



Concept Note: **HCV regional working group for the Congo Basin (HCV-RWG)**

I. CONTEXTE

The high conservation value (HCV) concept was developed by the forest stewardship council at the end of the nineteen nineties and has since been widely applied to identify and to attribute social and/or environmental values to particular landscape features.

Initially a concept intended for the management of forest landscapes allocated to timber exploitation, the use of the HCV concept has now been extended to other certification systems (*BonSucro, RSPO...*), as well as to natural resource management and conservation planning.

HCVs are biological, ecological, social and cultural values of critical importance on the national, regional or global level¹.

Principle 9 in the FSC certification standard is entirely dedicated to the management of HCVs and sets out a series of obligations that allow conserving these critical values.

The definition of these HCVs has been revised in the new version of FSC's Principles and Criteria (version 5; 2012). At the time of the development of the new FSC Norms for the Congo Basin, it seems thus critical and timely to develop regional guidelines for the identification, the management and the monitoring of the HCVs in the Congo Basin forests.

Since 2010, several national initiatives to define criteria for the identification and the management of HCVs have been launched (Gabon in 2008, Cameroon - for small and low-intensity managed forests (SMILFs) - in 2008, the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2012 and Cameroon in 2015). But these independent attempts have not produced a sound framework for the interpretation, the management and the conservation of HCVs and, consequently, they have not been formally endorsed by FSC international.

[Common Guidance for HCV Identification](#) have been produced and published at the international level in October 2013 by ProForest on behalf of HCV Resource Network. This document will be used to help define the HCVs for the Congo Basin sub region.

Furthermore, the policy Motion 65 that was adopted at the 7th FSC General Assembly in Seville (7-14 September 2014). This motion obliges FSC to develop specific indicators for Intact Forest Landscapes and to integrated them into the National FSC Norms.

Responding to this motion in an efficient manner forms part of FSC's strategic objectives, and in accordance with the former, and discussions held at the international level, it has been agreed that each important forest basin gets down to address this motion taking into account its respective particularities.

In order to respond to the different stakeholders' expectations (FSC members, partners in sustainable forest management, civil society,...) and to establish rules for the identification, the management and the monitoring of HCVs in the Congo Basin, a project document called « HCV Roadmap for the Congo Basin » has been written up with the support of the "Programme to Promote Forest Certification Operations" (PPECF). The first phase of his project benefits from the financial support of PPECF/COMIFAC and WWF International (World Wide Fund for Nature).

¹ [Common Guidance for HCV Identification](#); Proforest on behalf HCV Resource Network; 74 pp. ; 2013.



PROJECT PHASES:

Phase 1 (YEAR 2016): Development of regional HCV definitions with a focus on the development of IFL indicators (motion 65).

Phase 2 (year 2017): Development of regional guidance and national adaptations for the management and the monitoring of HCVs.

To officially launch the project, the Congo Basin sub regional FSC coordination wants to establish an HCV regional working group (HCV-RWG).

This working group will be in charge of producing the regional HCV guidance, which will consequently be adapted to the national level by the national working groups, which were already established for the elaboration of the national FSC standards.

II. STRUCTURE OF THE HCV-RWG

In accordance with the decision-making structure of FSC, the HCV-RWG will be a multidisciplinary team composed of six (06) experts originating from three chambers as follows:

- Two (02) representatives of the environmental chamber (Environmental NGOs, scientific experts);
- Two (02) representatives of the economic chamber (Private sector, industry and trade associations);
- Two (02) representatives of the social chamber (Representatives of civil society platforms, NGOs, scientific experts).

The HCV-RWG will be reinforced by representatives of the scientific community (International research centres, Universities, independent experts). The group will receive logistic support from the FSC sub regional coordination for Congo Basin and technical support from the HCV-Officer (being recruited) based in Brazzaville.

The selection of the members of the HCV-RWG will be done by the FSC sub regional coordination for Congo Basin based on the expertise of the candidates and/or their home institutions, as well as their comprehension and adhesion to the FSC vision and system.

