

Solar Stewardship Initiative

Standard Setting and Review Procedure

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The Solar Stewardship Initiative

The Solar Stewardship Initiative (SSI) works with industry participants including manufacturers, and buyers of solar photovoltaic modules, as well as other stakeholders including civil society, NGOs, intergovernmental institutions, international financial institutions, academics and independent experts with human rights and environmental expertise to collaboratively foster responsible production, sourcing, and stewardship of materials in the solar value chain. The SSI's mission is to enhance sustainability and environmental, social, governance (ESG) performance, as well as end-to-end transparency across the solar supply chain. Businesses actively involved in the solar value chain can apply to join the SSI and get certified against the SSI Standards.

The SSI's core objectives are to:

- Ensure the energy transition is just, inclusive, and respects people's human rights.
- Establish mechanisms to enhance supply-chain integrity in the global solar industry.
- Enable continuous improvement of ESG performance and level of transparency.
- Prepare the industry for relevant upcoming laws and regulations on ESG, transparency and responsible supply chains.

Foreword

The Solar Stewardship Initiative (SSI) and its members are unwavering in their commitment to responsible practices in the solar value chain.

Our core values are built upon the protection of the environment and respect for human rights. We recognise that these principles are fundamental to the sound governance of the solar sector. We are dedicated to accelerating the clean energy transition and delivering solutions to the immediate climate and energy crises. These values must be reflected at all steps of our industry's value chain; they are fundamental to the long-term success of any solar business operating today.

Solar is a reliable, sustainable, and renewable source of energy, critical to addressing climate change and improving energy security. The industry is growing rapidly; it is expected to be the main electricity source in Europe by 2050.

With its growth, the opportunity to foster green economic development also increases. Developing a responsible, transparent, and sustainable solar value chain is central to delivering this clean energy transition.

The SSI has been designed to clearly set out expectations for environmental, social and governance (ESG) practices, and supply chain transparency.

Its purpose is to strengthen confidence in how the materials and products in the solar value chain are manufactured and used. It aims to establish and communicate verifiable information on ESG practices and transparency of businesses along the length of the solar supply chain.

The SSI does not certify sites involved in forced labour. By refusing to conduct assessments or certifications in sites or regions that are not freely accessible, the SSI contributes to the marginalisation of businesses who fail to uphold strong ESG and traceability standards.

The publication of the SSI ESG Standard in October 2023 was a significant step in achieving these objectives, followed by the adoption of the SSI Supply Chain Traceability Standard in December 2024. With the combination of both Standards, stakeholders along the solar value chain will be reassured that the silicon used in the solar modules was produced responsibly.

More information can be found at www.solarstewardshipinitiative.org/

Version History

Version	Date	Description
1.0	October 2025	First version issued as approved by the SSI Secretariat.

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1. Introduction

1.1. About This Document

This document sets out the procedure for developing, reviewing, revising, and approving standards under the Solar Stewardship Initiative (SSI). It applies to all SSI standards, including the ESG Standard and the Supply Chain Traceability Standard.

Developed in accordance with the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards, this procedure ensures that all standard-setting activities are conducted in a transparent, inclusive, and credible manner. It outlines the roles and responsibilities of the SSI Secretariat, the Working Groups, and the SSI Board, and defines the steps involved in initiating, consulting on, finalising, and maintaining SSI standards.

The procedure is designed to support continuous improvement, stakeholder engagement, and the credibility of the SSI assurance system. It includes requirements for public consultation, stakeholder mapping, decision-making, and documentation, and serves as a reference for all participants in the standard-setting process.

This document is reviewed at the start of any new or revised standard-setting cycle and at least every five years. It is publicly available on the SSI website and forms part of the broader governance and assurance framework that underpins the SSI certification system.

1.2. Purpose

This procedure ensures the SSI's standards (ESG and Supply Chain Traceability) are developed, revised, and maintained through a transparent, inclusive, and credible process in line with the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Setting Social and Environmental Standards.

1.3. Scope

This procedure applies to:

- Development of new standards
- Periodic review and revision of existing standards
- Merging of standards
- Urgent or non-substantive amendments
- Associated guidance and assurance documents

1.4. Alignment with ISEAL Code of Good Practice

SSI's standard-setting process is guided by the following principles:

- **Transparency:** All relevant processes and decisions are publicly available.
- **Inclusiveness:** All stakeholder groups are given equal opportunity to participate.
- **Responsiveness:** Stakeholder input is treated with integrity and reflected in decision-making.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Standards evolve in response to emerging issues and lessons learned.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1. SSI Secretariat

The SSI Secretariat plays a central role in managing and delivering the standard-setting process. Its responsibilities include:

- **Process Coordination:** Oversees and administers the entire standard-setting and review cycle, ensuring alignment with ISEAL's Code of Good Practice and internal SSI policies.
- **Terms of Reference (ToR) Development:** Prepares, updates, and publishes the ToR for each standard-setting or revision process, including scope, justification, intended outcomes, and stakeholder engagement strategies. Approve non-substantive ToR updates without Board sign-off.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Identifies and maps relevant stakeholders, ensuring inclusive participation across sectors, geographies, and underrepresented groups. Organises consultations, workshops, and communication channels to gather meaningful input.
- **Facilitation and Support:** Provides administrative and technical support to the Standards Committee, including meeting coordination, background research, and documentation of discussions and decisions.
- **Document Management:** Maintains accurate records of all standard-setting activities, including meeting minutes, consultation logs, comment responses, and version histories. Ensures secure storage and public availability of relevant documents.

