GSTC

Global Sustainable Tourism Council

Development of the
Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC)

GSTC Criteria for
Food and Beverage Service Providers in Tourism

Terms of Reference

Document Control

This is version 1.0 of the Terms of Reference for the GSTC Criteria for Food and Beverage Service Providers in Tourism, 2024.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Food and Beverage Service Providers and Sustainability

Sustainability is becoming an increasing concern for travelers. Awareness about the negative impacts of huge emissions of air travel, environmental damage, and over-tourism is growing. Especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, travelers are considering changing their travel patterns. According to the report by World Travel & Tourism Council and Trip.com Group[1] In 2022, 69% of travelers were actively seeking sustainable travel options and 75% of travelers were considering traveling more sustainably in the future and nearly 60% have chosen more sustainable travel options in the last couple of years.

Major tourism companies, airlines, hotels and other accommodation providers seek business opportunities to supply sustainable and green products and services. For example, to reduce their contributions to climate change, travel companies are removing flights with excessive emissions of GHG or, where possible, replacing flights with other means of transport. Hotels and accommodations are working towards enhancing water stewardship. The MICE industry is also seeking ways to operate more sustainably and environment-friendly in parallel to the newly announced GSTC MICE Criteria.

The changing trend is not only affecting hotels, tour operators and MICE industry, but also other sectors in the tourism industry. Food and beverages (F&B) are indispensable parts of a destination's intangible heritage and tourism product. In the face of rising demand, gastronomy tourism generates high revenues and contributes to employment in destinations. On the other hand, the industry may have negative impacts on the environment, local communities and culture. In 2023, the gastronomy tourism market size was estimated at USD 960 billion to 1.1 trillion and is anticipated to expand at a CAGR (compound annual growth rate) of 17.3% from 2024 to 2032.[2]

Research indicates an increasing trend in sustainability in restaurants. These include nose-to-tail cooking to minimize waste, increasing plant-based menu options, and sourcing from regenerative

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[1] https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/gastronomyfood-tourism-market-size-forecast-2024-2032-vashistha-lp72e/

[2] Reseach and Markets, Global Gastronomy/Food Tourism Market Report and Forecast 2024-2032, https://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/5973780/global-gastronomyfood-tourism-market-report; Claight Corporation, Global Gastronomy/Food Tourism Market Size, Share, Price, Trends, Growth, Analysis, Report and Forecast 2024-2032, https://takeitcool.com/global-gastronomy-food-tourism-market-size-share/.

farms to restore soil health. Menus incorporate diverse and sustainable ingredients to promote biodiversity, while in-house fermentation repurposes food waste. Hyper-local sourcing, even in urban settings, is gaining popularity, and healthier, high-quality kids' menus are on the rise. Circular menus aim to reduce waste by utilizing all parts of ingredients.[3]

Further, the sustainability of food does relate to the Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the UN General Assembly which also focuses on Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being), Goal 12 (Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns), Goal 14 (Life Below Water) and Goal 15 (Life On Land).

Sustainable restaurants can play a significant role in the following measures:

- o Reduce the use of single-use plastics
- o Reduce energy and water footprint in food production
- o Reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- o Support ecosystems and wildlife by sustainable purchasing
- o Reduce food waste
- o Increase the use of environmentally conscious food products
- o Support local employment without discrimination
- o Support local and social entrepreneurs
- o Promote local culture and cuisine
- o Make supply chains more sustainable
- o Increase communities' involvement

Sustainable tourism requires a development and management approach that recognizes and responds to these responsibilities and opportunities. Given the ever-growing size of gastronomy tourism and the increasing demand for sustainable tourism, there is a need for global guidelines that inform sustainable practices that restaurants must follow.

To date, there are no globally adopted standards or criteria for restaurants. A few organizations have worked towards introducing standards to make the F&B industry more sustainable, but there are no globally agreed-upon standards. There is a need to create an international standard for restaurants linked to sustainable standards.

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[3] https://thesra.org/news-insights/insights/8-key-sustainability-trends-for-restaurants-in-2024/

1.2 Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria

The Global Sustainable Tourism Council currently has three sets of established and managed global sustainable standards, known as the GSTC Criteria. These are the globally-applicable guiding principles and minimum requirements that any tourism business or destination should aspire to reach in order to protect and sustain the world's natural and cultural resources while ensuring tourism meets its potential as a tool for conservation and poverty alleviation. They were developed and continue to be periodically revised through extensive public consultation throughout the globe, in both developed and developing countries, striving to adhere to the Standard-Setting Code of the ISEAL Alliance. They serve as vital tools for elevating good practice and policy, as well as driving market demand by all players in travel and tourism.

