



Fisheries
Transparency
Initiative

Transparency of fisheries in Seychelles

Kick-off Forum

30 September 2020

“Eden Bleu Hotel”, Eden Island / Seychelles

Report

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Impressions



Sustainable fisheries need transparency

Marine fisheries have become a critical resource fulfilling the economic, food security, and nutrition needs of millions of people around the world. For millennia those that dedicated themselves to fishing either for family consumption, recreational interest or as a commercial activity needed not to worry about the sustainable management of this natural resource. **Fish stocks replenished themselves with ease. That is not the case anymore.**

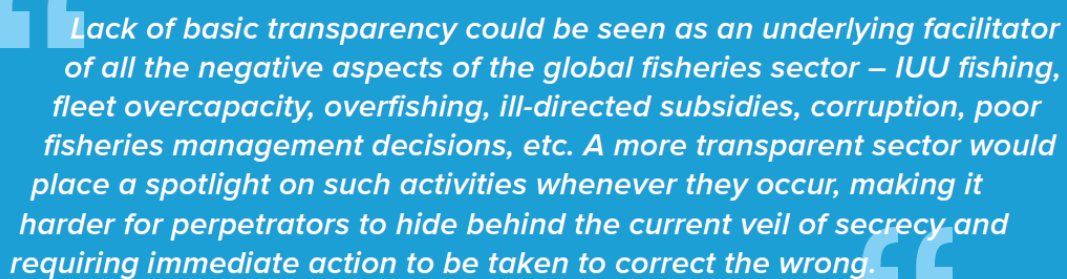
The global COVID-19 pandemic has struck at a time when the ocean was already under increasing threat from myriad impacts, including climate change, pollution and overfishing. According to the "State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020" report from the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), more than 34 per cent of global fish stocks are already fished at biologically unsustainable levels. Furthermore, according to the same report, it is unlikely that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) target 14.4 (to end overfishing of marine fisheries by 2020) will be achieved.

Governments have the fundamental obligation to manage fisheries responsibly, on behalf of their citizens, as a public asset. But this invokes a complex challenge: ensuring that fishing and fish trade contribute to income, employment, food and nutrition for millions of people, while also conserving marine biodiversity for present and future generations.

While there are many aspects to achieve sustainable fisheries, the public availability of credible information is critical. But it has not been a priority. Many governments are not disclosing even basic information on their fisheries sector, such as laws, permits, fish agreements, stock assessments, financial contributions, catch data, and subsidies. Also, not all companies are reliably reporting on catch volumes, fishing practices and payments to governments. Furthermore, the data that is already publicly available is too often incomplete, dated, unverified, or not readily accessible, affecting the capacity of governments to manage their marine fisheries efficiently and sustainably, as well as the ability for effective oversight and accountability.

Also, lack of transparency undermines not only the quality and credibility of decision-making and diminishes the prospect of effective oversight and accountability, but also marginalises or undervalues certain groups or fisheries sub-sectors (in particular those that involve women), and provides a breeding ground for corruption as well as misinformation, rumours and unfair adverse publicity.

The concept of transparency in fisheries has become increasingly mainstreamed. Perhaps the moment when this became most apparent was when the FAO published its annual State of the World Fisheries Report in 2010. It was the first-time transparency was mentioned prominently as being of central importance to various problems affecting marine fisheries worldwide:



Lack of basic transparency could be seen as an underlying facilitator of all the negative aspects of the global fisheries sector – IUU fishing, fleet overcapacity, overfishing, ill-directed subsidies, corruption, poor fisheries management decisions, etc. A more transparent sector would place a spotlight on such activities whenever they occur, making it harder for perpetrators to hide behind the current veil of secrecy and requiring immediate action to be taken to correct the wrong.

The arguments for transparency in the fisheries sector stem from multiple interests and concerns. This includes growing consumer interest on the sustainability of seafood products, mounting evidence about unethical business practices in the fishing sector (e.g. illegal fishing, even in protected areas), as well as a growing acceptance that problems confronting coastal communities and small-scale fisheries are rooted in the secrecy that has characterized this sector for so long.

Many of the elements included in campaigns for transparency in the fisheries sector are already established in [international agreements on fisheries reforms](#)¹. The challenge has been that while these texts provide some specific requests for governments to follow, transparency is, however, discussed in fairly general way. This leaves much open to debate on exactly what information ought to be made public, by whom and why.

Furthermore, we are facing an [implementation gap](#). Many governments are falling short of the true intent and spirit of these agreements and norms. The lack of transparency in fisheries access agreements between foreign fishing nations and developing countries, the lack of information on licensed vessels, the deficient public records on fishing quota allocations, as well as very limited data on subsidies, are just some of the most prominent examples. Yet, coherent national policies on fisheries management can only happen in the presence of open access to all relevant data needed to ensure equitable and sustainable outcomes. Transparency is essential to any effective national dialogue.

Addressing these shortcomings and contributing to sustainable fisheries management was a key motivator in establishing the Fisheries Transparency Initiative.

¹ For example, the need for governments to share information on fisheries is already described in the 1982 United Nations *Convention on the Law of the Sea* and the subsequent FAO's landmark *Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries* (1995). Transparency is also listed by the FAO as one of the core principles for States to follow in the *2012 Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Governance of Tenure in Land, Fisheries and Forests*, as well as the *Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries* finalised in 2014. Intergovernmental bodies, such as the European Union and the African Union, have also put forward transparency as an aspect of fisheries reforms that must be strengthened.

1) Background and objectives of Kick-off Forum

The Seychelles comprises 115 islands spread over an Economic Exclusive Zone (EEZ) of 1.37 million km². Despite having a land mass of just 455 km², Seychelles is a large oceanic state, and a major player in the global tuna industry, with Port Victoria one of the busiest industrial fishing ports in the Western Indian Ocean. Seychelles is heavily reliant on its two main pillars of the economy: tourism and fisheries.

In view that marine fisheries is such a key contributor to the social, economic and cultural fabric of Seychelles, the fisheries sector has taken a central role in the nation's developmental agenda, from successive National Development Plans to strategies for economic growth. Seychelles has also prioritized the nationalizing of the international agenda for sustainable fisheries, such as the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

Seychelles has been collaborating with the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) since 2015. The FiTI is a global multi-stakeholder partnership that defines for the first time the information that national authorities must publish on the marine fisheries sector. In fact, transparency has become a cornerstone of the country's endeavours to transit towards a sustainable ocean economy; and it is a core principle of the country's 'Blue Economy: Strategic Policy Framework and Roadmap'.

Seychelles is currently conducting its first assessment of publicly available information on its fisheries sector, and its first FiTI Report will be an important tool for institutionalising and improving the dialogue and cooperation with all bona fide stakeholders.

In order to support the country's transparency efforts in its marine fisheries sector, the Department of the Blue Economy and the FiTI International Secretariat agreed to organise the following two meetings over the next few months, with financial support from the World Bank's PROBLUE multi-donor trust fund.

- » Half-day *Kick-off Forum*, 30 September 2020
- » Full-day *Launch Forum for Seychelles 1st FiTI Report*, date to be confirmed

The objectives of the Kick-off Forum were to stimulate debates on how fisheries information is provided to the public and to further increase awareness of the importance of fisheries for Seychelles.

In order to support the organisation of these two meetings, a **National Outreach Committee** was established to help:

- » Determine the target groups for each meeting;
- » Identifying the key messages to be communicated, as well as outreach activities to build momentum towards both events; and
- » Contributing towards determining the agenda, invitees and identifying key speakers.