- **Communication and Publication:** Ensures timely dissemination of draft and final standards, consultation summaries, and decisions via the SSI website and other channels. Coordinates the release of translations, guidance documents, and communication materials.
- **Monitoring and Improvement:** Tracks stakeholder feedback, complaints, and lessons learned to improve future standard-setting processes. Facilitates periodic review of the procedure itself.

2.2. Working Groups

Working Groups (WGs) are convened by the SSI Secretariat to lead the technical development, revision, and review of SSI standards. These groups serve as the central forum for drafting and refining standards content and ensuring that all relevant stakeholder perspectives are considered.

Members of the Working Groups are selected by the SSI Secretariat based on their subject-matter expertise, familiarity with the solar value chain, and ability to represent a diversity of viewpoints (e.g., manufacturers, civil society, ESG experts, supply chain practitioners). All members serve in their individual capacity and are expected to act in good faith and in line with SSI's mission.

To maintain a clear separation between governance and technical decision-making, individuals serving on the SSI Board cannot simultaneously serve as members of any Working Group. However, companies represented on the Board may nominate different individuals to participate in Working Groups, provided that roles are clearly separated and all relevant conflict-of-interest provisions are respected.

Core responsibilities include:

- **Standards Development and Revision:** Lead the drafting of new standards or the revision of existing ones, ensuring clarity, technical accuracy, and alignment with SSI's objectives and international best practices (e.g., ISEAL, OECD, UNGPs).
- **Stakeholder Input Integration:** Review, analyse, and respond to public consultation feedback. Assess feasibility, intent, and potential impact of suggested changes, and integrate them where appropriate.
- **Evidence-Based Recommendations:** Make recommendations based on research, benchmarking, field experience, and implementation realities, with a focus on practicality, proportionality, and effectiveness.

- **Consensus Building:** Facilitate dialogue and convergence across diverse views to reach balanced and broadly supported outcomes. Where full consensus is not possible, provide a clear rationale for decisions.
- **Support to the Secretariat:** Provide expert insight and peer review of guidance materials, implementation tools, and interpretation notes related to the standard.
- **Time-Bound Engagement:** Participate in a defined workplan with scheduled meetings, document reviews, and decision points. Working Groups are typically convened for the duration of a specific standard-setting or revision process.

2.3. SSI Board

The SSI Board holds the highest decision-making authority in the Solar Stewardship Initiative's standard-setting and assurance system. It ensures that standards and procedures align with SSI's mission, legal obligations, and stakeholder expectations, while maintaining independence, credibility, and integrity.

The Board is designed as a multi-stakeholder body. Members are expected to act in the broader interest of the initiative, maintain confidentiality when required, and disclose any conflicts of interest in line with SSI governance policies.

Key responsibilities include:

- **Strategic Oversight:** Provide overall governance and strategic direction for the SSI standards system, ensuring alignment with the initiative's purpose to drive transparency, ESG performance, and responsible sourcing in the solar value chain.
- **Approval of Standards and Procedures:** Review and formally approve new standards, major revisions, and associated procedures (e.g., assurance, claims, traceability) based on recommendations from the Secretariat and input from Standards Working Groups.
- **Accountability and Safeguards:** Safeguard the impartiality and credibility of the standard-setting process by ensuring it complies with internationally recognized good practice (e.g., ISEAL Code of Good Practice). Intervene in cases of conflict of interest, failure of due process, or risks to SSI's reputation or effectiveness.
- **Risk and Compliance Oversight:** Review risks associated with standards implementation, including legal, reputational, operational, and stakeholder risks. Approve mitigation strategies proposed by the Secretariat.

- **Support Continuous Improvement:** Endorse periodic reviews of standards and procedures, including triggers for revision, external evaluations, and stakeholder feedback mechanisms.
- **Transparency and Integrity:** Ensure that decisions are well-documented, transparent, and made in the interest of the initiative's stated values. Oversee mechanisms for complaints and appeals related to standard-setting.

3. Procedure Overview

3.1. Initiation

The initiation phase formally begins the development of a new standard or the revision of an existing one. It ensures that the process is transparent, justified, and aligned with SSI's mission and strategic priorities. Key steps in the initiation phase include:

- **Triggering Events:** A standard-setting or revision process may be initiated due to one or more of the following:
 - Scheduled periodic review (at least every five years)
 - Merging of standards
 - Regulatory developments (e.g., new ESG or supply chain legislation)
 - Stakeholder feedback or complaints
 - Implementation challenges or ambiguities
 - Emergence of new risks, technologies, or best practices
- **Preparation of Terms of Reference (ToR):** The SSI Secretariat prepares a comprehensive ToR that includes:
 - Scope and intended use of the standard
 - Justification for development or revision
 - Key social, environmental, and economic outcomes
 - Alignment with SSI's Theory of Change
 - Geographic and sectoral application
 - Risks and mitigation strategies
 - Timeline and milestones
 - Stakeholder engagement plan
- **Approval and Publication of ToR:** The ToR is reviewed internally by the Secretariat and shared publicly on the SSI website. Where applicable, input may be sought from stakeholders or technical experts prior to finalisation.

- **Formation of Standards Working Group:** The Secretariat appoints a multi-stakeholder Standards Working Group to lead technical development or revision. Member selection is based on subject-matter expertise, representation diversity, and declared independence.
- **Project Planning:** A detailed project plan is established, outlining:
 - Key phases (e.g., drafting, consultation, finalisation)
 - Responsibilities and coordination mechanisms
 - Resource allocation
 - Communication protocols

The initiation phase ensures that the standard-setting process begins with clear objectives, sound justification, and a transparent, inclusive structure for development.

