



**Executive Brief:
General Counsel
Forest Stewardship Council
International (FSC)**

SRI 


FSC

Empowering
lasting impact



About the Forest Stewardship Council International (FSC)

FSC® is trusted by NGOs, businesses, and consumers worldwide to protect healthy, resilient forests for all, forever.

The Forest Stewardship Council runs the world's leading forest certification system and works to mitigate the climate and biodiversity crises by advancing sustainable forest management worldwide.

Currently, over 160 million hectares and 70,000+ organizations are certified to our standards.

Our mission is to promote environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial, and economically viable management of the world's forests.

We envision more: A new forest paradigm where the true value of forests is recognized and fully incorporated into society worldwide. FSC is the leading catalyst and defining force for improved forest management and market transformation, shifting the global forest trend toward sustainable use, conservation, restoration, and respect for all.

FSC operates the most rigorous forest certification system. We are governed by our members, who bring a balance of social, economic, and environmental perspectives and keep our standards robust and relevant.

Globally, our “check tree” logo is the most recognized and trusted consumer symbol for forest products*. Our certifications ensure third parties verify that our standards are properly implemented, meaning forests can remain forests and materials are sourced responsibly.

Certification is just one way we advance sustainable forestry. We provide a proven, measurable system to recognize the intangible benefits forests offer – thriving biodiversity, carbon storage, water protection, and more. Our holistic approach drives shared value for business, government, Indigenous Peoples and society at large by advancing responsible forest management and providing ways to recognize and harness the true value forests deliver.

For more information, please visit: <https://fsc.org/en/about-us>.





Role Purpose

The General Counsel (GC) is FSC's senior-most legal leader, responsible for transforming the Legal & Compliance unit into a globally integrated, business-partner-oriented capability that actively supports FSC and its mission. The role will require strengthening FSC's legal presence across the FSC Group, building internal legal capacity and reducing reliance on outsourced legal advice. This is to ensure consistent, high-quality support and enhance System Integrity across the entire network.

This role moves beyond traditional legal advisory functions to:

- Proactively advise senior leadership on legal, compliance, and risk matters.
- Enable operational efficiency and consistency across all FSC AC entities globally.
- Strengthen legal defensibility of FSC's System Integrity operations.
- Drive transformation of the legal and compliance unit into a globally coherent, efficient, and well-governed function.

The Director (GC) will restructure and professionalize what is currently a Bonn-centric legal department into a strategic global function capable of supporting FSC's worldwide activities with consistency, quality, and business acumen.



Major Duties and Responsibilities

Strategic Legal & Compliance Leadership

- Act as trusted advisor to the DG and C-suite on legal, compliance, and risk matters.
- Provide practical, solution-oriented legal guidance that enables business decisions rather than creating barriers.
- Identify emerging legal, regulatory, and reputational risks and propose proactive mitigation strategies.
- Represent FSC externally in matters requiring senior legal presence (regulatory bodies, litigation interface, strategic partnerships).
- Ensure legal function operates as a business partner, not simply a compliance checkpoint.

Global Oversight & Coordination

Provide strategic oversight of Legal & Compliance across FSC Group with presence across 90 countries and entities in:

- FSC Asociacion Civil (AC - Mexico)
- FSC Global Development (GD - Germany)
- FSC International Center (IC - Germany)
- Regional offices worldwide (China, Kenya, Ukraine)
- Support for remote locations and activities

Key activities:

- Ensure consistent and high quality of legal advice, policies, and processes across geographies. As our work is in the certification and standard setting, our policies and processes require precision.
- Develop and implement global legal standards and service delivery models.
- Establish and manage escalation protocols for legal and compliance matters.
- Coordinate with regional legal resources to optimize global coverage and expertise.





Transformation of Legal & Compliance Function

The General Counsel has authority to restructure team, implement new systems, and change processes and will be expected to lead initiatives to professionalize and modernize the legal function:

- **Process & Systems Improvement:**

- Introduce best-practice systems: contract lifecycle management, matter tracking, internal knowledge repositories.
- Standardize legal strategies including data privacy and compliance, processes, templates, and service delivery across all FSC entities.
- Implement metrics and KPIs to measure legal function efficiency and effectiveness.

- **Team Development & Structure:**

- Manage, develop, and structure the global Legal & Compliance Unit to ensure clarity of roles, accountability, and capacity.
- Build capabilities within the team to support FSC's evolving needs.
- Create clear career pathways and development opportunities for legal professionals.

