



# CHARTER OF THE INDIA NATIONAL PLATFORM ON PRIVATE SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS



Hosted by

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# Charter of the India National Platform on Private Sustainability Standards

## Preamble

WE THE STAKEHOLDERS OF THE INDIA NATIONAL PLATFORM ON PRIVATE SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS DETERMINED:

to inculcate sustainability in the mindsets of people, businesses, and governments, in order to fuel development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs,

to accentuate the importance of sustainable development in products, processes, and systems, and to promote environmental, economic, and social progress across sectors,

to establish harmonizing conditions for private sustainability standards in India,

to help Indian producers introduce sustainable products in domestic and global markets that enable their integration with the Global Value Chains,

to further the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development in India for realizing implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals,

AND FOR THESE ENDS:

to be guided by the cumulative and collaborative interests of people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership,

to encourage integration of sustainability into practices of businesses and to help PSS-creating bodies understand India's socio-cultural and business context while they create PSS for the Indian producers and markets,

to ensure, through deliberations, acceptance of principles, and institution of systems, that private sustainability standards are not used in a manner in which they become non-tariff technical barrier to trade,



to propagate knowledge on sustainability in order to encourage Indian consumers to opt for sustainably produced commodities, and at the same time influence choice of sustainable products in public procurement,

to employ a multi-stakeholder, member-driven, equitable, consensus-driven, governance framework for identifying and addressing issues concerning private sustainability standards in India,

HAVE RESOLVED TO UNITE OUR EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE THESE AIMS

Accordingly, our respective organizations, major groups, constituencies, and governments, through representatives or by virtue of being a party in person, assembled in the city of New Delhi, have agreed to the present Charter of the India National Platform on Private Sustainability Standards, and do hereby establish a multi-stakeholder deliberation and governance platform to be known as the India National Platform on Private Sustainability Standards.



## Chapter I. Introduction

### Article 1 Name of the Organization

1. The organization shall be known as the 'India National Platform on Private Sustainability Standards'.
2. The short name for this organization is the 'Indian PSS Platform'.
3. For the purposes of this Charter and its Schedules, any reference to 'the Platform' shall mean the Indian PSS Platform, unless otherwise specified.

### Article 2 Seat of the Organization

1. The Platform shall have its principal seat at New Delhi, India.
2. The Platform may decide to convene at any other subsidiary seat outside of New Delhi if the Secretariat so decides in the best interests of the Platform and its stakeholders.

### Article 3 Operational and financial cycles

1. The Platform shall consider the calendar year, i.e., from January 1 to December 31, for operational and documentation purposes.
2. The Platform shall follow the fiscal year, i.e., from April 1 to March 31, for budgetary computation and financial purposes.

### Article 4 Basic Structure

1. The basic structure of the Charter of the Platform includes the Preamble, and the Chapters concerning Introduction, Mission, Organs, and Budget and Finance.
2. Provisions that are part of the basic structure of the Charter shall be an exception to Chapter XIII and shall not be amended or changed.



## Chapter II. Mission

### Article 5 Purposes

The purposes of the Platform are:

- (a) To harmonize the private sustainability standards ecosystem in India;
- (b) To foster sustainability across all production, business and trade sectors;
- (c) To increase and orchestrate collaborations, activities and investments by stakeholders and public & private partners, leading to increased positive impact on all three dimensions of sustainability, viz., social, environmental, and economic;
- (d) To bring in transformative change in the production and consumption patterns in India, especially in MSMEs and common consumer behavior, so as to promote sustainable consumption and production;
- (e) To enable the resilience of farmers, smallholders, their communities, and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) for access, connection, and competition in Global Value Chains;
- (f) To promote sustainable public procurement either through voluntary or private sustainability standards that are in synchronization with the Indian context and/or with international standards;
- (g) To develop friendly relations among stakeholders based on respect for the principle of equal rights, cooperation, and consensus, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen decision-making about private sustainability standards.

### Article 6 Nature

The Nature of the Platform shall be demand-driven, solutions-oriented, harmonizing, diverse, collaborative, and deliberative.