The GSTC Criteria are based on decades of prior work and worldwide experience, taking into account the numerous guidelines and standards for sustainable tourism from every continent.

They are arranged in four pillars:

1. Sustainable management.
2. Socioeconomic sustainability.
3. Cultural sustainability.
4. Environmental sustainability (resource consumption, reducing pollution, conserving biodiversity and landscapes).

The Criteria are the minimum, not the maximum, which businesses, governments, and destinations should achieve to approach social, environmental, cultural, and economic sustainability. Since tourism destinations each have their own culture, environment, customs, and laws, the Criteria are designed to be adapted to local conditions and supplemented by additional criteria for the specific location and activity.

The three sets of the GSTC Criteria are:

1. **GSTC Industry Criteria (version 3, 2016)**, abbreviated as GSTC-I, related to the sustainable management of the private sector travel industry, focusing currently on hotels and tour operators.
   (* The GSTC Industry Criteria version 4 is currently under revision and will be released in 2025.)

2. **GSTC Destination Criteria (version 2, 2019),** abbreviated as GSTC-D, related to the sustainable management of tourism destinations and intended for public policy-makers and destination managers.

3. **GSTC MICE Criteria (version 1, 2024),** related to the sustainable management of venues, event organizers, and events/exhibitions.

With the three sets of Criteria, the GSTC intends to raise awareness and education levels of all travel and tourism players of sustainable tourism concepts in order to support sustainable consumption and production.

The three sets of Criteria and associated Performance Indicators are publicly available to download from the GSTC website. While the official language of the GSTC Criteria is English, translations into several other languages are available.

1.3 Purpose of the Terms of Reference

This Terms of Reference document sets out the need and requirements for developing the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Criteria for Food and Beverage Service Providers in Tourism and the processes to be followed.

The GSTC Criteria will be developed with the input of relevant stakeholders in the field of F&B, gastronomy, and professional kitchens.

This document provides an overview of the background and context of the Criteria including a) the proposed scope and the intended geographic application; b) justification of the need for the standard including: an assessment of the most important sustainability issues falling within the scope of the standard; an explanation of whether the proposed standard will meet an expressed need; and documentation of other standards operating or in development that meets all or in part of the expressed need; c) clear social, environmental and economic outcomes that the standard seeks to achieve and how those are linked to the GSTC's intended change; d) an assessment of risks in implementing the standard and how to mitigate these, including: identification of factors that could have a negative impact on the ability of the standard to achieve its outcomes; unintended consequences that could arise from its implementation; and possible corrective actions that could be taken to address these potential risks. (ISEAL Impacts Code 7.6 and 7.4); and e) decision-making procedures, including how decisions are made and who makes them.

A final section of the document outlines the stages that will be followed in the revision process.

The whole development process will be overseen by the GSTC International Standards Committee (ISC).

The development and content of these Terms of Reference meet the requirements of the ISEAL Code of Good Practice for Sustainability Systems version 1.0 and follow the GSTC Standard-setting Manual version 3.0.

* Note: The official name of the Criteria will be decided during the development of the Criteria.

2 GSTC Criteria Development for Food and Beverage Service Providers in Tourism

2.1 Needs for Development

The three GSTC Criteria sets can be used as a tool for businesses and destination management organizations to reflect upon the economic, social, and environmental impact arising from their activities. Yet the tourism industry and its activities are growing every day having a significant impact on many other industries and businesses. Clearly, there is a need to widen the scope of the GSTC Criteria and study the impacts of tourism on many other industries.

F&B sector activities are having significant impacts on the environment through food waste, energy consumption, and reliance on single-use plastics. However, the industry is making strides to mitigate these effects by implementing sustainable practices. These include increasing plant-based menu options, sourcing ingredients from sustainable sources, and emphasizing biodiversity. Additionally, restaurants are focusing on local sourcing, improving healthy menu options, and aiming at zero waste.

Restaurant sector activities are having significant impacts on society, the economy, and culture as well. These impacts include creating employment opportunities, influencing dietary habits, and contributing to local economies. Culturally, restaurants are platforms for culinary innovation and preserving traditional cuisines. Economically, they drive tourism and local business growth. Socially, they foster community interactions and promote food education. The industry's shift towards sustainability is enhancing these positive effects by encouraging responsible consumption and supporting local and sustainable food systems.