- **External Counsel Management:**

- Optimise use of external counsel for strategic, high-risk, or specialist matters.
- Build and maintain strong network of external legal and tax advisors.
- Ensure external counsel services are high quality, cost-effective, and delivered on time and be a business partner to the internal users of the external counsel.
- Establish protocols for external counsel engagement, management, and evaluation.





System Integrity Alignment

This is a collaborative/advisory role with System Integrity department. The objective is to ensure System Integrity operations are legally sound, minimize organizational risk, and withstand potential legal challenges. The incumbent will work closely with System Integrity leadership to provide legal oversight and support:

- Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) - review and advise on legal structure and enforceability.
- Due diligence and transparency frameworks - ensure legal robustness and compliance with applicable laws.
- Remediation and disassociation processes - provide legal guidance on anti-trust, , defensibility, and risk.
- Investigations and enforcement actions - ensure legal frameworks are robust, proportionate, and defensible.
- Legal interpretations of policies and procedures managed and implemented by System Integrity.

Governance, Compliance & Risk Management

- Responsible for ensuring the efficient and compliant operation of the Board of Directors. Support effective corporate governance, and provide advice to Board and executive management.
- Support operational and governance compliance across FSC International entities.
- Ensure legal, compliance, and integrity obligations are consistently understood and applied.
- Provide strategic input into risk mitigation for certification, member compliance, and reputation management.
- Oversee intellectual property protection (trademarks, logos) and international trademark licensing for FSC Certification Scheme.
- Ensure legal compliance of the FSC Group across all jurisdictions of operation.
- Maintain legally sound filing systems for contracts, official correspondence, and certificates.

Contracts & Commercial Legal Support

- Oversee the drafting, negotiation and interpretation of various agreements, including vendor, consultancy, and grant contracts.
- Review and draft FSC contracts and contract templates in cooperation with external advisors as required.
- Provide commercial legal advice to support business development, partnerships, and organizational operations.
- Ensure contracts protect FSC interests while enabling operational efficiency.

Capacity Building & Knowledge Sharing

- Train senior management and staff on legal matters as required.
- Build legal literacy across FSC to enable informed decision-making.
- Create accessible knowledge resources and guidance for non-legal staff.

Authority & Decision-Making

• Strategic Authority

- Oversight of global Legal & Compliance strategy and budget.
- Authority to approve internal legal opinions on cross-border or high-risk matters in conjunction with the DG and or the COO.
- Authority to manage, restructure, and allocate global legal resources.

• Operational Authority

- Mandate to implement standardized legal processes and legal service delivery to support all FSC entities.
- Consultation and oversight rights with System Integrity for MoUs, due diligence, and remediation.
- Authority to engage external counsel for strategic, high-risk, or specialist matters.

The position includes legal authority appropriate to the role (Handlungs - und Vertretungsvollmacht) resulting in all decision rights on all legal affairs below the Managing Directors.



Profile

Essential Qualifications & Experience

Education

- Successfully completed university degree in law (LLM or equivalent) Common Law background.

Professional Experience

- 10+ years senior leadership experience in international, multi-jurisdictional legal roles.
- Strong background in common law, regulatory compliance, and cross-border governance.
- Proven ability to transform legal and compliance functions into business-enabling units.
- Demonstrated skill as a strategic business partner in addition to being a legal advisor.
- Professional experience in supervising and developing legal teams.
- Experience working across diverse cultures, regions, and organizational models. Worked outside EU.
- Someone who has worked with multijurisdictional companies and therefore has a good understanding of the various laws and regulations and navigating through them.

Legal Expertise

- Deep understanding of antitrust, dispute resolution, and remediation regulatory and reputational risk management.
- Understanding of corporate law, governance, and compliance frameworks.
- Understanding of intellectual property, trademark, and commercial law.
- Experience with contract lifecycle management and commercial negotiations.





Leadership & Management

- Proven ability to lead organizational transformation and change management.
- Strong project management skills - ability to deliver within budgets and maintain priorities independently.
- Excellent relationship, negotiation, and conflict resolution skills.
- Solution-oriented and service-oriented approach to legal practice.

Desirable

Sector Experience

- Experience working in/with NGO's, certification systems, or quasi-regulatory environments.
- Understanding of international environmental or sustainability frameworks.
- Experience in integrity/certification type issues, investigations, or remediation frameworks (to support System Integrity).

Technical & Process

- Experience implementing legal operations technology (contract management, matter tracking).
- Knowledge of legal process optimization and service delivery models.
- Familiarity with global legal service delivery structures.

Required Competencies

- Business fluent English (spoken and written) - essential.
- Strong analytical and problem-solving skills.
- Exemplary verbal and written communication skills.
- High level of diligence and accuracy.
- Good time management skills and ability to handle multiple priorities simultaneously.
- Proficiency in standard software packages (MS Office, legal tech platforms).





