**MINUTES draft 3/7/2022**

**26 April 2022**

In attendance: Vinicius Ribeiro, Eva Eiderstrom (joined 10.37am), Bjorn-Erik Lonn (joined 10.41am), Yulia Gracheva, Xiaodan Zhang, Chin-Yuan Chen, Takashi Fujisaki (joined 10.22am), Hiroyuki Kobayashi, KS (Giri) Venkatagiri, and Kate Harris (Secretariat)

Meeting was called to order at 10:05 GMT

*Decisions are in italic*

**Actions are marked in bold**

1. **Administrative issues**
   1. Quorum present
   2. Welcomed by Secretariat. All shared an update on their region and COVID- 19 and general health.
   3. *Agenda for April Spring Board meeting was approved.*
   4. *Minutes of the 2022 #1 February Board meeting were approved with agreed amendment updating schedule for Agrement SA audit*Action items were also reviewed and discussed.

1. **Operational issues and communications**
   1. **Secretariat report**
   2. Secretariat provided an overview. Key highlights included commencing new website design/ wireframes and engagement of Republic of Everyone, by- Laws review with legal team, commencement of GENICES review, 30th birthday celebrations of member ecolabels and magazine released. New enquiries were also discussed- **AGM and webinar themes and planning including decision on location**

It was proposed that the theme for 2022 webinars and the GEN AGM and August magazine would be “ecolabelling and climate change”. This was highlighted as a relevant theme in 2022 with increased interest in climate solutions and seeking to understand the role of ecolabels. It was also noted that carbon is not the only issue in regards to climate change and additional considerations should be highlighted (such as methane and concerns re biodiversity/ bio fuels).

The webinars would commence with the CII webinar in June. CEC also offered to share survey results that will be a part of the IGPN SPP Programme. In regards to the recommended panel discussion as a part of the AGM series, it was agreed that WGBC and similar panel representatives were supported.

It was raised that the timing for the CII webinar in June was a difficult time for European countries due to peak holiday season. Secretariat to ensure able to record and disseminate the recording.

Yulia proposed two additional webinars for consideration. It was agreed that the private procurement and business to business solutions webinar was an important theme for progression. It was recommended that the business webinar be hosted by Russia in November after the 2022 AGM.

The decision regarding in place or virtual AGM was delayed till later in the Board meeting.

*Decision: The decision regarding the theme of ecolabelling and climate change was supported.*

* 1. **Webinar themes for 2022 were discussed in agenda 2.2 above**
  2. **World Ecolabel Day and magazine themes**

Secretariat gave an overview of recommended themes. The proposed approach was for members to highlight sustainability super heroes. The heroes could be either people or projects such as Hong Kong clean beaches or the Swedish textile campaign week. It would share positive action for people and planet. This was supported as a broad initiative. In regards to the magazine,the suggested theme of ecolabelling and climate change was supported. Yulia suggested white paper to demonstrate thought leadership and gain traction for WED. The white paper could be included in the magazine and social media. Siddarth Prakash was suggested as a possible author.

The 2020/ 2021 WED comparison data was noted.

**Action: Secretariat to take concepts above to the Sub Committee of Communications. Yulia to send contacts for white paper to Secretariat.**

* 1. **Look closer campaign and recommendations for 2022 promotion-** **decision**

The Secretariat presented the intention for the 2022 Look Closer campaign. It was also highlighted that the video may require further editing due to change in logo approved for dissemination in October 2022. It was highlighted that the Secretariat had been asked for KPI’s for the Look Closer campaign.

The Secretariat committed to discussing with the Sub Committee of Communications. It was recommended that the data from the 2021 WED social media campaign is used as an appropriate monthly target for social media/ video views.

**Action Items:**

* **Secretariat to discuss Look closer campaign and KPI’s with SC Communications for confirmation of approach.**
  1. **Update on GENICES audits 2022**

Members who have delayed their audit till 2023 were discussed and agreed to. It was noted that CQC and Philippines have confirmed for an audit in 2022. An update on the Indonesian Green label was provided by the auditors.

