

# General Guidance for Evaluation of Voluntary Sustainability Standards

*Draft*

## 1 Scope

This guidance could be used to the evaluation of Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS). The guidance aims to promote sustainable economic, social and environmental development.

The guidance proposes a methodology and a full-scale evaluation indicator system on evaluating a VSS.

## 2 Normative Reference

The following documents, in whole or in part, are normatively referenced in this document and are indispensable for its application. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO/Guide 82:2014 Guidelines for addressing sustainability in standards

ITU-T Y.4903/L.1603 (10/2016) Key performance indicators for smart sustainable cities to assess the achievement of sustainable development goals

## 3 Terminology

The following terms and definitions apply to this guidance.

### 3.1 sustainability

state of the global system, including environmental, social and economic aspects, in which the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

Note 1 to entry: The environmental, social and economic aspects interact, are interdependent and are often referred to as the three dimensions of sustainability.

Note 2 to entry: Sustainability is the goal of sustainable development (3.2).

[ISO/Guide 82:2014]

Sustainability is much more likely to be achieved by society as a whole if social, economic and environmental aspects are addressed in an integrated manner.

[ISO/Guide 82:2014]

### 3.2 Sustainability Standards, SS

*A standard that addresses the social, environmental or economic practices of a defined entity, or a combination of these.* [ISEAL Credibility Principles]

### 3.3 Voluntary Sustainability Standards, VSS

*Voluntary Sustainability Standards (VSS) are rules that producers, traders, manufacturers, retailers or service providers may be asked to follow so that the things they make, grow or do don't hurt people and the environment.* [quoted from <https://unfss.org/>]

### 3.4 sustainable development

development that meets the environmental, social and economic needs of the present without

compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

Note 1 to entry: Derived from the Brundtland Report.

[ISO Guide 82:2014]

### 3.5 voluntary standards

non-mandatory standards

### 3.6 responsible supply chain

## 4 Basic Principles

### 4.1 Sustainability

### 4.2 Broad Engagement / Stakeholder interests

### 4.3 Credibility

### 4.4 Transparency

### 4.5 Improvement

## 5 Dimensions and Indicators of VSS Evaluation

### 5.1 General

Starting from the three basic sustainable areas of society, environment and economy, this guidance is divided into three dimensions for the index decomposition of VSS Evaluation (see Table 1). In addition, appendix A provides 17 United Nations sustainable development goals (SDGs) corresponding to these indicators.

**Table 1 Dimensions & Indicators of VSS Evaluation**

<b>Social Dimension (5.2)</b>	<b>Environmental Dimension (5.3)</b>	<b>Economic Dimension (5.4)</b>
Human Safety and Health (5.2.1)	Resource Utilization (5.3.1)	Livelihood Assurance (5.4.1)
Working Condition (5.2.2)	Climate Change (5.3.2)	Quality Assurance (5.4.2)
Education and Training (5.2.3)	Biodiversity (5.3.3)	Responsible Supply Chain (5.4.3)
Basic Rights and involvement (5.2.4)	Environmental Quality (5.3.4)	Environmental Quality (5.3.4)
Other Social Elements (5.2.5)	Other environmental elements (5.3.5)	Other Economic Elements (5.4.5)

### 5.2 Social Dimension

#### 5.2.1 Human Safety and Health

Human Safety and Health should consider but not limited to the following factors: access to medical care, health (medical assurance and services), safety assurance (disaster help, emergency) etc...

#### 5.2.2 Working Condition

Working Condition should consider but not limited to the following factors: local communities, work environment, public area, labor relations etc...

#### 5.2.3 Education and Training

should consider but not limited to the following factors: further education, training, capacity

building, culture (shared books) etc...

#### 5.2.4 Basic Rights and involvement

should consider but not limited to the following factors: women participation, refuse child labor, labors' rights, social status (descent labor), social equity, tolerance, community involvement etc...

#### 5.2.5 Other Social Elements

should consider but not limited to the following factors: friendly partnership, quality of life etc...

### **5.3 Environmental Dimension**

#### 5.3.1 Resource Utilization

Resource Utilization should consider but not limited to the following factors: water, Soil, Energy, Renewable resources, reduction of non-renewable resources, recycling of resources, waste management etc...

#### 5.3.2 Climate Change

should consider but not limited to the following factors: carbon emission, air pollution, environmental pollution etc...