### Article 7 Objectives

1. The objectives of the Platform shall be as follows:

- (a) To identify and address issues concerning private sustainability standards in India by engaging stakeholders and facilitating meaningful dialogue between them;
- (b) To enhance market access and export opportunities for products manufactured in India or by Indian producers through harmonization of private sustainability standards in India;





(c) To liaise with the Government of India for extending support to the work of the Platform through classification under promotion of market access initiatives or such other distinction as deemed appropriate;

(d) To encourage creation of robust Indian standards for increasing quality of products in India, and gradually extend the scope of such quality standards for services and processes as well;

(e) To maintain transparency, confidence, accountability, and participation among all stakeholders;

(f) To collaborate with national and international stakeholders to create knowledge, promote research, and cooperate on findings in the area of sustainability standards and interconnections with sustainable development.

2. The Platform shall endeavor to optimize the sustainability standards ecosystem in India in a way that would promote sustainable development and contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals or any other subsequent global agenda for promotion of sustainable development.



## Chapter III. Membership

### Article 8 Membership criteria

1. Membership in the Platform is open to all organizations, firms, and individuals working in the manufacturing sector and in the area of private sustainability standards or are interested stakeholders in the promotion of the work of the Platform, which/who accept the commitments contained in the present Charter and, in the judgment of the Secretariat, are able and willing to carry out these commitments.

2. The Secretariat, at the decision of the Steering Council, and in consultation with the Multi-Stakeholder Assembly, may include provisions for a fee to become a member of the Platform.

3. The membership fee, when proposed, shall be nominal to only cover in full or in part the basic administrative expenses of the Platform, and in no way shall impede the full and complete participation of any member of the Platform due to inability to contribute the membership fee.

### Article 9 Good faith

Members and officers of the Platform shall act in good faith in the best interests of the Platform, bearing in mind the principles and purposes enunciated in the Charter.

### Article 10 Contravention of the Charter

A Member of the Platform which/who has persistently contravened the Principles contained in the present Charter may be expelled from the Platform by the Multi-Stakeholder Assembly upon the recommendation of the Steering Council.

### Article 11 Equity in Membership and Participation

1. The Platform shall at all times encourage the membership and participation of persons from across all sexes, and who identify themselves with any gender, under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs.

2. The Platform, including its Organs, Members and stakeholders shall not discriminate on the basis of sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, colour, nationality, age, religion, or psychological, physiological, or anatomical impairment.



## Chapter IV. Organs

### Article 12 Principal Organs

1. The Platform shall have as principal organs: a Multi-Stakeholder Assembly, a Steering Council, and a Secretariat.

2. The Secretariat shall, in consultation with the Multi-Stakeholder Assembly and the Steering Council, identify priority product groups for which Sectoral Committees shall be established. The Sectoral Committees will also be deemed to be principal organs of the Platform.

### Article 13 Subsidiary Organs

Such subsidiary organs as may be found necessary may be established in accordance with the present Charter.



## Chapter V. The Multi-Stakeholder Assembly

### Article 14 Composition

1. The Multi-Stakeholder Assembly shall consist of all the Members of the Platform.
2. Each Member shall have not more than two representatives in the Multi-Stakeholder Assembly.

### Article 15 Functions and Powers

1. The Multi-Stakeholder Assembly may discuss any questions or matters within the scope of the present Charter or relating to the powers and functions of any organs provided for in the present Charter, and, may make recommendations to the Members of the Platform or to the Steering Council or to both on any such questions or matters.
2. The Multi-Stakeholder Assembly shall consider the general principles of co-operation in issues concerning standards, especially private sustainability standards, certifications, and conformity assessment, along with allied subjects, and may make recommendations with regard to such principles to the Members or to the Steering Council or to both.

### Article 16 Decision-making

Decisions of the Multi-Stakeholder Assembly on procedural and all other matters shall be made by positive consensus, and abstentions shall be deemed as concurrence for the purpose of expedited discharge of the Platform's functions.

### Article 17 Procedure

1. The Chairperson of the Multi-Stakeholder Assembly shall be nominated and selected by the Secretariat bearing in mind their expertise in the field of trade, economics, and sustainability standards.
2. The Multi-Stakeholder Assembly shall adopt its own Rules of Procedure for conducting its business, or as may be guided by the Secretariat.



## Chapter VI. The Steering Council

### Article 18 Composition

1. The Steering Council shall consist a fundamental composition of eight groups of stakeholder members of the Platform, and may consist of an extended composition as required for any meeting.