Other members who are not currently progressing were discussed.

The issue of the change in by- laws and implications for current members was discussed.

**Action items:**

* **Secretariat to confirm dates and encourage completion of GENICES as soon as able due to change in by-laws at AGM including management of members who are not up to date**
* **Liaise with lawyer re version control of by-laws and impact to existing memnbers- that is do current members adhere to by-laws at time of membership or to latest version**

**2.7 Sub Committee updates were provided**

Bjorn-Erik provided un update on ISO Working Group. The third draft of 14020 revision closes on 20th of June.

Vinicius outlined an intent to schedule a Business Outreach SC meeting next month (May). Secretariat offered support to coordinate.

Chin- Yuan outlined the approach for member coordination and the intent to develop a common core criteria standard. They have provided 4-5 options for consideration.

1. **Special projects**
   1. **New website** -update and approval of wire frames **- for decision**

The draft wireframes for the new website were discussed. Considerations such as contextualization of various audiences (purchaser/ manufacturer) were suggested including how would we contextualise for different levels of members- including potentially new members. There was a question as to whether members could post on the website themselves. The Secretariat raised concerns of filtering and approvals and suggested that perhaps members can use social media as a channel for content approvals.

*Decision: Wireframes approved in principal subject to additional input from the Board.*

**Action: Board Directors to provide additional feedback on wireframes prior to the 12th of May.**

**Secretariat to progress copy based on the wireframes and additional comments received.**

**Add in a “what’s new in GEN”tab on the website and ensure placement of UN ecolabelling training.**

* 1. **UNEP ecolabelling training administration**

Secretariat outlined the progress in conversations with UNEP in regards to dissemination of the materials of the ecolabelling training. The draft UNEP dissemination strategy was shared with the Board Directors. It was generally supported that it was optimal for GEN to have control over the quality of materials. It was also highlighted that it was important to track who completes the program including quality facilitators through evaluation of feedback. It was also briefly discussed that UNEP are asking GEN to provide contractual engagement of a consultant in order to provide ongoing delivery of support to the Latin American (LAC) labels. The consultant is already known and in process of delivering the support to LAC but a contractual solution is needed. This will be low risk to GEN but further information is being sought from UNEP.

*Decision: The Board support GEN to host the UNEP ecolabelling training material- noting that it will require occasional additional resourcing beyond the Secretariat fee.*

Part A meeting closed at 12.57

Part B meeting formally opened 10.10 GMT

All present (Giri joined 10:13)

* 1. **Database discussion**

The Secretariat informed the board that the Origin database was struggling to progress in regards to members. Whilst the risk to GEN is low in regards to financial investment, it is a lost opportunity.

GEN has engaged Adelphi to interview GEN Members in regards to their needs.

Eva put forward her own organization for interview. TCO was also suggested.

It was also noted that the lead at Adelphi has been unwell and is yet to respond with next steps.

**Action Items:**

* **Eva and Soren to be linked with Jan for interviews.**

**3.4 GENICES review**

The Secretariat highlighted that the GENICES review working group has commenced. A key focus of the group is to review the existing GENICES documentations and make recommendations. Key decisions include how to manage non conformances and also whether to have a pass/ fail process.

It was discussed what aspects should be presented at the AGM for members and also what aspects of the draft ISO 14020 will influence GENICES. It was acknowledged that the GENICES is GEN’s own interpretation of ISO 14024. GENICES will need to consider rules as guidance – not as absolutes. EU stipulations should also considered.

It was acknowledged that a public comment round including internal and external stakeholders should be hosted and that the by-laws are the priority to complete at the AGM which ideally would reference the GENICES requirements. The decision of by-laws will influence the GENICES review also.

Consideration on how to support members who are falling behind was also discussed as a priority including how to balance stringency but not exclusivity.

The use of technology and the option to accredit auditing bodies for GENICES was also discussed.

There was also consideration of whether there was a preference for internal or external auditing and if external, how to cost of audits would be covered. The benefit of external audits was due to removal of any conflict of interest or bias.