3.2. Stakeholder Mapping

Stakeholder mapping is a critical step in ensuring the SSI standard-setting process is inclusive, balanced, and credible. It identifies and engages all relevant parties who may be affected by, contribute to, or have a legitimate interest in the development, revision, or implementation of SSI standards.

The SSI Secretariat ensures that all standard-setting activities reflect a fair and balanced range of perspectives and that efforts are made to remove barriers to participation, particularly for stakeholders in the Global South, SMEs, and vulnerable groups.

Objectives of stakeholder mapping:

- Ensure meaningful participation from diverse interest groups
- Promote equity and representation of underrepresented voices
- Build legitimacy and support for the standard
- Inform tailored consultation and engagement strategies

Key activities include:

- **Identification of Stakeholder Categories:** The SSI Secretariat identifies stakeholders across a range of categories, including but not limited to:
 - Solar manufacturers, developers, installers, and recyclers
 - Raw material suppliers and component manufacturers
 - Civil society organizations (e.g. human rights, environment, labour)
 - Trade unions and worker representatives
 - Indigenous groups and local communities

- Governments and regulatory bodies
- Investors, buyers, and downstream customers
- Standards and certification bodies
- Academic, independent and technical experts
- **Assessment of Representation and Influence:** Stakeholders are assessed based on their relevance, expertise, geographic scope, and degree of influence or vulnerability. Special attention is given to:
 - Stakeholders in high-risk regions or supply chain segments
 - Marginalised or historically underrepresented groups
 - Those with lived experience or practical knowledge relevant to the standard
 - Affected communities
- **Engagement Planning:** Based on the mapping, the Secretariat develops an engagement plan that outlines:
 - Which stakeholders to involve at which stages
 - Methods of engagement (e.g. survey, interview, webinar, roundtable)
 - Languages and formats needed for accessibility
 - Mechanisms to support meaningful participation (e.g. translation, time-zone sensitivity, pre-briefings)
- **Documentation and Updates:** The stakeholder map is maintained as a living document and updated throughout the process. It includes:
- **Stakeholder group names and affiliations**
 - Contact details (where appropriate)
 - Record of outreach and engagement actions
 - Feedback summaries and how input was considered

3.3. Consultation Phases

The consultation process is central to the integrity, transparency, and credibility of SSI's standard-setting activities. It ensures that all interested and affected stakeholders have the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the development or revision of SSI standards.

SSI conducts multi-phase consultations designed to meet or exceed the requirements of the ISEAL Code of Good Practice.

Consultation processes are adapted to the context of the standard, ensuring accessibility and inclusiveness across geographies, languages, and stakeholder capacities.

1. First Public Consultation – Draft for Comment

- Duration: Minimum 60 days
- Purpose: Collect broad stakeholder input on the initial draft of the standard or major revisions.
- Notification and Outreach:
 - Direct communication with mapped stakeholders
 - Public announcements via SSI website, newsletters, and social media
 - Targeted outreach to underrepresented groups
- Engagement Methods:
 - Online consultation form
 - Webinars and briefing sessions
 - Individual interviews or roundtables (as needed)
- Output: All submissions are logged, categorized, and analysed. A Summary of Comments and Responses is prepared for transparency.

2. Second Public Consultation – Revised Draft Review

This phase applies only in cases where a new standard is being developed.

- Duration: Minimum 30 days
- Purpose: Share the revised draft that reflects feedback from the first consultation and gather further input before finalisation.
- Scope: Focused on changes made, unresolved issues, or areas requiring further stakeholder input.
- Engagement Tools:
 - Highlighted change-tracking version of the draft
 - Summary report of how previous feedback was addressed
 - Additional briefings or Q&A sessions
- Output: Final set of comments and inputs to be integrated into the final draft. A second Summary of Comments and Responses is published.

3. Optional Third Public Consultation (if required)

This phase applies only in cases where substantive, unresolved issues remain after the second consultation; and these issues could significantly affect the standard's content or its implications for stakeholders.

- Trigger Conditions:

- Substantial new changes emerge during the second round
 - New stakeholder concerns arise
 - Consensus is not reached on critical issues
- Duration: Minimum 30 days
- Purpose: Test the stability and acceptability of final draft content
- Output: Consolidated input to support final review and approval.

4. Post-Consultation Transparency

For every consultation phase, SSI will:

- Publicly post all non-confidential comments received
- Publish a Consultation Summary Report detailing:
 - Who was consulted (by category)
 - Key themes raised
 - How input was addressed or why it was not adopted
- Ensure anonymity and data protection where required

3.4. Drafting and Revisions

The drafting and revision phase transforms stakeholder input, technical analysis, and strategic goals into clear, implementable, and credible standard requirements. This phase is iterative and guided by the principles of transparency, inclusiveness, and continuous improvement.

This process ensures the standard reflects the best available knowledge, diverse stakeholder input, and is fit for purpose across the global solar value chain.

- **Initial Drafting:** The Standards Working Group, coordinated by the SSI Secretariat, develops the initial draft of the standard or revision. The draft:
 - Aligns with the objectives outlined in the Terms of Reference
 - Reflects international frameworks (e.g., ILO, UNGPs, OECD Guidelines, ISO, and ISEAL)
 - Incorporates lessons learned from past implementation, pilot results (if applicable), and stakeholder feedback
 - Maintains clarity, consistency, and auditable language
- **Integration of Consultation Feedback** After each consultation round, the Secretariat and Working Group:
 - Log and review all comments
 - Categorize feedback by theme, section, or stakeholder group

- Assess the technical, operational, and ethical implications of proposed changes
- Revise the draft, accordingly, documenting the rationale for all accepted, modified, or rejected inputs
- **Internal Review and Consensus Building**
 - Revised drafts are shared within the Working Group for validation and refinement.
 - The Secretariat facilitates consensus-building discussions on complex or contested topics.
 - Where consensus cannot be reached, the issue is documented and resolved via clear rationale and, if necessary, escalated to the SSI Board for strategic direction.
- **Clarity and Coherence Review:** Before finalisation, the draft is subject to an internal review to ensure:
 - Alignment with existing SSI documents (e.g., Assurance Manual, Claims Guide)
 - Logical structure and readability
 - Clear use of defined terms and references
 - Compatibility with existing certification systems and operational realities
- **Final Draft Preparation:** After all consultations and revisions are completed, the final draft is prepared by the Secretariat, incorporating:
 - All accepted changes
 - A change log or comparison with previous versions
 - Updated references, annexes, and version control

The final draft is then submitted to the SSI Board for review and formal approval.