#### 5.3.3 Biodiversity

should consider but not limited to the following factors: plant diversity, animal welfare, protection and restoration of natural habitats etc...

#### 5.3.4 Environmental Quality

should consider but not limited to the following factors: ocean, air quality, water quality, hygienic quality, noise level etc...

#### 5.3.5 Other environmental elements

should consider but not limited to the following factors: agriculture, fishery, and forest management etc...

### **5.4 Economic Dimension**

#### 5.4.1 Livelihood Assurance

should consider but not limited to the following factors: employment, Income, salary and welfare, the minimum living allowance etc...

#### 5.4.2 Quality Assurance

should consider but not limited to the following factors: technology and innovation, quality management system, manufacturing process, product quality etc...

#### 5.4.3 Responsible Supply Chain

should consider but not limited to the following factors: social responsibility, value and supply chain etc...

#### 5.4.4 Risk and Resilience

should consider but not limited to the following factors: risk management, decision making etc...

#### 5.4.5 Other Economic Elements

should consider but not limited to the following factors: economic performance and development, industries etc...

## **6 Evaluation of VSS**

## 6.1 Basic Requirements

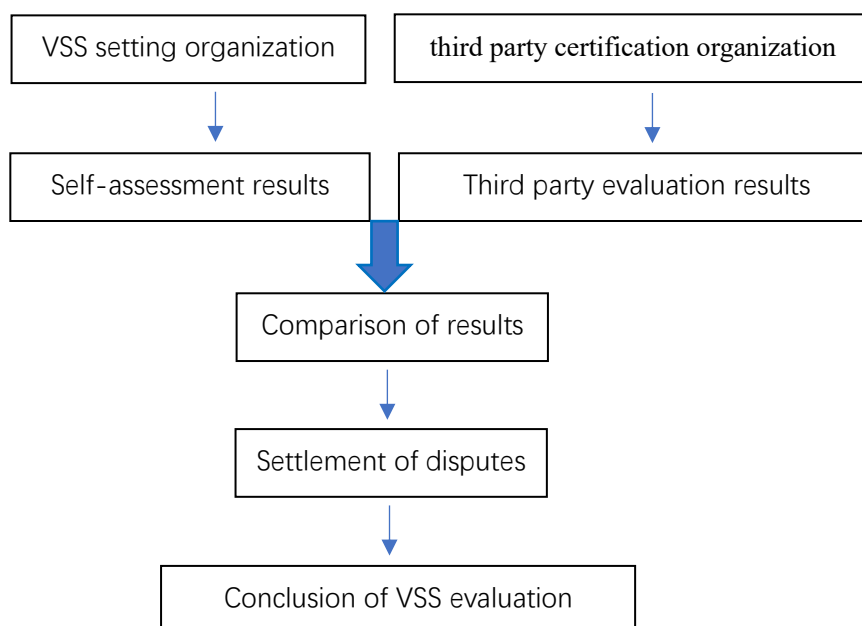
6.1.1 shall comply with principles listed in chapter 4 of this guidance;

6.1.2 shall not be lower than the minimum standards stipulated by national laws and regulations; (e.g. child labor age limit, emission standard, minimum wage, etc.)

## 6.2 Evaluation Methodology

### 6.2.1 Evaluation Procedure

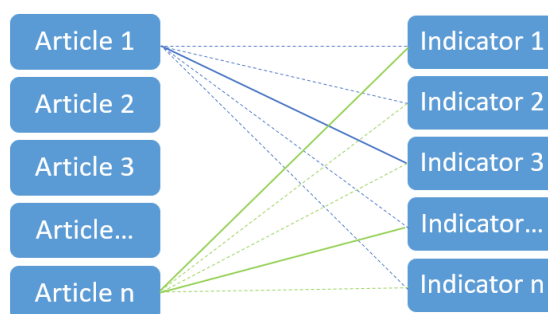
The evaluation of VSS is jointly carried out by the standard setting organization and the third-party evaluation organization. The VSS setting organization gives the evaluation results after self-assessment, and the third-party evaluation organization gives the results independently. The third party shall conduct comparative analysis on the evaluation results of both parties. If the evaluation results of both parties are consistent, the third party shall issue the conclusion of VSS evaluation. In case of any discrepancy, both parties shall negotiate the objection, reach a consensus conclusion, and the third-party evaluation agency shall issue the conclusion. The evaluation process is shown in figure 1.