Personal Attributes

- Demonstrated commitment to the values and mission of FSC.
- Professional, social and emotional intelligence.
- Strategic mindset and results orientated.
- Collaborative and empowering, working with colleagues from different locations and backgrounds.
- High level of integrity.
- Resilience.

Key Performance Indicators

• **Quality & Service Delivery:**

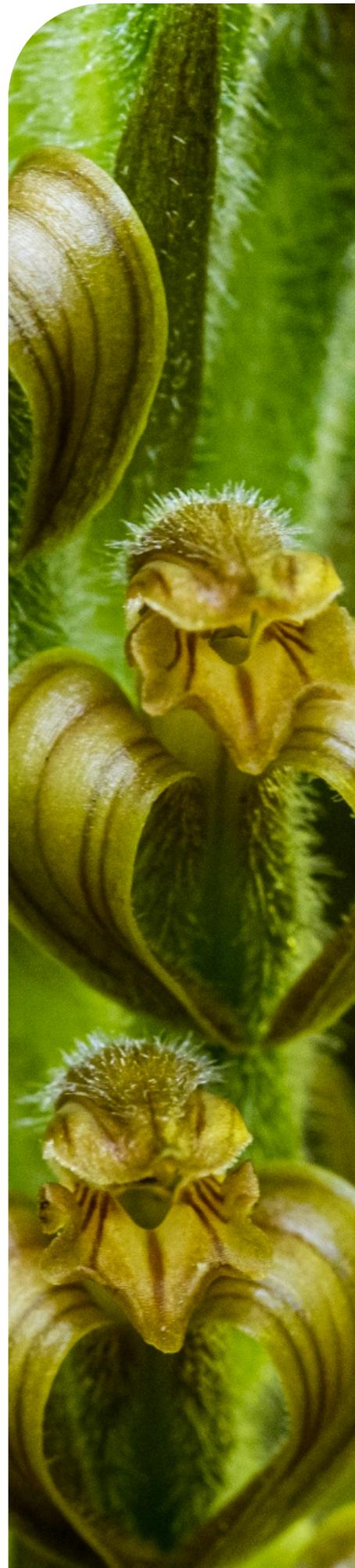
- High level of quality in legal services and advice (measured by stakeholder feedback, issue resolution).
- Responsiveness to internal client needs (turnaround times, accessibility).
- Consistency of legal advice across FSC entities.

• **Transformation & Efficiency:**

- Progress against transformation milestones (Year 1, Year 2 objectives).
- Reduction in external counsel spend (through improved internal capability).
- Implementation of legal operations systems and processes.
- Team development and capability building metrics.

• **Risk Management:**

- Proactive identification and mitigation of legal and compliance risks.
- Zero material compliance failures or legal exposures due to legal function gaps.
- Legal defensibility of System Integrity operations.





- **Financial Management:**

- Projects and initiatives managed within agreed budgets.
- Optimization of external counsel usage and costs.
- Return on investment in legal technology and process improvements.

- **Stakeholder Engagement:**

- Professional interaction and partnership with colleagues across FSC International.
- Strong working relationship with System Integrity leadership.
- Effective management of external legal network.
- Satisfaction ratings from internal clients (COO, Director General, Executive Team, business units).

Organizational Relationships

- **Internal Collaboration:**

- All units of FSC International (Director's Office, Policy and Standards, Quality Assurance, Business Development, Network, Central Services, Communications).
- System Integrity leadership and teams.
- ASI - Accreditation Services International.
- FSC Regional Offices.
- FSC Network Partners (National Offices, National Representatives, National Focal Points).

- **External Engagement:**

- External legal and tax advisors (global network).
- Regulatory bodies and government agencies (as required).
- Industry partners and stakeholders (where legal representation needed).

Terms of Appointment

Primary Reporting Line: Chief Operating Officer (COO)

Current Team Structure: Leading a team of 20 staff based in Bonn and one staff in our parent organisation in Mexico, covering Legal Operations, Corporate Affairs & Compliance and Intellectual Property & Trademark.