3.5. Pilot Testing

Pilot testing is a critical step used to assess the practicality, clarity, and effectiveness of draft SSI standards before final approval and full implementation. It ensures that the standard is workable, measurable, and relevant across different contexts and supply chain actors.

- **Objectives of Pilot Testing**
 - Feasibility: Evaluate whether the requirements can be implemented by organizations of different sizes and locations.

- Clarity: Identify ambiguous language or unclear expectations that may hinder consistent interpretation.
- Auditability: Ensure the standard can be objectively assessed by independent assurance bodies.
- Impact Assessment: Understand the potential environmental, social, and economic implications of implementing the draft requirements.
- Feedback Generation: Gather actionable feedback from users, auditors, and affected stakeholders on real-world performance and usability.
- **Scope of Pilot Testing:** Pilot tests may be conducted on:
 - A full draft standard or targeted sections (e.g., traceability, labour rights, responsible sourcing)
 - Specific geographies, supply chain tiers (e.g., quartzite, polysilicon, module assembly), or stakeholder groups
 - Tools and supporting materials such as checklists, guidance documents, or data reporting templates
- **Participant Selection:** Participants are selected to ensure diversity and representativeness, including:
 - Different types and sizes of SSI member sites
 - Various regions and risk contexts
 - Involvement of both operational staff and assessment bodies
 - Inclusion of at least one site per core supply chain segment (e.g., upstream material processor, downstream manufacturer)
- **Process and Methodology:** The pilot process typically includes:
 - Orientation session with participating sites and auditors
 - Simulated or real-time assessments against the draft standard
 - Collection of structured feedback through debrief meetings, surveys, and observation notes
 - Documentation of implementation challenges, time/resource implications, and verification difficulties
- **Review and Integration of Findings:** All feedback is compiled into a Pilot Testing Summary Report, detailing:
 - What worked well
 - Areas of concern or confusion
 - Recommendations for improvement

The Standards Working Group reviews the report and uses findings to adjust the draft standard before finalisation.

A summary of key findings and resulting changes is made public.

- **Transparency and Voluntariness:** Participation in pilot testing is voluntary and non-binding. Sites that participate are not automatically certified under the draft standard. Results are anonymised unless participants provide explicit consent for attribution.

4. Decision-Making and Approval

4.1. Consensus versus Voting Protocols

The decision-making and approval process ensures that the final version of each SSI standard is the result of a credible, inclusive, and transparent process, consistent with ISEAL's Code of Good Practice. This phase confirms that stakeholder input has been duly considered, procedural integrity has been maintained, and the standard is ready for adoption.

This structured approach to approval upholds the integrity, transparency, and credibility of the SSI standards and ensures stakeholder trust in the certification system.

- **Consensus-Based Decision-Making:** The Standards Working Group, coordinated by the SSI Secretariat, works to reach consensus on all key decisions during drafting and revision.
 - Consensus is defined as general agreement in the absence of sustained opposition. It does not require unanimity but reflects broad support from participants representing diverse stakeholder interests.
 - Where consensus cannot be reached, the Secretariat documents dissenting views and ensures they are transparently addressed in the final documentation.
- **Secretariat Review:** Upon completion of all drafting, consultation, and revisions, the SSI Secretariat:
 - Verifies that all procedural steps (including stakeholder engagement, consultation, and documentation) have been followed
 - Reviews the final draft for consistency, auditability, and alignment with SSI's mission, ToR, and legal obligations
 - Prepares a Final Standard Package, including:

- Final draft of the standard
 - Summary of changes made during the process
 - Consultation reports with comment logs and responses
 - Pilot testing findings (if applicable)
 - Implementation and transition recommendations
- **Final Approval by SSI Board:** The SSI Board is responsible for final approval of all new or revised standards. The Board considers:
 - Whether due process was followed
 - Whether the final content reflects stakeholder input and field feedback
 - Whether the standard is credible, implementable, and aligned with SSI's objectives
- The Board may:
 - Approve the standard
 - Approve with minor conditions (e.g. editorial refinements)
 - Request further revisions before approval
 - Once approved, the standard is assigned a version number and effective date.
- **Documentation and Publication:** The approved standard and all supporting materials are:
 - Published on the SSI website in English (official language)
 - Clearly marked with version number, publication date, and status (e.g. superseded, current)
 - Translated into other languages as needed, with English as the reference for interpretation
- **Communication and Implementation:** SSI communicates the outcome of the approval process to all stakeholders via:
 - Email announcements
 - Website updates
 - Webinars or info sessions (as needed)
- The standard is accompanied by guidance materials, training resources, and a defined transition period to allow users time to adjust.

5. Transition and Implementation

The transition and implementation phase ensures that new or revised SSI standards are adopted in a consistent, fair, and practical manner. It provides time for members, assurance providers, and other stakeholders to adapt their systems, processes, and training to meet updated requirements.