2. The fundamental composition of the Steering Council shall be as follows:

#### **(a) Government**

- i) One representative deputed by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India;
- ii) One representative deputed by the Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India;
- iii) One representative deputed by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India;

#### **(b) United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards**

One representative deputed by the Steering Council of the United Nations Forum on Sustainability Standards;

#### **(c) Autonomous Bodies**

- i) One representative each from the Export Development Authorities;
- ii) One representative each from the Commodities Board;
- iii) One representative from the Export Inspection Council of India;

#### **(d) Export Promotion Councils**

One representative each from the Export Promotion Councils;



**(e) Industry Associations**

- i) One representative from the Associated Chambers of Commerce of India;
- ii) One representative from the Confederation of Indian Industry;
- iii) One representative from the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry;

**(f) Standards Development Organizations**

One representative each from three private sustainability standards development organizations which are members of the Platform;

**(g) Market stakeholders**

- i) One representative who is a producer dealing with private sustainability standards;
- ii) One representative from a lead firm dealing with private sustainability standards;
- iii) One representative from a retailers' association dealing with private sustainability standards;
- iv) One member representatives from bodies involved in formulation of private sustainability standards;

**(h) Sectoral Committees**

The Chair of every Sectoral Committee of the Indian PSS Platform will be an ex-officio member of the Steering Council.

3. The Steering Council may have an extended composition as follows:

**(a) Representatives of National Platforms on Sustainability Standards**

- i) The Secretariat may invite representatives of other National Platforms on Sustainability Standards recognised by this Platform as part of the meetings of the Steering Council.



**(b) *International organizations and other organizations of repute***

- i) The Secretariat may invite representatives from agencies of the United Nations and other international intergovernmental organizations which have relevance in international trade for subject-specific inputs, briefings and to participate in the meetings of the Steering Council;
- ii) The Secretariat may invite representatives from reputed organizations which are alliances of organizations developing private sustainability standards for subject-specific inputs, briefings and to participate in the meetings of the Steering Council;
- iii) The Secretariat may invite representatives from consumer organizations of repute for subject-specific inputs, briefings and to participate in the meetings of the Steering Council;

**(c) *Individual experts***

- i) The Secretariat may invite individual experts for subject-specific inputs, briefings and to participate in the meetings of the Steering Council;
- ii) These individual experts may be from the following areas: trade and sustainability standards; trade and social sustainability; interests of producers, smallholders, farmers, workers, and labourers; trade and environmental sustainability; and, trade and economic sustainability.

4. Member representatives of the Private Sustainability Standards Development Organizations will be part of the Steering Council on a rotational basis, in the English alphabetical order of the name of the organization, with other PSS development organizations which are members of the Platform.

## **Article 19 Functions & Powers**

1. The Steering Council shall work to promote the purposes, objectives, principles, and values of the Platform.

2. The Steering Council may mitigate any situation causing friction in the space of private sustainability standards in submitted to it by the parties of such situation



through channels of the Secretariat. The Council may also recommend methods of mitigation in such cases.

3. The Steering Council may recommend the admission of new Members to the Platform.

4. The Steering Council shall not have *suo motu* jurisdiction on any matter.

5. The Steering Council shall be briefed by the Secretariat about any issue falling within the scope of the Platform that it should be cognizant of.

### Article 20 Decision-making

Decisions of the Steering Council on procedural and all other matters shall be made by positive consensus, and abstentions shall be deemed as concurrence for the purpose of expedited discharge of the Platform's functions.

### Article 21 Procedure

1. The President of the Steering Council shall be nominated and selected by the Secretariat bearing in mind their expertise in the field of trade, economics, and sustainability standards.

2. The Steering Council shall adopt its own Rules of Procedure for conducting its business, or as may be guided by the Secretariat.





## Chapter VII. The Secretariat

### Article 22 Organization and Mandate

1. The Quality Council of India shall be the Secretariat of the Platform.
2. The Quality Council of India derives its mandate as Secretariat after being identified at the Standards Conclave 2014 as the nodal organization to be dealing with private standards in India.
3. The offices of the Quality Council of India shall house the Secretariat of the Platform, unless otherwise determined.