Direct Reports: Head of Legal, Board Secretariat and Senior Counsel - System Integrity

Role Location

Bonn, Germany (Hybrid)

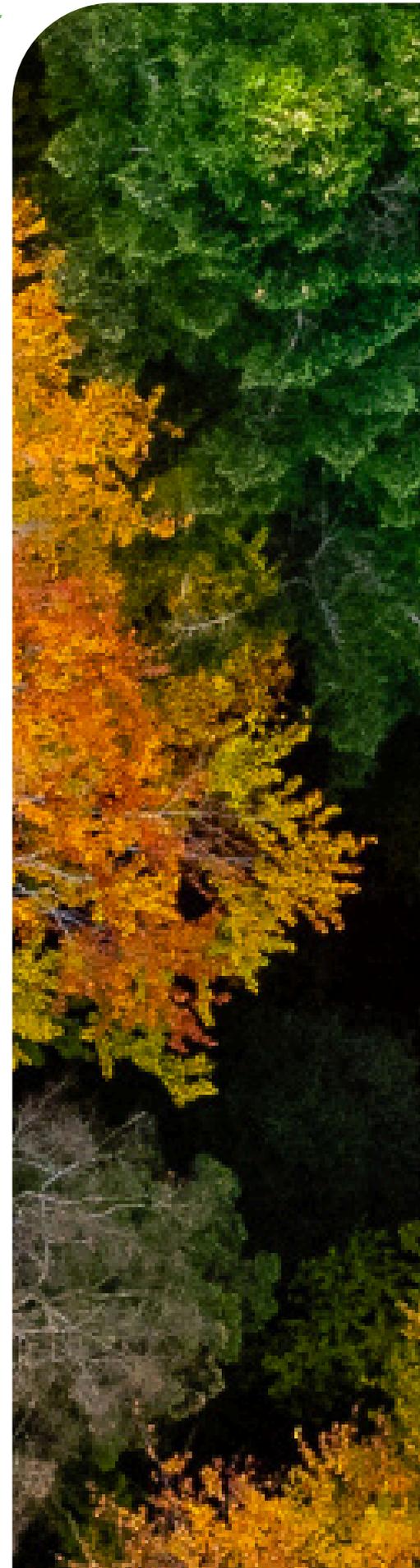




How to Apply & Key Steps in the Process*

*SRI Executive is exclusively retained by **Forest Stewardship Council International (FSC)** to undertake this assignment.*

- If you wish to be considered for this position, please forward a copy of your CV in Microsoft Word format, along with any relevant documentation, as soon as possible and no later than **28 April 2026** to FSC-GC@sri-executive.com
- All information will be treated in the strictest confidence. Applications will be reviewed as they are received and we will revert to you as soon as possible.
- During the recruitment process, should you demonstrate sufficient relevant experience, SRI Executive will require your cooperation in completing a Competency Profile. You will also be required to participate in several telephone or Microsoft Teams screening discussions with the SRI Executive team to ensure there is a clear understanding of the Terms of Reference and to ascertain if there is the appropriate “fit” (technical and behavioural) for you and **FSC**.
- Based on the screening discussions, SRI Executive will provide a shortlist of recommended candidates to FSC for further review. Suitable candidates to take forward for first round interview will then be selected by the hiring committee. SRI Executive will contact suitable candidates and arrange interviews.
- First-round interviews will be conducted by video-conference. Based on the outcome of first round interview, successful candidates will be invited to participate in a second-round face to face interview in Bonn.
- Please be aware that this appointment will require that you provide us with contact information of three people who are willing to act as a referee, including former direct reports. We will not contact these individuals without your expressed permission.





- After you meet with **Forest Stewardship Council International (FSC)**, we will advise you of their decision and provide feedback. At the selection stage, should you be the preferred final candidate, our client will likely extend to you a letter of intention to offer and that the offer will be subject to a reference from your current employer.

**Please note that this process may be subject to some change.*





About SRI Executive

SRI Executive is an Executive Search and Consulting firm specialising in International Development, Global Health, Sustainability, Development Finance and Education sectors. We have partnered with more than 300 organisations to place and support exceptional leaders and develop future-ready strategies that lead to impact.

We bring in-depth expertise, an exclusive network and tailored approach to our service so that in Executive Search, organisations are introduced to leaders who have the balance of behavioural and technical skills to succeed in shaping a better world. In Strategy, our teams are purpose-built with globally respected thematic experts who co-create a roadmap to achieve meaningful global change.

In enhancing the capability, capacity and resilience of mission-driven organisations around the world, we know it comes down to people.



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Empowering lasting impact

We work with the world's leading development organisations. We find, assess and position their leaders. We build the capacity and resilience of their people, teams and operations. We enhance their strategies, governance and effectiveness.

We're trusted for our technical expertise and sector insight, our collaborative approach, and our diverse, talented, innovative and dedicated consultants. We're known for our unparalleled global network of expert advisors, partners and outstanding, hard-to-find candidates.

For nearly three decades we've served over 300 clients across more than 70 countries. We help organisations maximise their impact and lead lasting change

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