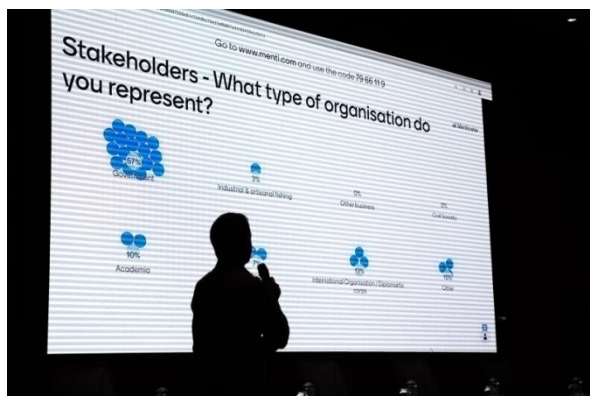
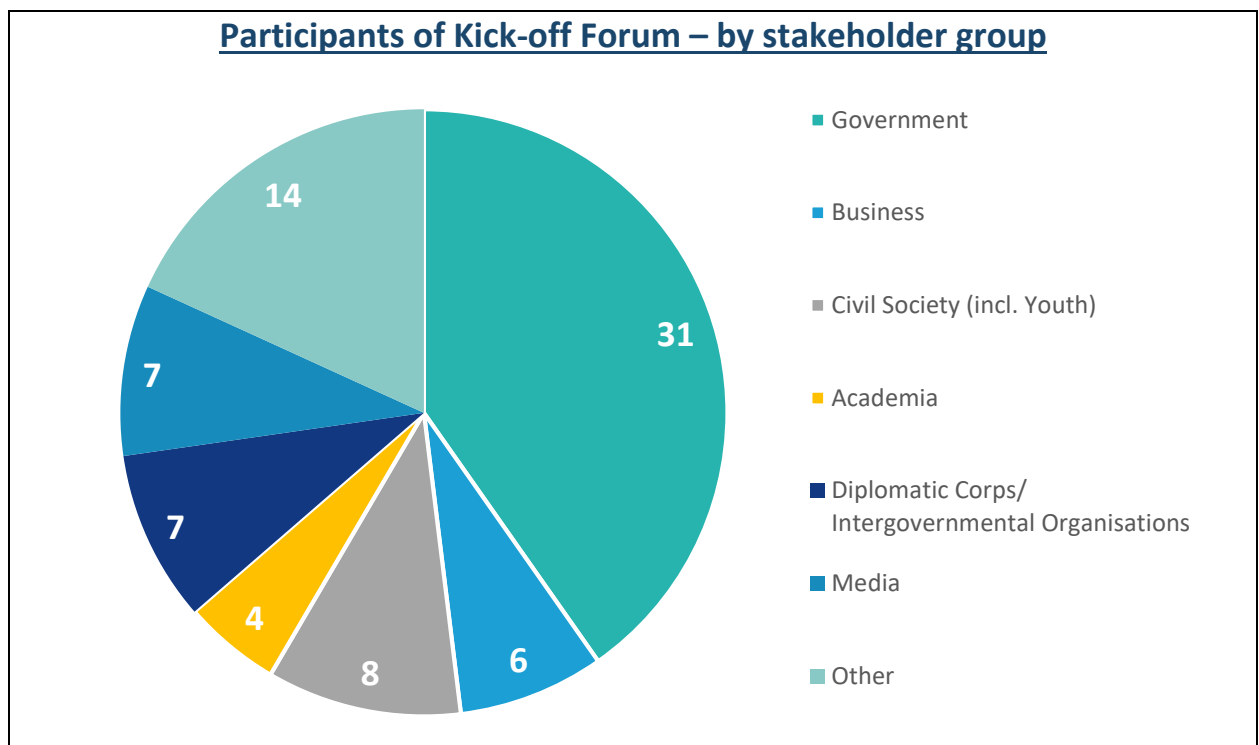
Most notably, the Committee recommended that due to the **Presidential and National Assembly elections in Seychelles (end of October 2020)**, invitations to government offices should be targeted at levels of Principal Secretaries from the different departments, and not to relevant Ministers. Furthermore, representatives of the three parties running for presidency were invited, but were asked not to send the heads of parties.

Also, the current **COVID-19 health guidelines** of the Seychelles Ministry of Health influenced the planning process, e.g. number of total invitations, seating orders.

	Committee members	Organization
1	ANDRE, Michele	Fisheries Transparency Initiative (World Bank-PROBLUE consultant)
2	ANTOINE, Sharif	Seychelles Fishing Authority
3	BIERMANN, Sven	Fisheries Transparency Initiative
4	GONTHIER, Gabriella	Blue Economy Youth Advocate
5	HOARAU, Beatty	Seychelles Fishermen & Boat Owners Association
6	HOAREAU, Kelly	Blue Economy Research Institute, University of Seychelles
7	KARAPETYAN, Salifa	Seychelles News Agency
8	MEDERIC, Emma	Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust

2) Participants

The half-day Kick-off Forum brought together **over 75 representatives** from different stakeholder groups, as shown below. Representatives from relevant international organisations, such as the World Bank, the Indian Ocean Commission, the Commonwealth Secretariat and non-resident diplomatic missions were invited as well, but were unable to attend due to the current COVID-19 related travel restrictions.



3) Welcome and opening remarks

Ms. Michele Andre from the FiTI International Secretariat welcomed all participants. In her capacity of the forum's Master of Ceremony she outlined the agenda for this half-day event and briefly highlighted administrative aspects. She also emphasised the health regulations put in place by the Ministry of Health in order to conduct such a large, in-presence gathering.



Afterwards, the forum was officially opened by the Principal Secretary of the Department of the Blue Economy in Seychelles, **Mr. Kenneth Racombo**, who commended the achievement of bringing together such an inclusive group of stakeholders. Mr. Racombo welcomed the Ambassadors of Japan, Russia and Cuba, former Minister Jean-Paul Adam, the Deputy High Commissioner for the British High Commission, as

well as several Principal Secretaries from other Ministries.

Mr. Racombo stated that sustainable fishery is not only about making sure that just enough fish is caught whilst maintaining marine ecosystems, it also needs to strike balances with trade in the industry, assuring livelihoods and generating income. He elaborated further that with notable demographic changes in world population and alarming decline in fish stocks worldwide, developing and maintaining a fishery sector is crucial. According to Mr. Racombo, the people of Seychelles need to have answers to key questions when it comes to their fisheries sector, including:

- » What is the actual state of fisheries resources?
- » Who has and how to get access to these resources?
- » Is the fish being caught in a sustainable manner?
- » Are there laws and policies that govern the fishing industry?
- » What barriers and obstacles exist that prevent sustainable fishing?

Recognizing the importance of transparency in the fisheries sector in Seychelles, Mr. Racombo recalled the various commitments and achievements of Seychelles to increase transparency in fisheries, notably the decision to join the initiative in 2015, the government's

commitment at the 'Our Ocean' Conference 2018 in Bali to host the FiTI's international headquarter, and being recognised as only the second country in the world, after Mauritania, to become a FiTI candidate country.

Mr. Racombo closed his brief remarks by expressing his expectations that this first forum will promote fruitful discussions around the country's fisheries sector, as well as the challenges and opportunities that such an initiative will bring to Seychelles on the international stage.

Following Mr. Racombo's remarks, **Mr. Sven Biermann**, Executive Director of the International Secretariat of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) also addressed the audience with a brief welcome. He later gave a presentation explaining what FiTI is and its importance in promoting transparency of fisheries in Seychelles.



4) Presentations & discussions

The importance of transparency for sustainable fisheries in Seychelles and Africa (and beyond)




Mr. Jean-Paul Adam, Director for Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resources Management division at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), expressed his sincere appreciation to participate in this important forum. He emphasised UNECA's efforts to support transitions among African countries towards a Green or Blue economy. He also expressed his delight to see the FiTI taking a strong hold in Seychelles and beyond, following his contribution to its development while being a member of the Seychelles Government.