The goal of this phase is to ensure that all parties have sufficient time, clarity, and support to comply with revised requirements—enhancing consistency, credibility, and long-term impact.

- **Transition Period:** Each new or revised standard is launched with a clearly defined transition period, typically ranging from 6 to 12 months, depending on the nature and extent of changes. The transition period is:
 - Approved by the SSI Board
 - Clearly communicated on the standard's cover page and SSI website
 - Announced directly to all members, auditors, and stakeholders

During the transition period:

- Members may continue to be assessed against the previous version of the standard
- No certifications are issued against the revised version until all associated systems (e.g., checklists, training) are finalized and operational
- **Preparation and Support:** To support effective implementation, the SSI Secretariat will:
 - Develop and distribute:
 - Guidance documents and interpretation notes
 - Training materials for members and auditors
 - Revised audit tools (e.g., checklists, SAQs, evidence guides)
 - Organize:
 - Webinars and live Q&A sessions
 - Targeted training for assurance bodies and high-risk suppliers
 - Helpdesk support during the transition period
- **Operational Readiness:** Before the new version becomes mandatory:
 - All approved assessment bodies must be trained and authorized to audit against the new standard

- o Members must update their internal systems and complete any revised self-assessment tools (if applicable)
 - o Any new SSI-recognized equivalencies or technical interpretations will be published
- **End of Transition:** At the end of the transition period:
 - o All new assessments and certifications will be conducted exclusively against the latest version of the standard
 - o Previous versions will be formally retired and archived
 - o Sites certified under the previous version may retain their certification until their next reassessment, unless otherwise stated by SSI
- **Communication:** All transition milestones and deadlines will be clearly communicated through:
 - o Email notices
 - o SSI website updates
 - o Member and auditor briefing sessions

6. Periodic Review and Revisions

To maintain the relevance, credibility, and effectiveness of its standards, SSI commits to a structured process of periodic review and revision. This ensures that SSI standards remain aligned with evolving best practices, regulatory developments, stakeholder expectations, and real-world implementation experiences.

This approach ensures SSI standards remain dynamic, credible, and reflective of ongoing learning, while maintaining transparency and accountability to stakeholders.

- **Review Cycle:** All SSI standards will undergo a formal review at least every five (5) years from the date of publication. An earlier review may be triggered by:
 - o Significant stakeholder feedback
 - o Implementation challenges
 - o Legislative or regulatory changes (e.g., EU CSDDD, Forced Labour Ban)
 - o Innovations in sustainability or traceability practices
 - o Risks to SSI's credibility, accuracy, or alignment with its Theory of Change
- **Types of Revisions:** SSI distinguishes between:
 - o Substantive Revisions: Major changes that alter the intent, scope, structure, or implementation of the standard. These require full consultation and may include new criteria, restructured requirements, or expanded applicability.

- o Editorial or Non-Substantive Revisions: Minor clarifications, terminology updates, or formatting improvements that do not change the intent of requirements. These may be fast-tracked with documented internal review and published as a minor version update (e.g., v2.1).
- **Inputs for Review:** During the review process, SSI considers:
 - o Results of previous consultations and assessments
 - o Feedback from certified sites, auditors, and working groups
 - o Outcomes of pilot tests and implementation evaluations
 - o Updates in international frameworks (ISEAL, ISO, OECD, UNGPs)
 - o Benchmarking against peer initiatives and regulatory expectations
- **Review Process:** The SSI Secretariat initiates the review and prepares a Review Report outlining:
 - o Whether the standard remains fit for purpose
 - o Recommended scope of revision (if any)
 - o Stakeholder engagement needs

The Secretariat may consult with relevant technical experts and reconvene a Standards Working Group (as needed).

If revisions are required, the standard-setting process follows the same steps as outlined in this procedure, including public consultation and Board approval.

- **Public Communication:** The outcome of each periodic review (whether a revision is made or not) is published on the SSI website. A summary of rationale, including stakeholder input, evidence reviewed, and any recommended updates, is shared publicly.

7. Documentation and Transparency

Transparent and well-maintained documentation is essential to uphold the credibility, traceability, and integrity of the SSI standard-setting and revision process. SSI is committed to ensuring that all key activities, decisions, and stakeholder contributions are recorded, accessible, and publicly reported wherever appropriate.

This commitment to documentation and transparency reinforces stakeholder trust, supports informed participation, and strengthens SSI's alignment with ISEAL's good practice framework.

- **Public Access to Information:** The following documents will be made publicly available via the SSI website:
 - o Current and past versions of all SSI standards
 - o Standard Setting and Review Procedure
 - o Terms of Reference (ToR) for each standard-setting or revision process
 - o Public summaries of stakeholder consultations, including how comments were addressed
 - o Final decision notices and Board approval records
 - o Transition timelines and implementation guidance
 - o Pilot testing summaries (where applicable)

All documents will clearly state:

- o Version number
 - o Date of publication
 - o Status (e.g. current, superseded, in review)
 - o Contact details for enquiries and feedback
- **Internal Recordkeeping:** The SSI Secretariat will maintain comprehensive internal records of all standard-setting and revision activities for a minimum of five (5) years, including:
 - o Stakeholder mapping lists and consultation invitations
 - o Stakeholder submissions and associated analysis
 - o Drafts (including tracked changes)
 - o Minutes from Standards Working Group meetings
 - o Voting records (if applicable)
 - o Evidence and rationale used for decisions
 - o Conflict of interest declarations
 - o Communication logs related to standard development

These documents are stored securely in digital format with appropriate data protection and access controls.