As the world population continues to increase and demand for food rises, food production poses a risk to the sustainability of natural resources, ecosystems, and biodiversity. Intensive agricultural practices can lead to soil degradation, water scarcity, and increased greenhouse gas emissions. Additionally, the reliance on monocultures and industrial farming methods threatens wildlife habitats and reduces genetic diversity. Addressing these challenges requires adopting more sustainable

agricultural practices, reducing food waste, and promoting dietary shifts towards plant-based foods to ensure food security and environmental health for future generations.

In the last decades, the engagement of F&B in the development of the tourism sector has been growing and therefore, its contribution to tourism development cannot be separated.

This explains the need for the Criteria in relation to tourism development and calls for the development of the GSTC Criteria for Food and Beverage Service Providers in tourism to ensure sustainable gastronomy industry development.

2.2 Objectives and Uses

The F&B Industry is able to make use of the GSTC Criteria in a variety of ways. For example, they may:

o Serve as basic guidelines for planning sustainable F&B management.

o Help travelers identify sustainable F&B service providers.

o Serve as a common denominator for information media to recognize sustainable F&B service providers and inform the public regarding their sustainability.

o Help certification and other voluntary F&B programs ensure that their standards meet a broadly accepted baseline.

o Offer governmental, non-governmental, and private sector programs a starting point for developing sustainable tourism requirements in gastronomy.

o Serve as basic guidelines for education and training bodies, such as tourism, cooking, gastronomy, and culinary arts schools and departments at universities.

2.3 Intended Outcomes

The intended outcome of the existence and application of the GSTC Criteria is for industry players to manage their kitchens and dining facilities more sustainably, understand the basic elements for reducing costs by implementing sustainability policies and practices, and safeguard the ecosystems, biodiversity, wildlife, culture, and local economies.

The GSTC is committed to ensuring that sustainable tourism best practices are adopted and implemented by the industry, destinations, and travelers.[4] With the development of the Criteria, the

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[4] https://www.gstcouncil.org/about/gstc-impact/

GSTC will add a new training program on sustainable F&B service providers. This is an expansion of the Sustainable Tourism Training Program which will provide more access to more tourism players.

The above are the GSTC's intended impacts through the activities of Global Criteria Development and training on the Criteria.

2.4 Risk Management

GSTC will strive to identify and mitigate all potential risk factors that may arise during the Criteria development process. The identified risks and GSTC's corresponding mitigation strategies are as follows.

- The identified risk: Various types and sizes of F&B service providers may not be involved in the development process, potentially resulting in a final version that reflects limited business scope opinions.
- Mitigation strategies: GSTC will strive to increase participation from various F&B service providers by promoting and encouraging public consultation using various novel media channels. Identify organizations that have difficulty participating in public consultation due to various factors (language, technology, limited accessibility to information, etc.), contact them individually, listen to their opinions, and reflect them in revisions.
- The identified risk: The Criteria are new for the sector and GSTC. There can be criticism to the development process from the F&B industry.
- Mitigation strategies: GSTC will initiate a pilot project in Türkiye to identify the feasibility and application of the new Criteria. The Criteria will be based on the experience of more than 1000 restaurants in Türkiye.

3 Criteria Development Process

3.1 Approach to the GSTC Criteria Development for Food and Beverage Service Providers in Tourism

A practical approach should be proposed to develop standards for the F&B industry to respond to the demand of the market. With the Criteria, the GSTC promises to act on its mission to deliver on impacts such as:

- o Inform F&B industry players of issues and actions to engage in sustainable restaurant management
- o Provide effective guidelines to the marketplace
- o To comply with universal principles

Instead of drafting a completely new standard, the Criteria will start by using the GSTC-I Criteria as its basis.