According to Mr. Adam, transparency is one of the enabling factors that empowers countries to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their specific targets. It is one of the mobilisers that ensures that the society is addressing an issue based on the best available data at the time. Transparency becomes even more critical in a time of crisis and as the world faces unprecedented health and economic challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with the debilitating impacts of the climate crisis, the focus on transparency is even more essential.

Mr. Adam noted that economic models that are predicated on infinite growth have been shown to be inadequate. Instead, a paradigm shift is needed, away from resource-heavy and inefficient models of production and consumption, which incentivise overexploitation. The concept of a Blue Economy is precisely aimed at ensuring that the health of the natural ecosystem is properly factored into the economic activities which generate wealth. Seychelles, and many other African countries, are blessed with significant oceanic resources, but these resources are increasingly under pressure due to overexploitation and climate change. This is also evident in several discussions with fishers, referring to the size of catches and the availability of certain species. Transparency is therefore a critical part in developing such a Blue Economy.

Mr. Adam stated further that the importance of biodiversity in a country's economy cannot be overemphasized. This is particularly important in Africa, as biodiversity is directly linked to economic and social outcomes. In rural areas of Africa, 62% of population depends directly on ecosystem services for their livelihood, whether land based, or ocean based.



Marine and coastal resources also represent up to 35% of GDP in some coastal African countries and fisheries amount to a total of 9.5 billion dollars per year. Protection of biodiversity therefore ensures future opportunities for generating wealth.

In relation to specific fisheries transparency measures, the FiTI Standard is invaluable towards properly measuring how countries can proactively contribute towards sustainable fisheries. This includes ensuring full transparency of fisheries agreements, availability and enforcement of appropriate labour laws, open and accessible information on beneficial ownership whether it be of vessels, businesses or investors in the fisheries sector, regularly recorded and available catch data, stock assessments, and information on subsidies to the fisheries sector.

Mr. Adam accentuated the importance of the FiTI Standard being adopted at national level, like in the Seychelles. Likewise, it is crucial to find support at a continental level to inspire policies that preserve the global commons, while also bringing benefits to local populations. He stated that the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) aims to raise environmental standards and quality controls to streamline trade within Africa. Transparency in the fisheries sector is a critical factor towards ensuring that trade is developmental, and improves environmental outcomes. Therefore, we must also work to ensure that the FiTI Standard can be considered as part of Africa's ongoing efforts to truly contributing towards a transformational trading area for all African citizens.

In closing, Mr. Adam emphasised that the efforts towards enhancing transparency in fisheries are also a key tool towards empowering the African Union's Blue Economy Strategy. The UNECA is supporting its implementation through the development of a Blue Economy valuation toolkit, which will help individual African countries better situate the true value of the fisheries and overall marine resources. He further highlighted that our natural capital is too often under-valued, and so are our oceanic resources and the potential of our blue economy. It is assumed to be owned by all, but the responsibility of none. Transparency efforts, such as the FiTI, can help creating awareness – one of the precursors to being able to take informed action.

Mr. Adam's speech is available at www.fiti.global.

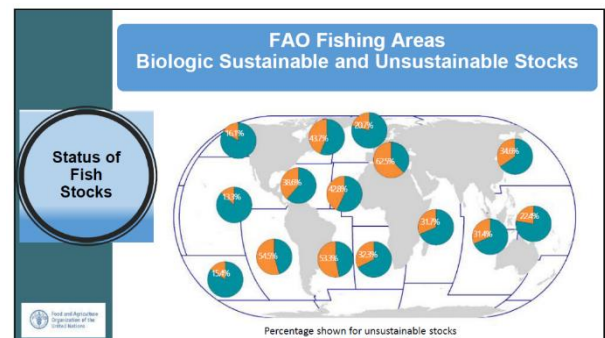
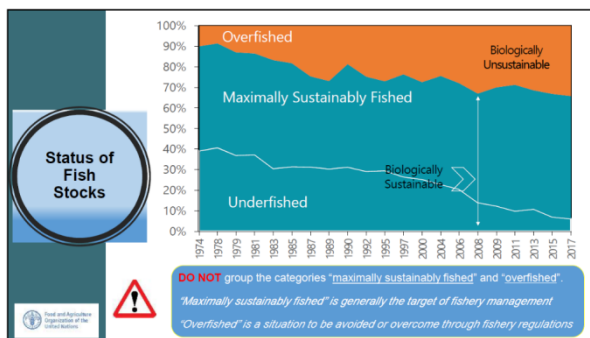
World Fish Production and Trade – Latest Data, Trends, and Challenges (with a focus on the Indian Ocean)



The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture (SOFIA) Report, published every 2 years by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), aims to provide comprehensive, reliable and up-to-date information to policymakers, civil society and those whose livelihoods depend on the sector.

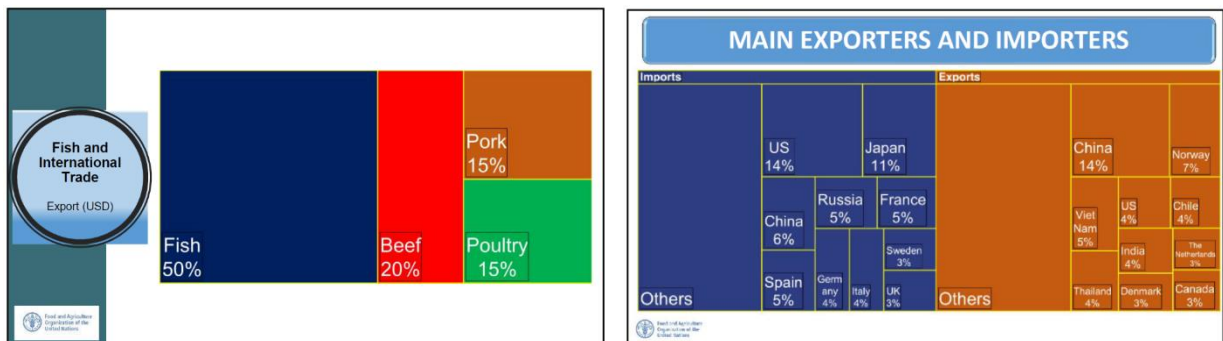
Mr. Marcio Castro De Souza, Senior Fishery Officer (International Trade) at the FAO, joined the forum virtually from Rome/Italy to present the 2020 SOFIA report and speak about latest data, trends and challenges of world fish production and trade.

Mr. Castro De Souza emphasised that the percentage of stocks fished at biologically unsustainable levels increased from 10 percent in 1974 to 34.2 percent in 2017, even though significant differences can be seen among FAO’s major fishing areas.



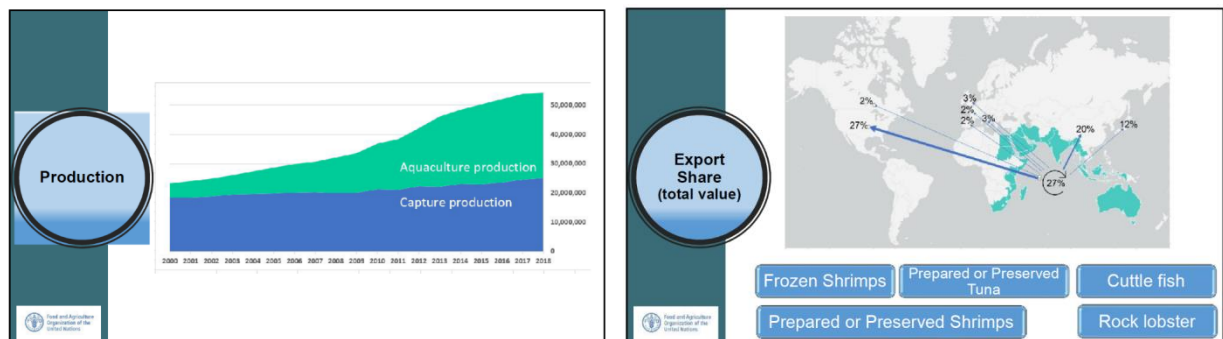
Mr. Castro De Souza further stressed that the solution for fishery sustainability around the world is clear: implement effective fisheries management. In fact, there is growing evidence that when fisheries are properly managed, stocks are consistently above target levels or rebuilding, giving credibility to the fishery managers and governments around the world that are willing to take strong action. However, the SOFIA Report also demonstrates that the successes achieved in some countries and regions have not been sufficient to reverse the global trend of overfished stocks, indicating that where fisheries management is not in place, or is ineffective, the status of fish stocks is poor and deteriorating.