### Article 23 Role & Personality

1. The Secretariat shall be the focal liaising point between the government and the industry.
2. The Secretariat shall continue to be a credible, reliable and trustworthy organization with a strong knowledge of the standards ecosystem.
3. The Secretariat shall collaborate with standards bodies, accreditation bodies across economies for promoting sustainability standards for mutual benefit.

### Article 24 Departments & Staff

1. The Secretariat shall comprise a Secretary-General and such staff as the Platform may require for efficient functioning of the Platform.
2. The Secretary-General of Quality Council of India shall be the ex-officio Secretary-General of the Platform.
3. The Secretary-General shall appoint one or more Secretaries to the Platform for discharging executive, coordinative, and administrative responsibilities on zir behalf.

### Article 25 Autonomy

1. In the performance of their duties, the Secretary-General, the Secretary-General and the staff shall not seek or receive instructions from any stakeholder of the Platform or from any other authority external to the Platform.
2. They shall refrain from any action which might reflect on their position as autonomous officials responsible to the Platform.



3. Each member of the Platform undertakes to respect the exclusive character of the responsibilities of the Secretary-General and the staff of the Platform and not to seek to influence them in the discharge of their responsibilities.

### Article 26 Reporting

1. The Secretariat shall appraise the Steering Council of any matter concerned with the Platform which it deems necessary for the Steering Council to be cognizant of.

2. The Secretariat shall periodically report to the Multi-Stakeholder Assembly and the Steering Council regarding matters of the Platform.

3. The Secretariat shall also brief and report to the Sectoral Committees on matters which it deems fit to be addressed by the Sectoral Committees.



## Chapter VIII. Sectoral Committees

### Article 27 Sectoral Committees for Priority Sectors or Product Groups

1. The Secretariat shall, in accord with the Multi-Stakeholder Assembly and the Steering Council, identify product groups and sectors which hold primary importance for the Platform. Such sectors or product groups shall be referred to as priority sectors or priority product groups respectively.

2. The Secretariat shall then institutionalise committees for harmonising and addressing issues relating to private sustainability standards in the priority sectors or product groups. These committees shall be referred to as Sectoral Committees.

### Article 28 Composition

1. The Secretariat shall determine the composition of the Sectoral Committees.

2. The Sectoral Committees shall be multi-stakeholder principal organs of the Platform comprising of members relevant to each respective sector or product group.

3. Such members may be, inclusive of but not limited to, members from the government, foreign governments, inter-governmental and international organizations working in that sector, regulators, implementation agencies, export promotion councils, authorities, commodities boards, private sustainability standards developing organizations, inspection agencies, trade policy bodies, industry associations, producers, consumers, sectoral experts, trade and exports experts, and sustainable development experts, and any other member as deemed fit.

4. The Chair of the Multi-Stakeholder Assembly and the President of the Steering Council shall be ex-officio members of every Sectoral Committee.

### Article 29 Functions and Powers

1. The Sectoral Committees shall deliberate and create consensus on resolving issues related to private sustainability standards in their sectors. Such issues shall be identified by the Secretariat, in accord with the Multi-Stakeholder Assembly and the Steering Council.



2. The Sectoral Committees shall adopt such recommendations or resolutions or both, as they may deem fit, for the expeditious resolution of issues relating to private sustainability standards in their sector.



## Chapter IX. Promotion of Sustainable Development, Multi-Stakeholder Cooperation, and Capacity-Building

### Article 30 Pledge to cooperate

1. Bearing in mind the necessity to cooperate for creating conditions of stability and well-being which are crucial for a conducive environment for sustainable development, based on respect for the principle of equal rights, the Platform shall promote:

- (a) Achievement of sustainable development at the local, regional and national levels through localizing the Sustainable Development Goals and any other further agenda for development of the world;
- (b) Higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development;
- (c) Solutions of national and international economic, social, health, and related problems; and national and international cultural and educational cooperation; and,
- (d) Universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to sex, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, colour, nationality, age, religion, or psychological, physiological, or anatomical impairment.

2. All Members pledge themselves to take collective and individual action in co-operation with the Platform for the achievement of the purposes set forth in Clause 1 of this Article.

### Article 31 Specialized agencies

1. The various specialized agencies, established by governmental mandate and intergovernmental agreement and having wide national and international responsibilities with respect to international and domestic trade, as defined in their basic instruments, in economic, social, cultural, educational, health, and related fields, may be brought into relationship with the Platform.