3.2 Development Process

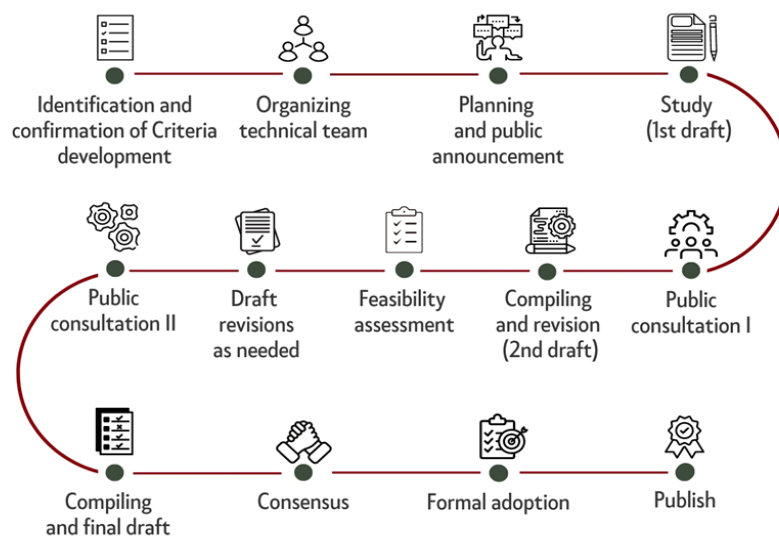A visual for the Criteria development process is shown below (Figure 1).

Figure 1. GSTC Criteria development process

The tasks by each step are as follows:

1) Confirmation of the Criteria Development

- Public announcement of the collaboration between the GSTC and key contributor(s) on the development of the Criteria ("Public Announcement"). The key contributor from Türkiye will be the Türkiye Tourism Promotion and Development Agency (TGA).

2) Organizing the Criteria Development Technical Team

- The GSTC internal experts and external organizations/expert(s) from the F&B Industry (GSTC Assurance Director manages the process and experts work on making an initial draft).

- - There are three external experts who have experience in hotel and tour operator management. Their role is to guide the overall process by engaging with the internal team in the drafts, consultation, and review process.
  - Overall, the GSTC Technical Team is responsible for the whole process and communication with internal and external stakeholders.

3) Planning and public announcement: Developing Terms of Reference following the ISEAL Standard-Setting Code

- Summary of the TOR for the criteria, including a. the proposed scope, objectives, and justification of the need for the standard; b. steps in the standard-setting process, including timelines and clearly identified opportunities for contributing; and c. decision-making procedures, including how decisions are made and who makes them.

4) Study of the 1st draft: Preliminary study and preparation of a draft outline

- Compilation of the criteria for all known standards and guidelines for the sector and related activities to determine common elements.
- Sharing preliminary results (a draft set of criteria) with the GSTC internal expert groups and outside experts in the sector.

5) Public consultation I: Public consultation on the 1st draft

- Developing a list of restaurant stakeholder groups based on the scope of the Criteria.
- Making separate lists of Key stakeholder groups that are directly affected.
- Conducting Online and Offline consultations.
- Inviting all stakeholders to give their input on the draft.
- Reaching out to under-engaged and under-represented groups by two international NGOs
- Conducting Focus Group workshop(s), interview(s), email communications, etc. (i.e., practitioners in the relevant sectors).

6) Compiling and revision of 1st draft

- Compiling all comments from the consultation.
- Refining the draft for feasibility assessment.

7) Feasibility assessment: Applying the 2nd draft to the field

- The systematic analysis and thoughtful evaluation of a potential Criteria's benefits to the field as well as anticipated impediments to their adoption and implementation by the relevant sector(s) (feasibility and auditability of requirements in the draft Criteria).
- Voluntary participation from the F&B Industry.

8) Compiling and revision of the 2nd draft

- Compiling all comments from the consultation.
- Refining the draft for 3rd public consultation.

9) Public consultation II on the 3rd draft

- Public sharing of SYNOPSIS of the comments from the 1st public consultation and the GSTC responses.
- Online and Offline consultation on the 3rd draft.
- Stakeholders' input via the GSTC website.
- Consultation with Key stakeholders and disadvantaged groups.

10) Compiling and final draft: Compiling all comments from the public consultation and refining the final draft

- Compiling all comments from the 2nd Public Consultation.
- Making the final draft for the final consensus of ISC and approval from the GSTC Board of Directors.

11) Consensus on the final draft

- ISC's review of the draft and agreement on accepting it as the final version.

12) Formal adoption: The GSTC Board of Directors' formal adoption of the final draft

- Making sure that stakeholders' views are reflected in decision-making.