He also highlighted the importance of fish and fish products for international trade (an often underappreciated aspect):



It is projected that about 36 percent of total fish production will be exported in 2030. At the same time, it is expected that trade in fish and fish products will increase more slowly than in the past decade.

With regards to the Indian Ocean region, Mr. Castro De Souza highlighted a significant increase in aquaculture production between 2000 and 2018, and further outlined key export markets for products from the region.



In his closing remarks, Mr. Castro De Souza emphasised that a high degree of transparency in science and management is fundamental to enable governments, fishers, NGOs, processors and retailers to have confidence in fisheries management, which is essential in building greater trust in the fisheries sector. The FAO is supporting all stakeholders with a suite of proven tools, such as the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, or the Voluntary Guidelines for Small-Scale Fishers. Transparency is an essential part in each of those tools and he complimented the stakeholders in Seychelles for being a leader in implementing the Fisheries Transparency Initiative.

Mr. Castro De Souza's presentation is available at www.fiti.global.

Seychelles and the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI)



Mr. Sven Biermann, Executive Director of the FiTI International Secretariat, started his presentation by briefly recalling that while marine resources belong to everyone, over one third of marine fish stocks are being exploited at unsustainable levels (as mentioned in Mr. Castro De Souza’s presentation). That means that fish has been caught much faster than stocks can replenish. The need for sustainable management of fisheries is therefore

urgent. Yet, he stated that it is often not known whether the sector is managed in a sustainable way, as even today – in the age of information – there is a lot of doubt and even secrecy about what’s happening in fisheries. This includes a lack of information about stock status, catch data, fishing authorizations, subsidies, and more. That is where the Fisheries Transparency Initiative, or FiTI, comes in. **The FiTI is a voluntary initiative that increases the public availability of credible information about national fisheries.** The FiTI presents a real opportunity for the government of Seychelles (and others) to provide more information on this sector, allowing for better informed decisions to help safeguard fisheries for generations to come. Additional aspects of the initiative were summarised as follows:

- » The FiTI is a **global initiative**; it does not focus on a single country or on a region.
- » The implementation of the FiTI is **country-centred**; the intention to join the FiTI must come from a country’s government.
- » The FiTI is a **multi-stakeholder initiative**, ensuring equal participation from government, companies and civil society.
- » The FiTI **does not highlight mistakes, weaknesses in decision-making, or bad fishing practices**. Instead, it empowers effective oversight and accountability.

Mr. Biermann stated that the Seychelles involvement in the FiTI is twofold: As an **implementing country**, Seychelles has started to conduct its first transparency assessment of publicly available information against the FiTI Standard. Furthermore, the Seychelles is the **host country** of its international headquarter.



**Implementing
country**

Seychelles has committed to implement the FiTI Standard and is currently recognized as a FiTI Candidate country

**Host
country**

Seychelles is also the host country of the FiTI's International headquarter

Mr. Biermann outlined that as part of this transparency assessment, **Seychelles is not expected to have complete data for every transparency requirement from the beginning.** Instead, public authorities must disclose the information they have, and where important gaps exist, they must demonstrate improvements over time. The results of this assessment are captured in an annual FiTI Report. The report summarizes the published information for each of the 12 requirements, along with recommendations on what steps can be taken to improve public information over time.



(1) Demonstrate whether information is published online by national authorities, is accessible and complete



2) Provide a succinct summary for **each** transparency requirement to contribute to public debates
3) Determine recommendations to improve the publication of data in the public domain

Ownership: the FiTI Report is owned by the National Multi-Stakeholder Group
No judgment: the FiTI Report does not highlight bad fishing practices, or weaknesses in decision-making

Mr. Biermann stated that the FiTI acknowledges that the fisheries sector is complex, and challenges to improve transparency are unlikely to be met by governments alone. Instead, a collective effort by all stakeholders is needed. That is why, in each country, a **Multi-Stakeholder Group (MSG)** leads the implementation of FiTI, with representatives from government, businesses, and civil society. In Seychelles, the MSG consists of 12 representatives, equally split into three stakeholder groups. He further stressed the important fact that neither is the assessment conducted, nor is the resulting report owned by the FiTI International Secretariat. Instead, it is owned by the MSG of Seychelles.

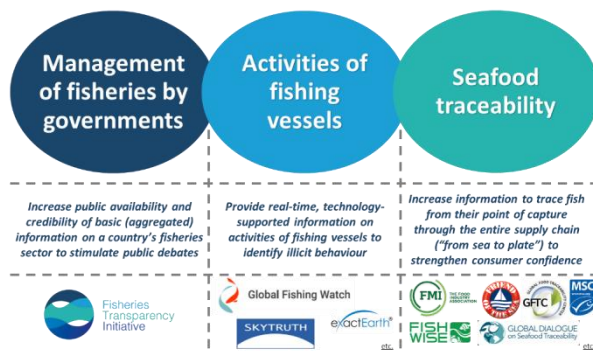
Mr. Biermann also stated that the FiTI emphasises the need for national authorities to **develop and strengthen their own systems for collating and publishing information online in a complete and accessible manner.** Therefore, the FiTI Report should not be mistaken as a substitute or duplicate to existing efforts, e.g. from the Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA). Instead, at the beginning of an FiTI implementation process, the FiTI Report could well be seen as a “travel guide”, highlighting where national fisheries information can be found online. Obviously, when the information base matures, data portals may be used by governments to present all information in a single spot.



- ① Shows where to find national fisheries information online (if available)
- ① Provides highlights (i.e. summaries) for each sight (i.e. transparency requirement)
- ① Outlines recommendations to improve your next experience
- ① Creates interest in the fisheries sector

Mr. Biermann concluded that the matter of transparency is “not as clear as it seems”, in particular as stakeholders have **different objectives, approaches and expectations towards transparency in fisheries**. He outlined that there is often confusion about the term “transparency in fisheries”, as it is used by a number of activities in the sector. The management of fisheries by governments, the activities of fishing vessels, and seafood traceability are all major issues now subject to calls for more transparency. Furthermore, transparency should not be seen simply as the act of providing information in the public domain (visibility), but also ensuring that such information is understandable and usable.

Confusion about transparency in fisheries



When transparency disappoints



- ① Visibility ≠ interest and concerns
- ① “Data dumping” and complexity
- ① Propaganda & self-marketing
- ① Willingness of decision-makers to engage
- ① Lack of demand

Mr. Biermann reiterated his sincere appreciation to the government of Seychelles and all participants for their interest and commitment in advancing transparency in fisheries management.

Mr. Biermann’s presentation is available at www.fiti.global.

Multi-Stakeholder Panel: Implementation of FiTI – Expectations, Opportunities and Challenges for Seychelles

After a brief networking break, the Kick-off Forum resumed with a multi-stakeholder panel to further discuss the implications of enhancing transparency of fisheries in Seychelles. The main objectives of this panel were as follows:

- » Emphasizing the importance of enhancing transparency and participation in Seychelles' fisheries management;
- » Raising awareness about the envisioned benefits, as well as practical challenges & solution approaches when implementing the FiTI in the country; and
- » Stimulating interest among participants to get to know their national fisheries sector better.