- **Data Confidentiality and Consent:** SSI respects stakeholder confidentiality and data privacy. Stakeholder input may be anonymised upon request, and personal data is handled in compliance with applicable data protection laws and SSI's internal privacy policies.
- **Ongoing Feedback and Access:** Stakeholders may:

- Submit feedback on published standards at any time via designated channels
- Request access to archived documents (subject to confidentiality and relevance)
- View a register of upcoming reviews or standard-setting processes

A public log of comments on the Standard Setting and Review Procedure itself is maintained and incorporated into future revisions.

8. Appeals and Complaints

SSI recognises the importance of maintaining transparency, accountability, and fairness throughout its standard-setting and revision processes. Stakeholders who believe that these processes have not been followed appropriately—or who wish to raise concerns related to decisions, conduct, or procedural integrity—may do so through the SSI Complaints and Appeals Mechanism.

This mechanism applies to:

- Procedural complaints related to the development, revision, or consultation of SSI standards
- Appeals concerning decisions made during or as a result of the standard-setting process
- Grievances involving the conduct of the SSI Secretariat, certified members, or approved assessment bodies in the context of standard-related matters

Process Overview: Stakeholders wishing to submit a complaint or appeal must follow the process outlined in the SSI Complaints and Appeals Mechanism (v2.0, March 2025), which includes:

- Scope of admissible complaints and appeals
- Submission requirements and forms
- Confidentiality provisions
- Investigation procedures and timelines
- Decision-making protocols and potential outcomes

Key Reference Document: For complete procedures, deadlines, and submission guidance, refer to the official document: SSI Complaints and Appeals Mechanism. Available at: www.solarstewardshipinitiative.org/about-ssi/complaints-and-appeal-mechanism

9. Official Language and Publication

The official language of all SSI standards and associated procedures, including this Standard Setting and Review Procedure, is English.

All final versions of standards, procedural documents, public consultation summaries, and supporting materials will be published in English on the SSI website. Where translations are provided to enhance accessibility, the English version shall prevail in the event of any discrepancies or differences in interpretation.

SSI commits to:

- Clearly labelling all documents with their version number, publication date, and current status (e.g. draft, final, superseded)
- Ensuring public access to current and historical versions of standards and procedures
- Providing translations where feasible and appropriate, especially for stakeholder engagement during consultations
- Notifying stakeholders of new or revised publications through the SSI website, email communications, and other appropriate channels

All publicly available documents can be accessed via the SSI resource portal at:

www.solarstewardshipinitiative.org/resources

10. Annexes

10.1. Annex A – Terms of Reference (ToR) Template

Template for Initiating a Standard Setting or Revision Process

Title and Version	
Document Title	Terms of Reference – [Standard Name or Revision]
Version Number	[e.g., v1.0]
Date of Issue	[DD/MM/YYYY]
Background and Context	
Brief summary of the rationale for initiating the development or revision of the standard	Reference to previous version (if applicable) Industry, regulatory, or stakeholder developments triggering the process Link to SSI's mission and objectives
Objectives of the Process	
Main purpose of the new or revised standard	

Specific ESG, traceability, or sectoral outcomes sought		
Alignment with SSI's Theory of Change		
Scope of the Standard		
Geographic scope	(global, regional, etc.)	
Target users	(e.g., manufacturers, buyers, assessors)	
Value chain coverage	(e.g., polysilicon, module assembly, downstream actors)	
Standard type	(e.g., ESG, Traceability)	
Intended Application		
How the standard will be used	(e.g., for certification, self-assessment, benchmarking)	
Types of assurance mechanisms	(e.g., third-party audits)	
Key Issues and Topics to be Addressed		
Focus areas	(Environmental, Social, Governance, Traceability, etc)	
Sector-specific or risk-based topics	(e.g., forced labour, circularity, due diligence)	
Known implementation challenges or gaps to address		
Process Overview		
Phases	(e.g., drafting, consultation, pilot testing, approval)	
Type of revision	(New standard, Full revision, Targeted update)	
Stakeholder Engagement Strategy		
Key stakeholder groups to engage		
Planned methods	(consultations, surveys, webinars, focus groups)	
Efforts to ensure inclusive and balanced representation		
Language and accessibility considerations		
Governance and Oversight		
Roles of SSI Secretariat, Board, and any Working Groups		
Decision-making structure and approval pathway		
Conflict of interest management		
Risks and Mitigation		
Key risks to credibility, feasibility, or inclusiveness		
Mitigation measures planned		
Timeline and Milestones		
Milestone	Target Date	Responsible Party
Launch ToR	[DD/MM/YYYY]	
First public consultation	[DD/MM/YYYY]	
Pilot testing (if applicable)	[DD/MM/YYYY]	
Board approval of final version	[DD/MM/YYYY]	
Publication and transition begins	[DD/MM/YYYY]	
Contact Information		

**For questions or comments
regarding this Terms of
Reference, please contact**

contact@solarstewardshipinitiative.org

10.2. Annex B – Stakeholder Mapping and Engagement Record

Template for Identifying and Tracking Stakeholder Participation in Standard Setting

Stakeholder Mapping Summary

Stakeholder Group	Examples of Actors	Relevance to the Standard	Geographic Coverage	Priority for Engagement
Industry (Manufacturers, Suppliers)	Module producers, raw material suppliers	Primary users and implementers	Global	High
Civil Society / NGOs	Labour rights groups, environmental NGOs	Represent affected communities, ESG experts	Global/Regional	High
Workers / Trade Unions	Local unions, international federations	Represent labour rights and workplace concerns	Site-level	Medium/High
Governments / Regulators	National ministries, EU bodies	Regulatory alignment and policy integration	National/Regional	Medium
Academia / Experts	Universities, think tanks, technical advisors	Provide research and technical expertise	Global	Medium
Financial Institutions	ESG investors, development banks	Influence adoption through ESG due diligence	Global	Medium
Certification/Assurance Bodies	Third-party verifiers, auditors	Responsible for assessments and implementation	Global	High
Affected Communities	Local residents, Indigenous peoples	Directly impacted by operational decisions	Regional/Site-level	High
Others (Specify)				