13) Publish

- New Criteria are published promptly and made available for free in electronic format.
- Making available hard copies of public summaries, standards, and other materials upon request.
- Standards and supporting documents shall each include:

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  - Contact information on the GSTC
  - The formal status of the document
  - The official language(s) and
  - A note that, in the case of inconsistency between versions, reference shall default to the official language version

Below is the timeline of each of the 13 steps of the Criteria development (Table 1).

Table 1. Timeline of Criteria Development.

TASK	TIMELINE	OUTPUT	BY
1. CONFIRMATION of the Criteria Development	Year 2024		GSTC Board of Directors
2. ORGANIZING the Criteria Development Technical Team	May-June, 2024	Initial draft drafted by the GSTC staff and external experts	GSTC Secretariat
3. PLANNING and PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT: Developing the Terms of Reference following the GSTC Standard-setting Manual	July-August 2024	Public announcement and information sharing	Technical Team International Standards Committee (ISC) GSTC Secretariat
4. STUDY (1ST DRAFT) Preliminary study and preparation of a draft outline	Mid-August - October 31st, 2024	1st draft of the Criteria	Technical Team
5. PUBLIC CONSULTATION I Public consultation on the 1st draft	November 1st - December 31st, 2024	Feedback from various stakeholders Reaching out to the Disadvantaged Group via FGI, workshops, interviews, etc. Consultation with Advisory Group and Key Stakeholder Group members	Technical Team
6. COMPILING and REVISION OF DRAFT (2ND DRAFT)	January 1st - 31st, 2025	2nd draft of the Criteria	Technical Team

TASK	TIMELINE	OUTPUT	BY
7. FEASIBILITY ASSESSMENT Applying the 2nd draft to the field and refining it	February 1st - March 31st, 2025	Outcome of the feasibility assessment with comments from feasibility assessment participants	Technical Team
8. COMPILING and REVISION OF DRAFT (3RD DRAFT)	April 1st - 30th, 2025	3rd draft of the Criteria	Technical Team
9. PUBLIC CONSULTATION II Public consultation on the 3RD draft	May 1st - 31st, 2025	Feedback from various stakeholders	Technical Team
10. COMPILING and Final DRAFT Compiling all comments from the public consultation	June 1st - 30th, 2025	Refining the draft and making a final draft for approval	Technical Team
11. CONSENSUS Consensus on the final draft.	July 1st - 15th, 2025	Review the process and the final draft	Technical Team and ISC
12. FORMAL ADOPTION GSTC Board of Directors' formal adoption of the final draft	July 15th, July 31st 2025	Approval of the final draft by the GSTC Board of Directors	GSTC Board of Directors
13. PUBLISH		Publicly available new Criteria in an electronic format	GSTC Secretariat

3.3 Stakeholder Mapping

F&B Businesses

There are different types of F&B service providers in terms of size, location, service, products, and food served.

F&B Standard Owners and Certification Bodies

There are organizations that have developed, used, and/or certified F&B service providers. They are important in promoting best practices and sustainability in the F&B industry. By setting standards and providing certification, these organizations help to improve the quality of the F&B

service providers , ensure food safety, protect the environment, support local and rural production and agriculture, and promote responsible business practices in the industry.

F&B Associations and Academia

The F&B industry is supported by domestic, regional, or international associations and academic institutions that provide resources, research, and education for the industry. These organizations are instrumental in advancing the knowledge, skills, and professionalism of F&B professionals and promoting the growth and sustainability of the industry.

Travel Agencies

Travel agencies play an important role in the F&B industry by connecting travelers with restaurants.

Destination Communities

F&B have significant impact on the local community, both positive and negative. Local communities are essential partners in the food production processes, and their involvement is critical to the sector's success and sustainability.

Suppliers and farmers

F&B industry greatly influence local suppliers and farmers, with both beneficial and adverse effects. Local suppliers and farmers play a crucial role as partners in the F&Bindustry, and their participation is vital for the success of events and the long-term sustainability of tourism.

Public (Potential Customers in the F&B supply chain)

The public is directly and indirectly involved in the F&B industry through local restaurants, providing feedback and input on food and services such as surveys or focus groups, etc.

Disadvantaged Groups

For the GSTC Criteria Development, the Disadvantaged Groups are defined as under-engaged and underrepresented groups due to barriers such as linguistic, geographic, technical, and other difficulties/barriers. Disadvantaged groups will be reached out to get their input in the GSTC Criteria Development.