The panel was chaired by **Ms. Angelique Pouponneau**, Chief Executive Officer of the Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust (SeyCCAT), who welcomed the following panellists:

Mr. Jude Talma, Principal Secretary for Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture

Mr. Philippe Michaud, Special Advisor to the Vice President of Seychelles and FiTI National Lead Seychelles

Mr. Beatty Hoarau, Treasurer, Seychelles Fishermen & Boat Owners Association (FBOA)

Mr. David Bentley, Managing Director, Sea Harvest



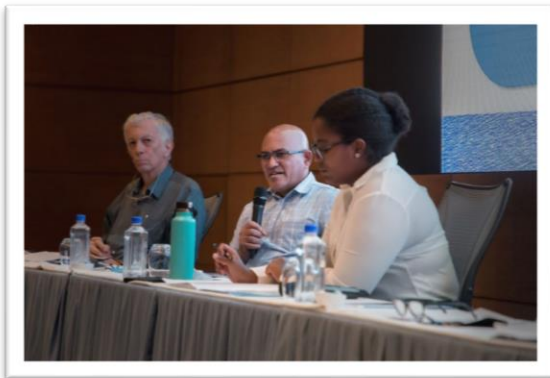
Ms. Pouponneau opened the panel discussions by stating that fisheries is everyone's business in Seychelles. She challenged the audience by asking whether they feel information on fisheries management is really accessible to them. Issues such as the availability of up-to-date data were highlighted and a reflection on the possible causes of a lack of systematic reporting was given. Does Seychelles have a culture of systematic reporting? Is the lack of it a result of limited capacity? Additional aspects such as data credibility, online access, and

whether the available information is easy to interpret by citizens/non-fisheries experts were also briefly raised. Ms. Pouponneau also stated that it is only when information is clearly and timely available that better decision-making can be made.

She further highlighted that as transparency in fisheries requires collaboration between various actors, the multi-stakeholder panel consisted of representatives from government and business. Unfortunately, despite best efforts, the conference organisers were unable to recruit a civil society representative for this panel; an aspect that she emphasized as important to improve in future meetings.

Ms. Pouponneau then started the panel discussions by addressing initial questions directly to the various panel members².

Fisheries play a major role in Seychelles, including its contribution to the economy. How do you reckon that enhancing the amount of information in the public domain can be beneficial for the country (from an economic point of view) and also, where do you see challenges?



Mr. Jude Talma agreed that allowing more information to enter the public domain will increase transparency, therefore giving investors the confidence to invest in Seychelles.

Lack of timely and updated online fisheries data by the Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA) was brought forward as a challenge stemming from a lack of capacity. He was optimistic that with the recent appointment of the new CEO at SFA this would soon be resolved. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has also set up a unit for the fisheries community to respond to the public demand. This will also help the government to take informed decisions and to design the required relevant policies. (To note that at the time of publishing this report, the Ministry has now changed to the ‘Ministry of Fisheries and Blue Economy’).

One of the challenges brought forward by the audience was the need to clarify the level of detail of information that should be made available in the public domain, for example of the status of fish stocks. Is a summary of findings sufficient or should it be more disaggregated information? Mr Talma responded by saying that the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) website does currently provide scientific information for those who wish to look for this kind of information.

² Panel members were asked to refrain from using PowerPoint presentations or reading off fully prepared speeches.

Why is the inclusiveness of all stakeholders in the process of transforming Seychelles to a Blue Economy so crucial and how can the FiTI contribute to this?



Mr. Philippe Michaud responded by confirming that the nature of a blue economy is covering multiple sectors within a country, such as tourism, fisheries, renewable energy and thus, it is important to have all the different stakeholders, with their specific interests and expectations, engaged. Otherwise, government agencies can become complacent. He stated clearly that there also needs to be a bottom-up demand for such information. Governments are

always balancing multiple priorities and if no demand or interest is shown in a particular set of information, priority may be given to other areas. He further stated that Seychelles has a lot of information about the fisheries sector, but this information is not necessarily publicly available yet. Having information on the fish stocks, export figures, fishing agreements and fisheries policies are all vital for decision-making as Seychelles economy is so dependent on fisheries. However, he stated that from his perception, the fisheries sector is currently underappreciated within Seychelles, as some information, in particular regarding financial and economic contribution of the sector (e.g. to the country's Gross Domestic Product), may not truly represent the direct and indirect significance of the sector. He further outlined that fisheries around the world are under pressure, including to some extent in Seychelles. Yet, there does not seem to be a sense of urgency within the wider community in Seychelles. He stated that as long as there is still "fish on the plate", people do not seem to worry about the status of the resource. Therefore, all of these aspects are critical to discuss in order to ensure the sustainability of the sector, and this can only happen in a regular multi-stakeholder setting. He highlighted that the National Multi-Stakeholder Group, which is required by the FiTI, provides such a regular platform – instead of the ad-hoc driven stakeholder consultations, convened only when problems arise.

Having people engaged is very important. Yet, we do not have the representative of the civil society on the multi-stakeholder panel. How can we address this gap?

Mr. Michaud said that over the past years, there seems to be the perception amongst the public that fisheries matters are government's affairs. Yet, civil society plays an important role; not only, but also as, consumers. He reiterated his expectations that by making information easily available to the public through the FiTI, interest among civil society organisations might be stimulated to conduct better oversight of government services.

This was later echoed by a member of the audience who expressed disappointment by the fact that the government of Seychelles had to wait for an international initiative like the FiTI to tell them that fisheries information should be available online in the public domain, costing the government an annual fee of 25,000 US Dollars. In response, Mr. Michaud clearly stated that the FiTI is a fully self-funded organisation, with minor institutional support from the government of Seychelles. In fact, the FiTI is bringing much needed foreign exchange into the country, e.g. through foreign donor grants. Furthermore, in his capacity as a member of the International Board of the FiTI, he stated that while it is correct that countries voluntarily joining the FiTI had to provide annual financial contributions to the initiative in the past, the Board has just recently waived all membership contributions from countries for the next 3 years in order to mitigate the economic challenges induced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Finally, he stated that Seychelles are benefiting from the internationally recognised framework (i.e. FiTI Standard) that the FiTI is providing, as well as the tools and knowledge exchanges with other countries. Having to develop such an approach all by itself would have been more burdensome for Seychelles, and the sharing of good practices with other members will be useful in future.

A member of the audience raised the point regarding the challenge of representation within the FiTI National Multi-Stakeholder Group. Mr. Michaud responded that there are very few groupings of fish processors, tuna purse seiners, industrial long liners, etc. So, it is challenging to get their participation. This aspect was further raised by a representative of the Citizens Engagement Platform Seychelles (CEPS) in the audience. He stated that CEPS, which is the body grouping most civil society organizations in Seychelles, does not have members directly involved in the fisheries sector and asked how to encourage better engagement from the civil society members currently acting in the FiTI Multi-Stakeholder Group. Mr. Michaud responded by highlighting that the maritime industry concerns all citizens of Seychelles. One does not need to be a fisher or being part of the maritime industry to participate in the FiTI. The civil society organisations, including those currently more focused on environmental conservation, have an important role to play in the implementation of the FiTI. Mr. Biermann added that in most countries, there will be more interested stakeholders than available seats in a National Multi-Stakeholder Group. He noted that the initial size of the Seychelles Multi-Stakeholders Group was smaller than the current 12 seats, but was increased later to ensure increased participation from the civil society. However, he highlighted that the individuals serving in the National Multi-Stakeholder Group do not represent their own organisation, but instead represent their assigned stakeholder group. Thus, the four representatives for civil society in Seychelles, for example, have an obligation to ensure that information is also disseminated to other civil society stakeholders, who are currently not part of this group. The same principle applies also to the governmental and industry representatives.