Stakeholder Consultation Tracking

Stakeholder Name / Org	Group Category	Method Used	Date Engaged	Summary of Input / Concern Raised	Follow-Up Actions Taken
SolarTech Alliance	Industry	Written submission	[DD/MM/YYYY]	Suggested clearer definitions for supplier risk rating	Included in revised draft
Global Workers Union	Trade Union	Online interview	[DD/MM/YYYY]	Raised concerns about	Considered for new guidance

				third-party worker representation	
EcoJustice Europe	NGO	Public consultation	[DD/MM/YYYY]	Recommended stronger biodiversity language	Forwarded to technical reviewer
Independent Technical Expert	Academic / Expert	Virtual workshop	[DD/MM/YYYY]	Flagged audit feasibility challenges in traceability	Escalated to Working Group

Summary of Representation Balance

Sectoral Diversity: ☐ Achieved ☐ Needs Improvement

Geographic Coverage: ☐ Global North and South represented ☐ Gaps identified

Vulnerable Groups Engaged: ☐ Yes ☐ Partial ☐ Not yet

Language and Accessibility Barriers Addressed: ☐ Yes ☐ Partially ☐ No

Stakeholder Communication Log

Date Sent	Recipient Group	Communication Type	Summary of Message Sent	Response Received (Y/N)
[DD/MM/YYYY]	All mapped groups	Email blast	Announcement of consultation launch	Yes/Partial
[DD/MM/YYYY]	Affected Communities	Translated flyer	Overview of standard changes and invitation	Pending

10.3. Annex C – Public Comment Log

This log is used to document all public comments received during the consultation phases of a standard-setting or revision process, including the response provided and the final decision made regarding each submission.

Comment ID	Stakeholder Type (Org/Individual/Anonymous)	Stakeholder Category	Standard Section Referenced	Summary of Comment / Suggestion	Secretariat / Working Group Response	Decision / Outcome	Notes or Follow-Up Required
PC-001	Solar Panel Co. (Org)	Industry	Section 4.1 – Pre-assessment	Clarify timeline for SAQ submission	Clarified language in draft v2.0	Accepted	Updated clause and added example
PC-002	EcoRights Alliance (NGO)	Civil Society	Section 6 – Conformance Ratings	Recommended stronger enforcement for major NCs	Reviewed and added explanation to CAP protocol	Partially accepted	Flagged for follow-up in guidance notes

PC-003	Anonymous	Individual	General	Concern about cost of surveillance audits	Costs evaluated; no changes made	Not accepted	Refer to Assurance Manual guidance
PC-004	CertifyCheck Ltd. (Assurance Body)	Conformity Assessment	Annex A – ToR Template	Suggested alignment with ISO 17065	Reviewed and aligned terminology	Accepted	Shared with Working Group for consistency
PC-005	GreenLab (Academia)	Technical Expert	Section 5.5 – Interviews	Recommended inclusion of night-shift workers in sample	Incorporated into sampling guidance	Accepted	Added to final checklist protocol

Notes:

- Comments submitted anonymously will be recorded and reviewed equally but may be listed without identifying detail.
- All accepted changes will be documented in the final version change log and noted in the consultation summary report.
- This log must be retained as part of the public record and shared upon request (with confidential details redacted if applicable).

10.4. Annex D – Standards Committee Composition and Declaration of Interests

This annex documents the composition of any Standards Working Group, Expert Panel, or Advisory Group appointed during the standard-setting or revision process. It also records declarations of interest to ensure transparency, independence, and impartiality in decision-making.

Name	Organisation / Affiliation	Stakeholder Category	Role (e.g., Chair, Member)	Area of Expertise	Geographic Representation	Participation Status (✓/X)
Dr. Laura Kim	SolarTech Manufacturing	Industry	Member	ESG implementation	South Korea	✓
Juan Martinez	Fair Supply Coalition	Civil Society / NGO	Member	Labour rights, human rights	Mexico	✓
Amina Hassan	GreenEnergy Consultancy	Technical Expert	Chair	Audit systems, ISO standards	Kenya	✓

Hugo Stensrud	SolarTrace AB	Assurance Body	Observer	Traceability verification	Sweden	✓
[Add more rows as needed]						

Declaration of Interests Form

Each participant must complete and sign a declaration of interests prior to joining a standard-setting group.

Declaration of Interests Form Template

Full Name:

Organisation / Affiliation:

Role in the Working Group / Panel:

I declare that:

I will act in my personal or professional capacity with integrity and in the best interest of SSI's mission and objectives.

I will disclose any potential or actual conflicts of interest that may influence, or be perceived to influence, my contributions to the standard-setting process.

I agree to withdraw from discussion or decision-making on matters where I may have a conflict, as determined by the SSI Secretariat.

I agree to maintain confidentiality where required.

List any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest below (e.g., financial, organisational, personal):

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Reviewed and accepted by SSI Secretariat: [Name] – [Signature] – [Date]

Retention and Publication

- Completed forms will be stored securely by the SSI Secretariat.
- A summary of the committee composition and any declared interests will be included in the public summary report of the standard-setting process.
- Individuals serving in a personal capacity will be noted as such.