3.4 Guiding principles

This standard-setting process adheres to the guiding principles described in the GSTC Standard Setting Manual version 3.0 as follows:

Collaboration - Governments, businesses, and civil society organizations, including other sustainability systems, that are working towards shared sustainability objectives. It actively seeks alignment, establishes partnerships, and shares learning to improve efficiency and direct or systemic impacts.

Continual Improvement - Objectives, strategies, and performance of the tools and system are regularly reviewed by which the impacts and outcomes are evaluated. Lessons learned from the continual improvement process are for improvement purposes that respond to new evidence, stakeholder input, and external changes, adapting its strategies to improve its impacts and remain fit for purpose.

Measurable Progress - Quantitative or qualitative tools that are relevant to achieving sustainability objectives, whereby progress towards objectives are measured over time. The sustainability system of the GSTC collects and analyzes the data it needs to measure and understand. Measuring the progress ensures that the user of the data is directed toward the sustainability objectives.

Reliability - Information is consistent and tools are designed in a way so that they can be implemented and assessed with consistency. Reliability ensures assessments of users' sustainability performance are competent and accurate and that these assessments support any claims it allows users to make.

Rigor - All components of a standard system are structured to deliver quality outcomes. Standards are set at a performance level that results in measurable progress towards the scheme's sustainability objectives, while assessment of compliance provides an accurate picture of whether an entity meets the standard's requirements.

Stakeholder Engagement - The sustainability system of the GSTC empowers stakeholders to participate in decisions and hold the system to account. Balanced and diverse group of stakeholders are involved in decisions that will affect the system (or the building of the GSTC Criteria). Stakeholder engagement is essential and provides clear and transparent feedback that guarantees adaptation to the whole system. It shall be a fair, impartial and accessible mechanism for resolving complaints and conflicts.

Sustainability Impacts - Results that deliver what achievements have been met to what has been measured. The sustainability impact communicates the strategies for achieving objectives

involving social, environmental, economic and cultural aspects of current scientific evidence and international norms when relevant. It is adapted to local or sector-specific conditions where this helps improve impacts.

Transparency - Important information is publicly available and easily accessible, while protecting confidential and private information. Stakeholders can further understand and evaluate the system's processes, decision-making, results and impacts. Through openness and honesty stakeholders have the necessary information and resources they need to participate in decisions or raise concerns actively.

3.5. Restaurant Criteria Development Process Management

GSTC Technical Team

The GSTC Technical Team will consist of internal experts and external experts. The internal experts are the GSTC staff, including the Global Assurance Program Director, the Project manager, and the Membership Coordinator.

The four external experts were contacted based on their experience in sustainability programs and events and their professionalism in F&B and international settings. Their role is to provide guidance to the overall process of developing the Criteria and perform as experts in the drafts, consultation, and review process. The external experts will be the facilitators for each draft development and consultation stage.

Overall, the GSTC Technical Team is responsible for the whole process and communication with internal and external stakeholders. The GSTC Board will approve the Technical Team's final work.

Advisory Group

The GSTC will invite a maximum of 10 globally important organizations from both public and private sectors to the Restaurant Criteria Development Advisory Group.

The Advisory Group's role is to provide high-level feedback and comments to the Technical Team. As leaders in the field, they will be asked to share key stakeholders' contact information so the Technical Team can engage them in the Criteria Development Process and to encourage the restaurant industry to participate in the Public Consultation and Feasibility Assessment. Apart from this role, they are asked to attend the online meeting for each development phase.

Key Stakeholders Group

Key players in the restaurant industry, with their business volume and roles, will be identified as key stakeholders. Representatives from the industry and other stakeholders will be invited as key stakeholders. These key stakeholders shall give input based on their experience/knowledge and insights from the F&B industry.

Disadvantaged Group Consultation

The GSTC will outsource disadvantaged group consultation. To cover the global geographical scope of five continents, the GSTC will contract with two international NGOs working in different regions. The contracted organizations will conduct disadvantaged group consultations on behalf of the GSTC Technical Team.

GSTC International Standards Committee

The International Standards Committee shall oversee the development process of the GSTC Restaurants Criteria in all its forms in accordance with the ISEAL Alliance Standards Setting Code. Any disputes on management approach between the Committee and the Secretariat shall be resolved by the Board.

GSTC Board

The GSTC Board is responsible for overseeing the governance of the Corporation's mandate, program of work, and operations. The Board will approve the new Restaurants Criteria, as proposed by the International Standards Committee.

#END#