting was to link this with the Dogwood Alliance/ EPN and Southern Forests Roundtable. However, some SG members subsequently expressed concern that this may not be perceived as a neutral venue, notably for reaching out to the US forest industry stakeholders, and that various other options for a venue should be explored.