10.5. Annex E – Decision-Making Records

This annex provides a formal record of decisions made during the standard-setting or revision process. It supports transparency, traceability, and procedural integrity by documenting:

- Who made the decision
- What was decided and why
- When and how the decision was reached

This record is maintained by the SSI Secretariat and forms part of the public assurance file for each standard version.

Decision Log Table

Decision ID	Date	Decision Type	Description of Decision Made	Stakeholders or Group Involved	Basis / Rationale	Outcome (e.g. Adopted, Deferred, Rejected)
DEC-001	#####	Structural Revision	Agreed to consolidate ESG sections 6–9 into a single Environmental Management Systems clause	SSI Secretariat + WG	Simplifies overlapping content; aligns with ISO 14001	Adopted
DEC-002	#####	Stakeholder Proposal Response	Proposal to mandate on-site subcontract or audits rejected	SSI Working Group	Considered infeasible for SMEs; risk-based approach preferred	Rejected
DEC-003	#####	Pilot Test Adjustment	Modify sampling size for high-risk suppliers based on pilot feedback	Secretariat + External Advisor	Feedback showed administrative burden disproportionate for certain traceability tiers	Adopted
DEC-004	#####	Approval Milestone	Final draft submitted to SSI Board for approval	Secretariat	Final draft completed; all consultation responses addressed	Forwarded for Board Review
DEC-005	#####	Board Approval	SSI Board approved Standard v2.0 subject to minor	SSI Board	All procedural requirements met; Board endorsed	Approved with conditions

			editorial changes		consensus recommendations	
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Summary of Decision-Making Principles

- All decisions should aim for consensus but may proceed by clearly documented rationale if consensus is not achievable.
- Decisions are made by the SSI Secretariat, relevant Working Groups, or the SSI Board, depending on the process stage.
- All decisions must be recorded within five (5) working days of being made.

Decision Review and Retention

- All decisions and related materials (e.g., meeting minutes, written rationale, supporting evidence) must be retained by the SSI Secretariat for at least 10 years.
- Summaries of key decisions will be made available in the Final Consultation Report and on the SSI website where applicable.

10.6. Annex F – Document Control and Version History Template

Document Metadata

Field	Details (to be completed per document)
Document Title	[Full title of the standard or procedure]
Document Type	☐ Standard ☐ Procedure ☐ Guidance ☐ Policy
Lead Author(s)	[Name/Organisation]
Responsible Unit	SSI Secretariat
Review Cycle	Every 5 years or as needed
Official Language	English
Document Owner	SSI Secretariat
Confidentiality Level	☐ Public ☐ Internal ☐ Restricted
Date of Initial Publication	[DD/MM/YYYY]
Current Version Number	[e.g., v2.0]
Effective Date	[DD/MM/YYYY]
Next Scheduled Review	[DD/MM/YYYY]

Version History Table

Version No.	Date Published	Description of Change	Change Type (Minor/Major)	Approved By	Status (Draft/Final)
v1.0	#####	First edition of the Standard Setting Procedure issued	Major	SSI Board	Final

v1.1	#####	Clarified stakeholder consultation timelines in Section 6	Minor	SSI Secretariat	Final
v2.0	[Planned]	Full revision aligned with ISEAL v7.0 and updated ToC	Major	SSI Board	Draft

10.7. Annex G – Summary of Consultations

Consultation Overview

Item	Description
Standard Title	[e.g., SSI ESG Standard v2.0]
Consultation Period (Round 1)	[Start Date – End Date]
Consultation Period (Round 2)	[Start Date – End Date] (if applicable)
Consultation Method(s)	☐ Online form ☐ Webinars ☐ Interviews ☐ Public workshop ☐ Written submissions
Languages Offered	[e.g., English, Spanish, Chinese]
Total Submissions Received	[Number]
Summary Published	☐ Yes ☐ No (If yes, link or file name)

Stakeholder Participation Overview

Stakeholder Category	Number Engaged	Region(s) Represented	Notes
Industry (e.g., manufacturers, suppliers)			
Civil Society / NGOs			
Labour / Trade Unions			
Government / Regulatory			
Academia / Experts			
Affected Communities			
Auditors / Assurance Bodies			
Other (specify)			

Key Themes Raised by Stakeholders

Theme / Topic	Summary of Stakeholder Feedback	SSI Response or Action Taken
Clarity of ESG indicators	Concern about vague language in Section 3.2	Revised language for greater auditability
Stakeholder interview protocols	Request to clarify worker confidentiality protections	Updated interview guidance in Assurance Manual
Certification thresholds	Suggested tighter limits for traceability non-conformances	Forwarded to Working Group; thresholds adjusted
Risk-based audit model	Support from industry; concerns from NGOs	Maintained approach; added safeguards in guidance

Changes Made Based on Feedback

Briefly summarise how the draft standard was modified in response to consultation:

- Merged overlapping ESG indicators into a unified Environmental Management section
- Added guidance on subcontractor oversight in traceability assessments
- Clarified the appeal process for disputed certification outcomes
- Adjusted sampling guidance for low-risk suppliers based on pilot testing
- Communication and Outreach Summary

Communication and Outreach Summary

Activity / Channel	Description	Reach / Engagement
Email blast to stakeholder list	Sent to 320+ contacts across sectors	47% open rate
Public webinar (Round 1)	Overview of proposed changes + Q&A session	72 attendees
Local NGO briefings	Virtual sessions with Global South partners	3 briefings held
SSI website	Consultation documents and submission portal	850+ page views

Lessons Learned for Future Consultations

- Consider extending consultation periods in regions with limited internet access
- Early engagement with assurance bodies improves technical feasibility of criteria
- Multilingual summaries increased submissions from non-English-speaking stakeholders