**Figure 1 Procedure of VSS Evaluation**

### 6.2.2 Evaluation methodology

The methodology is to connect articles of a VSS with indicators of the evaluation model in chapter 5 (see Figure 2).



### Figure 2 Correlation Analysis of VSS Articles and Evaluation Indicators

The basic idea is to give a score of each correlation, and finally get a rating scale of VSS evaluation. The evaluation should be carried out according to the form of table 2, and the correlation analysis should be carried out between each article of the evaluated VSS and the evaluation index system stipulated in this guidance. The correlation between each article and each indicator is represented by the numbers "1" and "0": "1" means relevant, while "0" means irrelevant.

**Table 2 Example for rating scale of VSS Evaluation**

Dimensions	VSS Articles						Total
	Indicators	Article 1	Article 2	Article 3	Article ...	Article n	
<b>Social Dimension</b>	Human Safety and Health	1	0	0		0	1
	Working Condition	0	0	0		0	
	Education and Training	0	0	0		0	
	Basic Rights and involvement	0	0	0		0	
	Other Social Elements	0	0	0		0	
<b>Environmental Dimension</b>	Resource Utilization	0	1	0		0	2
	Climate Change	0	0	0		0	
	Biodiversity	0	0	0		0	
	Environmental Quality	0	0	0		0	
	Other environmental elements	0	0	0		1	
<b>Economic Dimension</b>	Livelihood Assurance	0	0	0		0	1
	Quality Assurance	0	0	0		0	
	Responsible Supply Chain	1	0	0		0	
	Environmental Quality	0	0	0		0	
	Other Economic Elements	0	0	0		0	
<b>Total</b>		2	1	0		1	<b>4</b>

#### 6.2.3 The setting of index weights

Suppose each indicator has a base weight of 5% and a maximum weight of 25%. Taking indicator 1 as an example, if there is no correlation between each article in the evaluated VSS and indicator 1, then the weight of indicator 1 to the VSS is 0. If there is one and only one article related to indicator 1, the weight of indicator 1 to VSS is 5%. If there are two articles related to indicator 1, the weight of indicator 1 should be 10%. In the same way, the index weight increases by 5% for every correlation, until it reaches the maximum weight value of 25%. That is, if there are five or more articles that are relevant to indicator 1, then the weight value of indicator 1 to the VSS should be 25%. The setting of the weight value is shown in table 3.

**Table 3 The corresponding index weights**

Indicator	Number of Relevant articles	Index weight
Indicator 1	0	0
Indicator 1	1	5%
Indicator 1	2	10%
Indicator 1	3	15%
Indicator 1	4	20%
Indicator 1	5 and more	25%

### 6.3 Conclusion of VSS Evaluation

#### 6.3.1 General

The conclusion of VSS evaluation should be carried out by the third-party certification body and the procedures should be followed as stated in 6.2.1. The evaluation is based on the correlation between the VSS articles and the evaluation indicators. The correlation degree should be calculated according to the rating scale of VSS evaluation given in 6.2.2 and the index weight determined in 6.2.3.

#### 6.3.2 Expression of the Conclusion

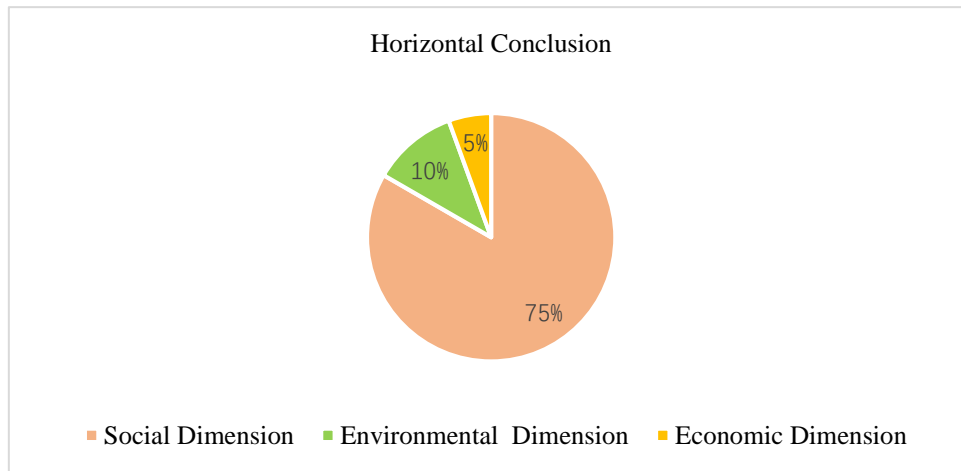
Suppose a targeted VSS has 20 articles, and after the process of VSS evaluation as stated in 6.2, a third-party body comes to a conclusion of the following rating scale as showed in Table 4.