What are the expectations from the traditional and semi-industrial fisheries sectors in Seychelles when it comes to transparency of the sector?



Mr. Beatty Hoarau responded by stating that the expectations of the fishers are to continue feeding the Seychelles nation and this need was particularly evident during the peak points of the COVID-19 crisis, when import of foreign goods had to slow down. He welcomed that the FiTI Standard is aligned with the FAO voluntary guidelines on small-scale fisheries (SSF) and also with the Seychelles Constitution; particularly with regards to the right to information and expression. Knowing what is happening in

the country's fisheries sector is a basic human right; a right which must be respected and protected.

He further outlined that it is his expectation that through the FiTI, the fisheries sector in general, and the contribution of the artisanal fishery will become more visible to the citizens of Seychelles. He often perceives that the artisanal fishers are taken for granted, or even worse, being looked down upon by society as the low-class people ('nou pti dimoun'). While the fisheries industry is not a glamorous one, the economic, social and cultural contribution of the fishers are significant for Seychelles, and fishers are pursuing a noble, hard-working job and ensuring food security in terms of animal protein for our nation.

FBOA is a non-governmental body which can also be considered as part of the civil society. The right for information has come up strongly in your answer. So, once you have gained access to the fisheries information, what do you do with it? And what are the synergies that FBOA is utilising towards the SSF to make use of this information?

Mr. Hoarau responded that the main objectives of the FBOA are to advocate for and protect the rights of the fisher. Increased transparency in fisheries will help the FBOA to understand whether the entire sector is managed in a sustainable manner, so that future generations can also benefit from the ocean. Once the information is available online the FBOA will be in a better position to assist the SSF community into making timely and informed decisions. He stated further that the information should be easy to locate, as the fishers do not have the time to spend hours in front of a computer to look for specific information. He therefore welcomed the twofold approach of the FiTI, to not only make more information publicly available, but also take into consideration the ease of access, understandability and usability. Furthermore, he stated that the information to be published should include the amount of fish caught, what species and who caught them. Other than commercial and semi industrial

sectors, the recreational and sports fishing sector should also be included to ensure a true representation.

Mr. Michaud added that the Seychelles Fishing Authority has already produced some excellent fisheries statistics over the past and that the FiTI will be a good tool to present them in a coherent way.

The FiTI is an initiative that is targeting a country's government and their management of fisheries. What are your expectations from the industry in the implementation of the FiTI and where do you see your contributions or even responsibilities to the success of this process?



Mr. David Bentley responded that the concepts of sustainability and compliance are key aspects when it comes to international trade, as also highlighted by the colleague from the FAO in his earlier presentation. He mentioned the requirements of the European Union as an example. The fisheries industry will encounter great difficulties if the Indian Ocean is overfished, or perceived as overfished. This will then have direct negative consequences for the

businesses in the Seychelles. Mr. Bentley's business, Sea Harvest, currently employs 33 staff members with a 100% representation of Seychellois. With the tourism sector currently struggling due to the pandemic, it is more crucial than ever to have fisheries managed in a sustainable and transparent way, so that everyone – not only the citizens of Seychelles, but also foreign buyers and investors – have confidence in the region and continue sourcing from and investing in here.

Mr Bentley also outlined that international markets and buyers are not setting enough incentives for governments and exporting companies to increase transparency on their fisheries management endeavours. Instead, it is more of a pressure chain. Non-governmental organisations put pressure on retailers, and the retailers put pressure on the producers.

The FiTI is a voluntary initiative. Do you think that with the challenges our ocean is facing, such initiatives can actually provide meaningful impact, or shouldn't we strive for more legislation and enforcement?

Mr. Michaud responded by stating that Seychelles has many laws and legislations, which we should be proud of. However, sometimes there is a lack of respect for such legal instruments. FiTI is a voluntary initiative and some countries find it advantageous for them to join. It improves their international image and encourages investments.

A member of the audience asked how long it would take for other countries who are major players in the fisheries industry to join FiTI. Ms. Pouponneau asked Mr Biermann to address this question. He responded that different countries join the FiTI for different reasons and expectations. Some countries join the FiTI to highlight the need for increasing transparency, as well as requesting support from the international community. Others see the FiTI as a strong vehicle to demonstrate their regional or even global leadership and, through their own participation, trying to motivate other neighbouring countries to join and gradually establish a level playing field of transparency in fisheries. Mr. Biermann also stated that there are significant fishing countries that, within the foreseeable future, may not join the initiative at all. The FiTI is in constant discussions with stakeholders around the globe to better understand the rationales behind such a conduct. He mentioned that the aspect of publishing information that is seen as commercial sensitive, and the legal uncertainty that would be caused by this, is a matter of discussion in some countries. He also stated that a lack of transparency should not always be seen as a deliberate state of affairs, driven by the desire to hide information from public scrutiny. Some governments fall short on transparency simply because they do not have the human, technical and financial resources. It is understandable that some organisations, particularly those that are underfunded to begin with, may not prioritise transparency. Of course, this may also be a convenient excuse to avoid scrutiny, and to hide illicit activities. The FiTI is therefore in regular consultations with regional and global development organisations to explore ways to mitigate the lack of resources. He further stated that the FiTI International Secretariat is currently developing a programme which will assess all countries, also those that may not join the initiative soon, according to the level of publicly available information on their fisheries sector.

Ms. Pouponneau thanked all panellists and the audience for a lively and very interesting discussion and closed the session.

Brief presentations from other initiatives

As the final item on the agenda, the floor was given to representatives from the National Outreach Committee to demonstrate how an increase in transparency for fisheries is also relevant for their own activities.

Sharif Antoine; Seychelles Fishing Authority

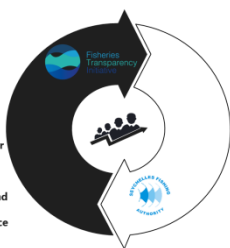


Mr. Antoine emphasised that fisheries is one of the major contributors to the Seychelles economy. The Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA) is an executive arm of the Seychelles government, overseeing policy implementation, management, development, scientific research and capacity building. SFA promotes a culture of transparency by committing to compile fisheries data and making this data readily available. He highlighted the strong relevance of SFA to the FiTI and indicated SFA's direction towards increased transparency.

RELEVANCE OF SFA TO FITI

12 TRANSPARENCY REQUIREMENT

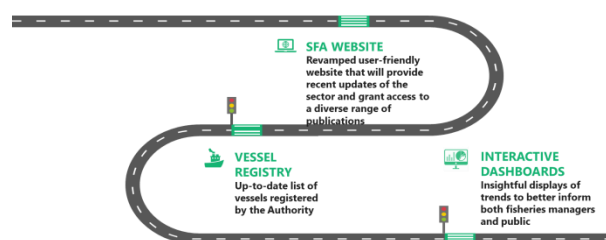
- ✓ Laws, regulations & policy documents
- ✓ Details of fishing agreements
- ✓ Reports on the state of fish stocks
- ✓ Registry of vessels and of their payments and catches
- ✓ Law Enforcement
- ✓ Labour standards
- ✓ Info on post-harvest sector and fish trade
- ✓ Info on development assistance
- ✓ Country's status on beneficial ownership



SFA MANDATE

- ✓ Responsible for collating data on fish stocks and catches
- ✓ Responsible for fisheries laws and regulations
- ✓ Responsible for agreements and aspects of fisheries management
- ✓ Responsible for fisheries law enforcement through Monitoring, Control and Surveillance
- ✓ Responsible for fisheries biological and economical research
- ✓ Responsible for fish trade and subsidies

SFA'S DIRECTION TOWARDS TRANSPARENCY



He further highlighted that the SFA is in close contact with the FiTI International Secretariat to explore additional ways of collaboration and learning, e.g. on the envisioned interactive dashboard.