III. MISSIONS & ACTIVITIES OF THE HVC-RWG

The mission of the HCV-RWG is the writing up of a guidance document for the identification, the management and the monitoring of HCVs in the Congo Basin.

Doing so, the HCV-RWG will assure that the guidelines are in accordance with the Principles and Criteria of FSC, as well as with the generic guidelines and any other reference document produced by the HCV Resource Network.

More specifically, the HVC-RWG will be in charge of the following activities during project phase one:

- Finalization and adoption of the manual of procedures (written by the HCV Officer);
- Assuring that the procedures are coherent with those demanded by the international donors to the project;
- Preparation of the regional HCV guidance :
 - Identification of the methodology to be adopted for the definition of HCVs;
 - Determination et identification of existing data to be used for the definition of HCVs and HCV management;
 - Compilation of existing data and information with the help of the HCV-Officer;
 - Proposition of HCV definitions for the six (06) HCV categories;
 - Participation at regional and international workshops related to the topic;
 - Acting as interface between all stakeholders of the project: private enterprises, public administrations, civil society organizations, scientific experts (in prior agreement with the Head of the Congo Basin FSC Programme);
 - Assure a good regular communication between the different project implementation bodies (in prior agreement with the Head of the Congo Basin FSC Programme).



IV. PRELIMINARY TIMETABLE AND WORKING SESSIONS PLANNING

The HCV-RWG will work in tight collaboration with the HCV-Officer, who coordinates the activities of the group according to the established work programme.

During project phase one, three regional workshops will be held in Brazzaville at the Congo Basin FSC office and one steering committee meeting at the FSC headquarters in Bonn, Germany:

- **Workshop 1 (Brazzaville, 5 days) :**
Initial training related to the HCV concept, the generic definitions of the six HCV categories and the existing data and studies available to prepare definitions adapted to the Congo Basin. Validation of the manual of procedures: Agreeing on the ways the activities will be coordinated between the different members, including the responsibilities. Definition of the technical and scientific contributions required for the establishment of HCV definitions.
- **Workshop 2 (Brazzaville, 5 days) :**
Writing of the guidance for the identification of HCVs (including thresholds – to discuss) and focus on IFLs.
- **Workshop 3 (Brazzaville, 5 days) :**
Finalisation of the Congo Basin HCV guidance for the HCV definitions and the criteria to define thresholds, with a focus on the definition and management of IFLs (motion 65).
- **Steering committee meeting (Bonn, 3 days) :**
Presentation and submission of the results to the steering committee for final amendments and approval.

The meetings will be prepared and organized by the HCV-Officer, the steering committee and the Head of the FSC Programme of the Congo Basin.

Each meeting will be summarized by a report written by the HCV-RWG, assisted by the FSC Congo Basin secretariat, and sent to the PPECF/COMIFAC and WWF International, as well as to other stakeholders, after validation by the Head of Programme.

A quarterly financial report will be composed by the HCV-Officer for the donor agencies.

V. DELIVERABLES

The expected deliverables of the HCV-RWG by the end of the first project phase 1 are:

- A manual of procedures;
- A final version of the regional guidance for the definition of HCVs in the Congo Basin is transmitted to the steering committee for validation ;
- A regional guidance draft for the definition and the management of IFLs in the Congo Basin is established and submitted to the steering committee for validation ;
- After approval by the steering committee, the final versions of the regional guidance documents are widely distributed and made available to forest managers;
- The national working groups were instructed by the HCV-RWG regarding the process and its result and are able to adapt the regional guidance to the national level.



VI. RESOURCES

The six HCV-RWG members are selected on the basis of the call for the expression of interest by the FSC sub regional coordination for Congo Basin.

The selection will be subjected to recognition by FSC Policy and Standards Unit (FSC-PSU).

All members of the HCV-RWG will receive the same remuneration.

Regional and international travel, food and accommodation costs will be covered by the FSC sub regional coordination for Congo Basin, thanks to the support by PPECF/COMIFAC and WWF International.