2. Such agencies thus brought into relationship with the Platform are hereinafter referred to as specialized agencies.

3. The Platform shall make recommendations for the co-ordination of the policies and activities of the specialized agencies.



4. The Platform shall, where appropriate, initiate negotiations among the stakeholders concerned for the creation of any new specialized agencies required for the accomplishment of the purposes set forth in Clause 1 of Article 30.

5. Responsibility for the discharge of the functions of the Platform set forth in this Chapter shall be vested in the Multi-Stakeholder Assembly and, under the authority of the Multi-Stakeholder Assembly, in the Secretariat, which shall have for this purpose the powers detailed in Chapter VII.



## Chapter X. Arrangements

### Article 32 Moving the Secretariat to facilitate

1. The Members of the Platform may move the Secretariat for facilitating such arrangements as may be deemed necessary for the evolution of healthy trade, good business and production practices, between such organizations and stakeholders a necessary.

2. The Secretariat shall endeavour to give effect to as many arrangements as possible for enabling members to better their trade prospects by best utilisation of sustainability standards, and build capacity for producers and sectors to implement such standards.



## Chapter XI. Interface with Government

### Article 33 Secretariat to maintain Governmental Interface

1. The Secretariat shall maintain interface of the Platform with the government, and in accordance with Clause 1 of Article 23, shall be the liaising point between the government and the other members of the Platform.
2. The Secretariat shall represent and perform in good faith all functions on behalf of the Platform to further the purposes of the Platform.





## Chapter XII. Budget and Finance

### Article 34 Budgetary responsibility of the Secretariat

1. The Budget and Finance of the Platform shall be determined by the Secretariat of the Platform on a generic as well as project-specific basis.
2. The Secretariat may seek and pursue any and all methods of financing of the Platform that are legal and hold good in the eyes of the laws of India.
3. The Secretariat shall present the financial details and provisions of the Platform to the Multi-Stakeholder Assembly on an annual periodicity.



## Chapter XIII. Amendments

### Article 35 Amendments upon Secretariat's continuous review

1. The Charter shall be reviewed continuously by the Secretariat to identify required amendments in order to reflect the concurrency of changing times, realities of a dynamic society, and improve any operational exigencies that may impede the functioning of the Platform.
2. Amendments to the Charter brought upon through the process of Secretariat's continuous review shall be informed to the Members of the Platform.
3. Amendments to the Charter under this Article shall not bear any pecuniary implication on the Members of the Platform.

### Article 36 Entry into force of amendments proposed by Members

Amendments proposed by the Secretariat shall enter into force seven days after the communication to the Members of the Platform, unless objected to, in which case it shall be placed on the agenda of any subsequent meeting of the Platform's Assembly or Council.

### Article 37 Amendments proposed by Members

1. Any Member of the Platform may propose an amendment to the Charter by written communication to the Secretariat.
2. The Secretariat shall transmit such proposed amendments to all Members of the Platform in writing.
3. Amendments proposed by a Member of the Platform shall be enlisted on the agenda of any subsequent meeting of the Platform's Assembly.

### Article 38 Entry into force of amendments proposed by Members

Amendments proposed by Members of the Platform to the present Charter shall come into force for all Members of the Platform when they have been adopted by a vote of two thirds of the members of the Multi-Stakeholder Assembly.

### Article 39 Review Conference

1. A General Conference of the Members of the Platform for the purpose of reviewing the present Charter may be held at a date and place to be fixed by the Secretariat.



2. Each Member of the Platform shall have one vote in the conference.

3. If such a conference has not been held before the twentieth annual session of the Multi-Stakeholder Assembly following the coming into force of the present Charter, the proposal to call such a conference shall be placed by the Secretariat on the agenda of that session of the Multi-Stakeholder Assembly, and the conference shall be held if so decided by a majority vote of the members of the Multi-Stakeholder Assembly.



***In faith, whereof***

the Secretariat of the Platform has brought to action this Charter, which shall hold operational relevance till such time when it is adopted by the Members of the Platform

***Entered into***

at the city of New Delhi, the Twenty-Ninth day of December, in the year Two Thousand and Seventeen.