Gabriella Gonthier; Blue Economy Youth Advocate



Ms. Gonthier stated that the Blue Economy Youth Advocacy Group was launched in 2020. It is made up of 5 members who all share a common interest in the Blue Economy and are between 18 to 25 years old. The group works in close collaboration with the Department of the Blue Economy towards prompting the youth from diverse backgrounds becoming more interested and involved in the development of the Blue Economy in Seychelles. She

outlined that the group also aims to empower the youth to participate in decision-making, ensuring that the voice of the youth is heard in national policy making.

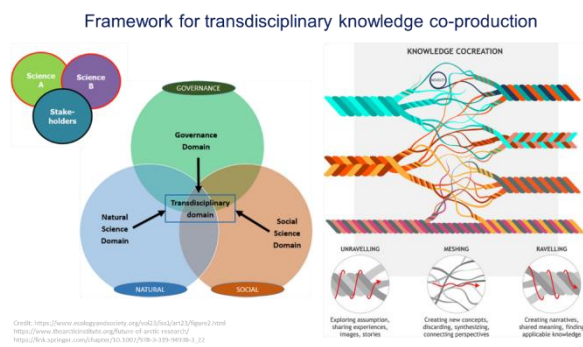
She emphasised that the FiTI provides a good platform for the youth to understand better what is the status of the country’s fisheries sector. This will help the youth significantly to become more proactive, conscious and aware on how important this sector is for the country. She also welcomed the inclusion of the group in the FiTI National Multi-Stakeholder Group in Seychelles.

Kelly Hoareau; Blue Economy Research Institute, University of Seychelles



Ms. Hoareau outlined in her presentation the research work currently being undertaken by the Blue Economy Research Institute (BERI) to support transparent management and decision making.

The concept of a ‘Transdisciplinary Knowledge Co-Production’ was explained as the combination of the natural science domain, the social science domain and the governance domain. She emphasised that BERI aims to create an active academic research network to support an informed, fair and sustainable Blue Economy. Several fisheries-related online courses are already offered showcasing the sector’s importance on an academic level.



Ms. Hoareau also pointed out that transparency is vital for integrated ocean management to ensure that the country’s natural capital continues to be beneficial for everyone. Transparency requires data, collaboration, access, assimilation, and interpretation – thus clearly showing the need for academic involvement and contribution. Knowledge co-production is therefore essential. This enables long-term sustainable solutions that are supported by various stakeholders. She concluded by stating that it is important for Seychelles to generate its own academic research to support a fair and informed Blue

Economy, empowering decision-makers, and not remain only beneficiaries of research (with limited control).

Betymie Bonnelame; Seychelles News Agency



Ms. Bonnelame stated that the Seychelles News Agency (SNA) was launched in April 2014, as an online news agency, providing real-time coverage in English and French of news and events in the Seychelles and the Indian Ocean.

She emphasised that with fisheries being the second top contributor to the Seychelles' economy, it makes it an extremely important subject both for local and international readers. Consequently, the SNA follows closely the developments in the country's fisheries sector to allow readers from all around the world to obtain up-to-date information.

Furthermore, the SNA is also increasingly looking into feature stories that promotes sustainable fishing. This includes not only coverage of important on-going topics, such as illegal fishing in Seychellois waters, but also following developments in other countries.

Ms. Bonnelame concluded by stating that one of the agency's greatest challenge is to gain access to important information, and this affects the agency's timeframe set to the release of timely stories. She therefore welcomed the FiTI's endeavour to increase the public availability (and ease of access) towards public information on fisheries.

Angelique Pouponneau and Emma Mederic; Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust

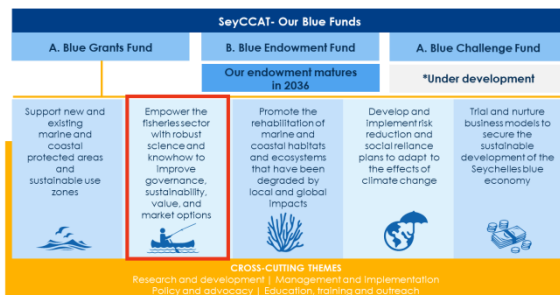


Ms. Pouponneau reminded the participants that SeyCCAT is an independent trust fund which strategically invests in ocean stakeholders to generate new learning, bold action and sustainable blue prosperity in Seychelles. It is governed by a Board of Directors and a Finance and Grant Committee. She emphasised that among others, SeyCCAT is committed to empowering the fisheries sector with robust science and know-how to improve governance, sustainability, value and market options.



Ms. Mederic presented afterwards several concrete fisheries-related projects that were already funded by SeyCCAT, such as voluntarily piloting fisheries zone closure on Praslin Island for the benefit of the marine environment and fisher folks.

Our Blue Funds...and Strategic Objectives...



Fisheries-related projects funded by SeyCCAT

- Fishing Livelihoods and Fisheries Management in the Mahé Granitic Island, Seychelles: A Cost-Benefit-Analysis based on a Value Chain Approach
- Piloting voluntary fisheries zone closure on Praslin Island for the benefit of the marine environment and fisher folks
- Spatial ecology and response to catch-and-release of recreationally targeted fish species on St. François and Alphonse Atolls: Implications for conservation and management
- Assessment and Valuation of the Parrotfish Fishery to Support an Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries

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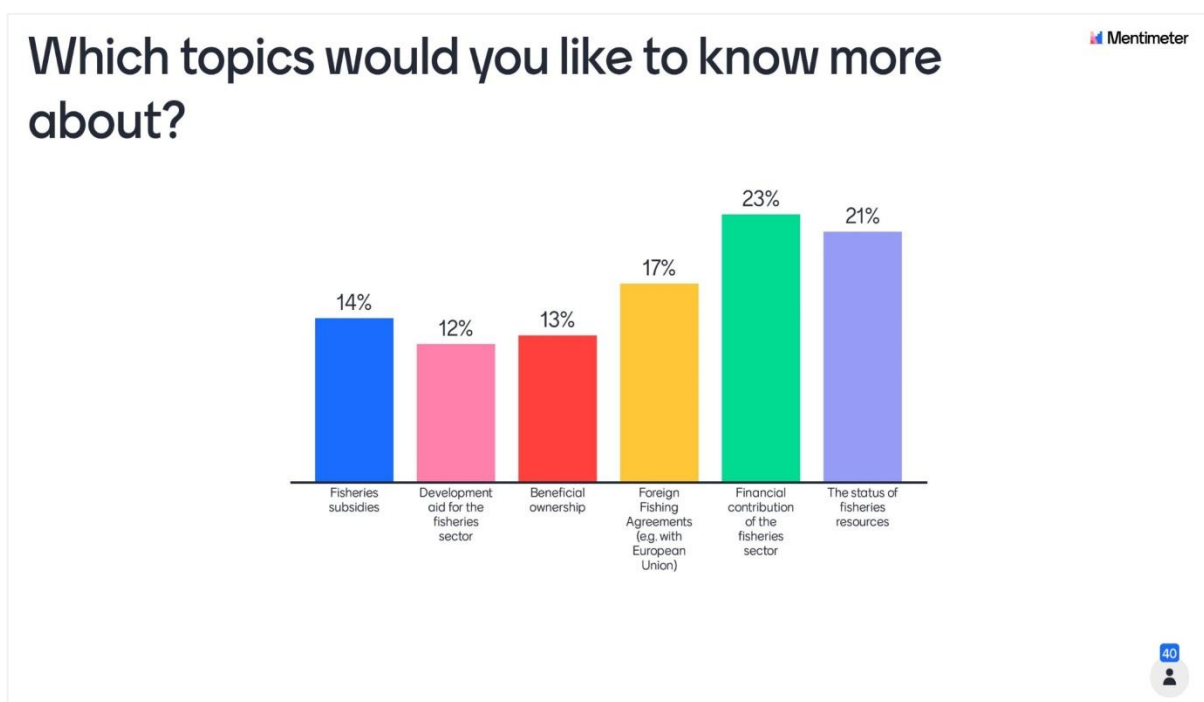
Ms. Pouponneau concluded that one major aspect of the FiTI implementation in Seychelles will be that important information gaps become more transparent. This will provide valuable information for SeyCCAT and potential future grant requestors to conduct activities that contribute to close these gaps over time.