**Table 4 Example of a 20-article VSS rating scale conclusion**

Dimensions	VSS Articles Indicators	Art.1	Art.2	Art.3	Art. ...	Art.20	Total	Index Weight	Con.
Social Dimension	Human Safety and Health	1	0	0		0	1	5%	15/20 75%
	Working Condition	0	0	0		0			
	Education and Training	1	1	1	11	1	15	25%	
	Basic Rights and involvement	0	0	0		0			
	Other Social Elements	0	0	0		0			
Environmental Dimension	Resource Utilization	0	1	0		0	1	5%	2/20 10%
	Climate Change	0	0	0		0			
	Biodiversity	0	0	0		0			
	Environmental Quality	0	0	0		0			
	Other environmental elements	0	0	0		1	1	5%	
Economic Dimension	Livelihood Assurance	0	0	0		0			1/20 5%
	Quality Assurance	0	0	0		0			
	Responsible Supply Chain	1	0	0		0	1	5%	
	Environmental Quality	0	0	0		0			
	Other Economic Elements	0	0	0		0			
<b>Total Correlation</b>	<b>15 Indicators</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>45%</b>	

The conclusion should be expressed vertically and horizontally.

Horizontally, we could see from Table 4 that, there are 15 articles out of a total of 20 articles of this VSS are relevant with social dimension, that accounts for 75%. Accordingly, environmental dimension takes up 10% of this VSS, and economic dimension only accounts for 5%.



**Figure 3 Horizontal Expression of the Conclusion**

Vertically, the conclusion could be expressed as its compliance to the VSS evaluation system. As showed in Table 4, the compliance of this particular VSS to the Evaluation system is 45%.

## **Bibliography**

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- [9] ISO 37120:2018 Sustainable cities and communities — Indicators for city services and quality of life
- [10] ISO 37122:2019 Sustainable cities and communities — Indicators for smart cities
- [11] ISO 37123:2019 Sustainable cities and communities — Indicators for resilient cities
- [12] ISO/Guide 82:2014 Guidelines for addressing sustainability in standards
- [13] ITU-T Y.4903/L.1603 (10/2016) Key performance indicators for smart sustainable cities to assess the achievement of sustainable development goals



## Appendix A

Correlation between VSS Evaluation Indicators and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)  
(Informative)

**Table A.1 Correlation between VSS Evaluation Indicators and 17 SDGs**

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Factors</b>	<b>SDGs</b>
<b>Social Dimension</b>	Human Safety and Health	access to medical care, health (medical assurance and services), safety assurance (disaster help, emergency) etc...	3, 6
	Working Condition	Local communities, Work environment, Public area, Labor relations etc...	8, 11
	Education and Training	Further education, training, capacity building, culture (shared books) etc...	4
	Basic Rights and involvement	Women participation, refuse child labor, social status (descent labor), social equity, tolerance, community involvement etc...	5
	Other Social Elements	friendly partnership, quality of life etc...	10, 16, 17
<b>Environmental Dimension</b>	Resource Utilization	water, Soil, Energy, Renewable resources, reduction of non-renewable resources, recycling of resources, waste management etc...	7, 12, 11
	Climate Change	carbon emission, air pollution, environmental pollution etc...	13, 14, 15
	Biodiversity	plant diversity, animal welfare, protection and restoration of natural habitats etc...	14, 15
	Environmental Quality	ocean, air quality, water quality, hygienic quality, noise level etc...	9, 13
	Other environmental elements	agriculture, fishery, and forest management etc...	2, 14, 15
<b>Economic Dimension</b>	Livelihood Assurance	employment, Income, salary and welfare, the minimum living allowance etc...	1
	Quality Assurance	technology and innovation, quality management system, manufacturing process, product quality etc...	12, 9
	Responsible Supply Chain	social responsibility, value and supply chain etc...	12
	Environmental Quality	risk management, decision making etc...	8, 9, 11
	Other Economic Elements	economic performance and development, industries etc...	8