GEN’s role was also discussed in regards to how we can balance our mentoring role as opposed to an auditing role.

In addition the Secretariat requested for funds to support external advisory support for the GENICES review.

*Decision: It was agreed that the decision should be with members and therefore decided at the AGM.*

*It was agreed that up to 20k could be spent on external review of GENICES. This will be allocated from the technical budget.*

*Key recommendations for GENICES can be taken to an extra-ordinary meeting prior to the AGM.*

1. **Finance and Governance**
   1. **GAO update including update on 2022 budget**

GAO outlined GEN’s financial position for FY 2022 including 463k cash in bank including the carry over from FY 2021. There is minimal activity to date. Bjorn- Erik pointed out that expenses will be lower in 2022 due to less travel. It was suggested that we need to budget for bigger activities. It was noted that the expense level needs to be in accordance with the revenue. Majority of members have paid 2021 membership fees. Membership fees for international members was also discussed. The current definition was noted.

**Action: Add additional column to add commentary to explain variations.**

* 1. **Financial statement- pre- audit for FY 2021 for approval**

The accepted the FY 2021 Financial Statement which will now be completed for the financial auditors.

* 1. **Membership waiver requests**

Fee reduction requests discussed

Sri Lankan label could be offered in kind contribution in recognition of their fee reduction.

The Secretariat raised the need for consistency and transparency of fee reduction including the possibility of publishing of fee reduction. It was recommended that these issues be considered moving forward including possible AGM decision and referencing in by-laws.

*Decisions:*

*Thailand to be invoiced $3,500.00 in consistency with colleagues of same size.*

*Sri Lanka to provide in kind contribution equivalent to $1,000.00*

**Action Items:**

* **Fee reduction rules should be referenced in by- laws including decision framework.**
* **Secretariat to draft suggested approach for fee reduction**

**4.4 Bylaws progression including legal update**

The Secretariat updated the Board in regards to the review of the by- laws by lawyer Robert Wilcher. The cost is estimated to be approximatey 5k USD based on $660 per hour. It was also discussed that additional legal review to ensure international and in particular US laws may be required- subject to our decision on where to have the organization registration moving forward.

*Decision: spend on legal review of by- laws was supported.*

**Action: Secretariat to agree to terms of legal revision noting associated estimated spend. Secretariat to research international review including the suggestions to discuss with UL/ Linda Chipperfield re USA context and requirements.**

**4.5 Board Director and Chair succession planning**

Given there is significant turn over in Directors and the Chair at the upcoming AGM, it was noted that it was important to discuss succession planning. Some experienced individuals were discussed as future possibilities.

In regards to the Chair position it was acknowledged that ideally it would be someone who had existing knowledge of the Board and organizational detail.

*Decision: It was agreed that the Secretariat should reach out to GEN members to consider future talent for Board Directors and they could then be considered for sub committee involvement. Whilst acknowledging that they may not be appointed in 2022, it was about supporting a pipeline.*

**Action Items:**

* **Consider possible revision to by- laws to allow for extension of Director positions**
* **Consider CO- Chair /Vice Chair position**
* **Consider advisory Board of past Board Directors in order to create a centre of organisational knowledge and history.**
* **Nominations committee to send out requests in July- not August.**

1. **Strategy**
   1. **3-year plan for GEN and proposed transition models for discussion**

A power point presentation on 3 models for future GEN organisational structure was shared by the Secretariat. Given the limited time for discussion, it was decided that an extra-ordinary meeting would be organized for early June. This would be schedule for 1.5 hours ccommencing 9am GMT.

1. **General Business / other agenda items**

**The EU Green Deal was briefly mentioned noting that the sustainable claims report is scheduled for release in July 2022.**

*Decision: It was also agreed that the AGM 2022 would be virtual this year due to the ongoing COVID- 19 situation and the challenge with international travel.*

**Action: The Secretariat is to inform all members of the virtual nature of the AGM.**

Meeting adjourned at 1310 GMT