A special session was organized in Kuching, Sarawak on 6 January 2017, bringing together members of the Malaysian National Standards Development Group (NSDG), Technical Experts and selected stakeholders. The objective of this one-day session was to discuss specifically, nationally relevant indicators and verifiers for FSC Criteria 6.9 and 6.10 around the concept of no net loss and 1:1 compensation (1ha protected/conserved for every 1ha converted).

The Malaysian NSDG is responsible for drafting, and modifying if appropriate, indicators and verifiers for FSC Criteria. It is important to make the FSC standard applicable to forest Management Units in all three regions of Sabah, Sarawak and Peninsular Malaysia.

Considering FSC’s latest perspective on the forest conversion issue and the existing 1994 cut-off rule, the group discussed issues ranging from applicability and challenges of implementing the no-net-loss concept in Malaysia, to the role of industrial tree plantations in relieving pressure on natural forests and practical solutions (and safeguards that need to be in place) for certifying plantations converted from natural forests post-1994.

The group felt that the Malaysian standards must improve responsible forest management in the country and create strong incentives for the restoration of degraded lands. It was also felt that responsible plantation management is the future of forestry in Malaysia, and that the Malaysian FSC standard must become a driver towards realizing this aim.

The meeting concluded that more deliberation is required and the onus is now on the NSDG to propose a pragmatic solution for Malaysia through ongoing national interpretation and standards development as well as anticipated public consultations.