5) Concluding remarks and next steps

Mr. Philippe Michaud and Mr. Sven Biermann closed the Kick-off Forum by thanking all participants for their keen interest in promoting transparency in fisheries and for sharing their view, expectations as well as concerns. Mr. Michaud stated that the assessment of the public availability of Seychelles fisheries sector is already under way and that the public will be informed as soon as results are available.

Mr. Biermann explicitly thanked the teams of the Department of the Blue Economy and the International Secretariat of the FiTI for organising this event. A sincere appreciation to the World Bank's PROBLUE trust fund for financially supporting this event was reemphasised.

The forum closed with an online survey to determine topics of interest for future discussions:



Mr. Michaud and Mr. Biermann stated that additional workshops are planned (for 2021) to discuss some of these prioritised topics in further detail with the public. Discussions with potential sponsors for such events have already started. As soon as concrete dates become available, the public will be informed.

The forum was closed.

Appendix I: Media coverage (extract)

Wednesday, 2 September 2020 | Seychelles News Agency

<http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/13483/Seychelles+creating+a+%27fisheries+travel+guide%27+report+as+step+to+join+Fisheries+Transparency+Initiative>

Monday, 28 September 2020 | Local radio (Interview with Mr. Sven Biermann)



Wednesday, 30 September 2020 | National television (Bonzour Sesel interview with Mr. Philippe Michaud)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nHvJ0k0V1SQ>

Post-Forum coverage

Seychelles News Agency:

<http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/13636/Fishing+industry+wants+more+data%2C+to+ensure+Seychellois+always+have+fish+on+their+plates>

Seychelles Nation:

<http://www.nation.sc/articles/6281/spotlight-on-transparency-of-fisheries-in-seychelles>

Today in Seychelles

Transparent fisheries Starting a debate

A new report detailing the state of Seychelles' fisheries sector is being published in two months. It is sure to shake up the industry, but those working on it say that greater engagement from the general public is a pre-requisite.

by W. J. May

Fisheries experts undertaking a national project to bring much-needed transparency to a sector sometimes accused of occupying muddy waters say they hope their work will provoke a country-wide debate on the management of Seychelles' marine resources.

The Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FITI) is a global partnership seeking to increase transparency and participation in fisheries governance by encouraging countries to voluntarily commit to making credible information regarding their fisheries industry publicly available.

Dr. Julee Bijoux, a local consultant specialising in fisheries and marine conservation, is today beginning to collect information from government agencies, artisanal fishermen, industrial fleet operators and other stakeholders ahead of compiling a report detailing how transparent or opaque our industry really is.

This first FITI Report is expected to be completed by December 2020, and will delve into details about Seychelles' fisheries industry covering fields such as government transfer and fisheries subsidies, beneficial ownership transparency, labour standards, law enforcement efforts, foreign fishing access agreements and the post-harvest sector and fish trade, among others.

The report will further highlight

gaps where information does not exist, and where this is the case, public authorities will have to show improvements over time. However, the extensive efforts that have gone into convincing Seychelles' government to sign up to the FITI Initiative

(which it did in March this year – only the second to do so worldwide) will be in vain unless the wider public is brought onboard.

"There is still fish on the plate – they may be more expensive than five years ago or maybe a different

species – but there is still enough to eat so I don't see much urgency to act like when something is really bad," said Sven Biermann, executive director of FITI's secretariat in Seychelles.

Biermann was speaking to TO-

DAY on Wednesday outside a workshop at Eden Bleu aiming to raise awareness on the importance of fisheries transparency for Seychelles and how fisheries information should be provided to the public.

"That is the issue of the fisheries sector in general," he continued. "With the forestry sector for example, transparency is much more advanced as people see trees being cut down. But fish are underwater, fishing happens beyond the horizon so we don't notice it and there's no sense of urgency."

The executive director added that once a "trustworthy report all stakeholders stand behind" is published in December, the public will have access to an informative tool to pressure state actors into taking decisions for the long-term good of the industry.

For his part, Philippe Michaud, chairperson of the national multi-stakeholder committee that must approve the report before it goes public, agreed that "there is currently a lack of interest from the public for information."

He described this as "unfortunate" as Seychelles' marine resources do not belong exclusively to the government.

"They belong to all of us and if the government does not manage them properly, we all suffer. Perhaps you cannot blame some as the information just isn't readily available or easily digestible! Hopefully, the report will make it easier for the public to get data-based answers regarding our fisheries sector and so improve its management. We want to stimulate discussions among the wider public," Michaud added.



Seychelles applied to become a member of FITI in March 2020, and will be declared a full FITI-compliant country upon publication of the report in December

Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation: Appearances in the English, French and Creole news bulletins on Wednesday, 30 September 2020

Appendix II: Agenda

Wednesday, 30 September 2020

08:00 – 08:30	Registration of Participants
08:30 – 08:40	Welcome and Opening Remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Kenneth Racombo, Principal Secretary, Department of the Blue Economy, Seychelles• Mr. Sven Biermann, Executive Director, International Secretariat of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative
08:40 – 09:00	The importance of transparency for sustainable fisheries in Seychelles and Africa (and beyond) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Jean-Paul Adam, Director, Technology, Climate Change and Natural Resource Management division, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)
09:00 – 09:20	World Fish Production and Trade – Latest Data, Trends, and Challenges (with a focus on the Indian Ocean) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Marcio Castro de Souza, Senior Fishery Officer (International Trade), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), <i>per video</i>
09:20 – 10:00	Seychelles and the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Sven Biermann, Executive Director, International Secretariat of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative
10:00 – 10:30	Coffee Break & Interviews with media representatives

<p>10:30 – 11:45</p>	<p>Multi-Stakeholder Panel: Implementation of FiTI – Expectations, Opportunities and Challenges for Seychelles</p> <p>Chair: Ms. Angelique Pouponneau, Chief Executive Officer, Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust (SeyCCAT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Jude Talma, Principal Secretary for Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture • Mr. Philippe Michaud, Special Advisor to the Vice President of Seychelles & FiTI National Lead Seychelles • Mr. Beatty Hoarau, Treasurer, Seychelles Fishermen and Boat Owners Association • Mr. David Bentley, Managing Director, Sea Harvest <p>Questions from the audience</p>
<p>11:45 – 12:20</p>	<p>Brief updates from other initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Sharif Antoine, Seychelles Fishing Authority • Ms. Gabriella Gonthier, Blue Economy Youth Advocate • Ms. Kelly Hoareau, Blue Economy Research Institute • Ms. Betymie Bonnelame, Seychelles News Agency • Ms. Angelique Pouponneau & Ms. Emma Mederic, Seychelles Conservation and Climate Adaptation Trust
<p>12:20 – 12:30</p>	<p>Summary and Outlook for Launch Forum</p>
<p>12:30 – 14:00</p>	<p>Lunch</p>