

Summary of the FSC General Assembly for ATIBT and its members : an eye-opener, a constructive communication and a motion adopted



Dear Members,

Two weeks ago a delegation of ATIBT's staff, as well as a number of representatives from FSC certified companies in the Congo Basin, members of ATIBT, attended the FSC's General Assembly in Vancouver, Canada.

This 3-yearly event brings together representatives of the FSC's three chambers: economic, environmental and social; chambers that are divided in north and south. ATIBT is a member of the economic chamber north.

An eye-opener

For many of us it was the very first time to take part in such a General Assembly and I don't think I exaggerate when stating that it was an absolute eye-opener and a valuable experience in understanding how this organisation works.

An estimated 750 attendants from every corner of the world, all with their own specific agenda and interests they wanted to defend. For changes of existing policies and/or new initiatives to be executed by the FSC's Board of Directors and Executive Committee, motions are tabled for which you seek support from the three chambers through an intense lobbying campaign ("I support your motion, provided you support mine..."). For a motion to be adopted by the members, one needs the majority support of each individual chamber.

Motions to amend the implementation of Motion 65 on IFLs

During the previous General Assembly in Seville in 2014, Motion 65 IFL's (Intact Forest Landscapes), was adopted. However, IFL's were determined by the WRI (World Resources Institute) and a number of environmental NGO's based on satellite images alone and without any on-ground verification. This has since been strongly criticised by forest operators in Canada, Russia, Latin America, Asia and the Congo Basin. Strict implementation of this motion would have had serious consequences for the economic viability of companies. Therefore, ATIBT tabled three motions to request certain amendments to Motion 65.

In the end, we decided to drop two of our motions as they are now partly covered by the newly adopted IGI's (International Generic Indicators), but wanted to maintain the motion that is dealing with the economic viability of companies. This motion (Motion 34) calls for **a regional assessment of the overall short and long-term impacts (environmental, social, and economic) of the management and protection measures linked with the implementation of Motion 65.**

FSC National and/or Regional Office(s) will develop their own national or regional approach to conduct the assessment. The Standard Development Groups (SDG) shall consider the assessment results when developing indicators related to Intact Forest Landscapes protection within National Forest Stewardship Standards.

A plebiscite for ATIBT Motion 34, improved dialogue with NGOs and a need for follow-up

Because of an excellent lobbying and awareness building campaign, ATIBT's Motion 34 was overwhelmingly adopted by the General Assembly. However, we now need to ensure we do not lose momentum and get this assessment on the way as soon as possible. FSC's environmental and social chambers will be closely watching progress.

From our meetings with environmental NGO's, especially Greenpeace, it became clear that there is a need for improved dialogue. Perhaps such dialogue would contribute to a better understanding of the challenges responsible forest operators are facing and, might avoid clashes as has been the case with the IFL discussion. Time will tell but ATIBT fully supports the idea of regular meetings with environmental NGO's.

Thanks to some intense work (and short night rests....) we are proud to have had Motion 34 adopted by the General Assembly, a cause worth fighting for and I would like to thank all participants for their contribution and tireless efforts.

Yours,

Robert Hunink
President ATIBT