

Pre-export Verification of Conformity (PVoC) to Standards for Stand-Alone Solar Products in Ethiopia

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Africa Clean Energy
Catalysing Africa's Solar Markets



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PRE-EXPORT VERIFICATION OF CONFORMITY TO STANDARDS (PVoC) FOR STAND-ALONE SOLAR PRODUCTS

Introduction

The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MOTI) has been implementing a conformity assessment programme to control the quality of imported Stand-Alone Solar (SAS) products. The SAS products that are imported into Ethiopia and covered under this programme require a Certificate of Conformity (COC). The Government of Ethiopia will appoint selected 'PVoC Agents' to conduct Pre-Export Verification of Conformity (PVoC) assessments according to the required standards.

The Certificate of Conformity (COC) issued by PVoC Agents shall be presented for customs clearance. Original copies of the COC shall be submitted to MoTI by the importer to facilitate cargo clearance at the Ports of Entry. The COC document is also available online for authorities to cross check authenticity.

Objective

The main objective of PVoC is to ensure that prior to shipment, all imports of regulated products comply with the Ethiopian quality standards for SAS products (ES IEC TS 62257-9-8: 2020) and the approved Ethiopian technical regulations, or other approved international standards.

The specific objectives of the PVoC programme are to:

- ♦ Ensure quality of SAS products, health and safety, and environmental protection
- ♦ Reduce the risk of unsafe and sub-standard SAS imports entering Ethiopia through the execution of conformity assessment activities from the country of export
- ♦ Facilitate the clearance process by eradicating bottlenecks caused by the entry point verification performed on arrival

Subjected Goods

These include products covered by the standard ES IEC TS 62557-9-8, which are DC Plug and Play solar system kits with a peak power rating of the PV module or other power generating devices less than or equal to 350 Wp.

Responsibilities



Importer

Ensure suppliers are conversant with import quality requirements and that consignments containing regulated products are accompanied by a Certificate of Conformity (COC). COC is a mandatory document for the clearance of SAS goods at the border. For consignments of SAS products delivered to Ethiopia without COC, importers may be issued a penalty of 10% of the Cost, Insurance, and Freight (CIF) and are required to issue a bond for 10% of the CIF value. The costs of the test will also be charged to the importer.



Exporter

It is the responsibility of the exporters to ensure their goods meet quality and regulatory requirements before shipment, by carrying out tests and obtaining the necessary COC from the appointed PVoC partners.



PVoC Agents

PVoC Agents are inspection companies appointed by Ministry of Trade and Industry. The role of these partners is to undertake conformity assessment activities in the country of origin for products being imported into Ethiopia. These activities include document verification, inspection, sampling, testing, sealing of full-load containers and issuance of Certificates of Conformity (COCs). Thereby every consignment of SAS imports, which contain regulated products, shall be accompanied by a COC issued by the PVoC Country Offices (offices operated and managed by authorized PVoC Agent) prior to shipment.



The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MoTI) is responsible for the implementation of the PVoC programme and should ensure imported goods comply with Ethiopian quality standards and national regulations to gain entry into the country. For the solar pilot program, MoTI has delegated Ethiopian Conformity Assessment Enterprise (ECAE) to facilitate the contract management of the PVoC program.



The Ethiopian Standards Agency (ESA) is responsible for the administration of national standards and the issuance of the national quality mark for imported products that are accompanied by a COC.

Certification Routes

The PVoC program has been designed to provide maximum flexibility to exporters and importers by providing three possible routes for obtaining the COC. The route applied depends on the frequency of exporters' shipments to Ethiopia and the level of compliance they can demonstrate when they initially apply for certification.

The PVoC Agent will review the Request for Certification (RFC) received from the exporter before determining the most appropriate certification route and the applicable standard the MoTI can use in the certification process.

ROUTE A – Consignment Inspection and Testing

Route A is for small-scale traders and SAS products intended for shipping should have an accredited test report and undergo physical inspection to demonstrate conformity to ES IEC TS 62257-9-8: 2020. The certification process through Route A is outlined in Figure 1.

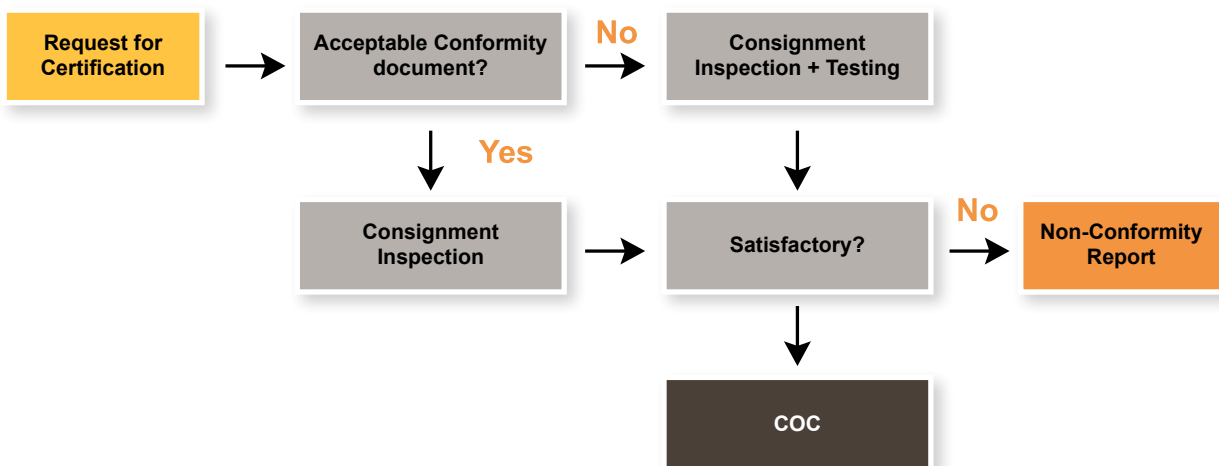


Figure 1: Certification process through Route A

Step

1

Submission of Request for Certification (RFC) by the Exporter:

The exporter shall complete and submit the RFC form to the respective PVoC Partner's office together with the following information/documentation:



- ♦ Commercial Invoice
- ♦ Details of product description which are included in the shipment
- ♦ Traceable test reports issued by a third-party ISO/IEC 17025 accredited laboratory
- ♦ Certificates related to the management quality and safety system
- ♦ Location of consignment and provisional date of availability for inspection
- ♦ Payment of fees as per the route chosen

Step

2

Review of RFC/ Documentation by the PVoC Partner:

The PVoC Partner shall review the documentation to verify whether the submitted substantiating test documents are enough for a standardised product conformity assessment. If the documents are satisfactory, the PVoC agent will proceed to consignment inspection. However, when acceptable conformity documents are not provided, the PVoC agent shall conduct the consignment inspection coupled with sampling and testing.



Step

3

Consignment Inspection:

To obtain evidence that all requirements in the applicable standards or technical requirements are met, the PVoC Agent will arrange a visit and conduct an on-site inspection at the Applicant's operation. The inspector will:



- ♦ Perform visual verification of the specifications for the line items
- ♦ Perform visual verification of the available quantity of each line item
- ♦ Take photos of the products in the consignment
- ♦ Seal the container (For the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic, remote inspection can be applied, and container sealing can be waved)

Step

4

Consignment Sampling and Testing:

When control testing is required, samples shall be selected during consignment inspection and forwarded to an ISO 17025 accredited laboratory for analysis according to IEC TS 62257-9-5. These samples shall be drawn and forwarded to the testing laboratory by PVoC Partners.



Step

5

Issuance of the Final Certification:

The PVoC Partner shall make a certification decision and issue a Certificate of Conformity (COC) or a Non-Conformity Report (NCR) based on the inspection and test reports.



ROUTE B – Product Registration and Surveillance

Route B offers a fast-track certification process for goods with reasonable and consistent levels of quality through a registration procedure done by the PVoC Agent. This product registration is recommended to exporters who have frequent shipments of homogenous products. Registration is annually renewable and subject to continual compliance. The registration process through Route B is outlined below:

Step

1



Submission of Application Form for Registration by the Exporter:

Exporters (i.e., Trader or Manufacturer) seeking registration of their products under the PVoC Programme shall fill and submit to the PVoC Agent the registration application form together with the required supporting documents.

Step

2



Review of Registration Application Submitted by the Exporter:

On successful review of the registration application, the PVoC agent will issue a Statement of Registration (SoR) for the products, that is valid for 1 year (upon payment of the applicable fees).

Step

3



Monitoring:

The PVoC agent will draw a monitoring plan for all the products listed in a SoR and submit the plan to MoTI. The agent should report on surveillance activities monthly and monitoring shall be carried out as detailed in the plan throughout the validity period of the registration. The surveillance plan can include consignment inspection, conformity document verification and testing. It should at least require that one surveillance inspection be scheduled and carried out during the validity period. However, the frequency of inspections may be increased depending on the risk assessment conducted by the PVoC Agent.

ROUTE C - Product Licensing and Surveillance

This route is open only to manufacturers who can demonstrate the existence of a compliant and appropriate quality management system in their production/manufacturing process. Route C offers a quicker certification process that involves; auditing these production processes and licensing of products manufactured thereof; by authorized PVoC Agents in line with ISO Guide 28: 2004.

Step

1



Licensing Criteria

- ♦ Be the manufacturer of the products or the official representative of the manufacturer
- ♦ Have a compliant quality management system implemented at factory level and valid certification issued by an accredited body: ISO 9001, ISO/TS 16949, HACCP, ISO22000, ISO13485 et.al.

Step

2



Licensing Process

- ♦ Submission of application form for licensing: The application should be accompanied by the necessary supporting documents, test reports and the manufacturer's quality system documentation.
- ♦ Review of Licensing Application by the PVoC Partner and licensing decision: After the review of the application, the PVoC partner shall in the case of satisfactory results, grant the manufacturer a Statement of Licensing (SoL). The SoL is valid for a period of one (1) year, upon payment of applicable fees.

Step 3

Monitoring



- ♦ **Annual Audits:** The PVoC Partner shall conduct an annual audit of the manufacturing process and review the quality management system for licensed products. Audit schedules for each licensed product(s) shall be submitted to MoTI together with SoL immediately after licensing.
- ♦ **Surveillance Inspection:** A surveillance inspection plan with at least (2) inspections scheduled during the validity period of the license, shall be prepared, and shared with MoTI.

A summary of the three routes is provided in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Summary of the certification processes

Conformity Assessment Fees

The fees charged for conformity assessment cover; documentary verification, physical inspection and sampling including sealing of the containers, where applicable. The PVoC fee schedule described in the table below does not include additional costs that may be charged to importers and/or exporters for laboratory testing, manufacturer licensing, registration fees and sampling of bulk shipments, which may be required according to the conformity assessment route.

Table 1: Conformity assessment fees

Route	AD Valorem Fee as Percentage of FOB	Minimum Fee (USD)	Maximum Fee (USD)
A	0.75%	265	2,700
B	0.60%	265	2,700
C	0.40%	265	2,700

For more information contact,
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