



Fisheries  
Transparency  
Initiative

# 14th meeting of the FiTI International Board

9 September 2021, Conference Call

## Meeting Minutes

ID: BM-14\_2021\_MM

**Provided by:** FiTI International Secretariat

**Date:** 24.09.2021

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<b>Date</b>	9 September 2021
<b>Time</b>	Noon – 1.50 p.m. (Greenwich Mean Time)
<b>Venue</b>	Global Conference Call (Zoom)
<b>Supporting document(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Expression of Interest from the Open Government Partnership to become a standing observer to the FiTI International Board, 27 August 2021</i></li> </ul>

## Outcomes of meeting

### 1. Welcome and Administration

The Chair of the FiTI International Board, Valeria MERINO, opened the 14<sup>th</sup> International Board meeting by welcoming all participating members.

Apologies were noted prior to the meeting from Francisco MARI (Social Sector stakeholder group). Francisco assigned Alfred SCHUMM as his proxy.

After all participants joined, it was determined that a quorum for this meeting was reached<sup>1</sup>:

Pro-rated attendance of Board Members <sup>2</sup> :	At least two Board Members per stakeholder group?	Attendance of Observers:
13 out of 18 votes	Yes	3

### 2. 2021 membership election for the FiTI association

The FiTI Chair noted that the FiTI International Secretariat launched the global call for the 2021 membership election to the FiTI association on 15 July 2021. The call was published on the FiTI website<sup>3</sup>, sent by email to more than 1,200 contacts from the FiTI's global database, and distributed via social media, e.g. Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook. Additionally, individual persons were contacted by the International Secretariat as well as the FiTI Chair to either consider applying for this membership or to distribute this call within their own networks.

<sup>1</sup> In accordance with article 14 (7) of the constitution of the association of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (as of 13 May 2021): 'No binding decision shall be made in an FiTI International Board meeting unless a quorum is present at the time of making the decision. Half of the total number of members (including proxies), with at least two members from each stakeholder group, forms a quorum.'

<sup>2</sup> In accordance with article 14 (13) of the constitution of the association of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (as of 13 May 2021). 'Every member has one vote, unless the current total number of members is not equally distributed among the stakeholder groups stated in Article 8. In such a case, voting power shall be determined on a pro-rated system, ensuring that all stakeholder groups have equal voting power.'

As not all 18 seats have been filled for this Board meeting, the pro-rated voting powers for the 14<sup>th</sup> FiTI International Board meeting were determined as follows:

- **Government sector:** Currently three active Board Members → each Board Member carries two votes
- **Business sector:** Currently three active Board Members → each Board Member carries two votes
- **Social sector:** Currently six active Board Members → each Board Member carries one vote

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.fiti.global/2021-membership-election-for-the-fiti-association>

In accordance with the agreed timetable, the first process step ('Call for nominations') has been closed after 31 August 2021.

The FiTI Chair informed the participants that, in total, five applications had been received: four applications for representatives of the social sector and one application from a representative of a regional multi-stakeholder forum.

Stakeholder Group	Membership seats to be filled	Received applications
Government sector	3 membership seats	None
Business sector	3 membership seats <sup>4</sup>	None
Social sector	1 membership seat	4 applications

The FiTI Chair stated that if the election process would continue within the initially agreed timeline, then only one new member from the social sector would be elected. This would mean that

- ➔ the currently vacant seats for the government and business sector remain unallocated until the next election cycle in Fall 2022, and that
- ➔ the current Board Members within the Government and Business stakeholder group hold individually more voting power to ensure that collectively, all stakeholder groups have the same voting power<sup>5</sup>.

The FiTI Chair inquired whether the Board's current members had additional ideas for nominees that would justify the adjustment of the current timeline (while still adhering to the end date of the process). Various potential candidates for the government sector (including implementing as well as donor countries) and business sector were identified by the Board Members.

The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

**Decision [BM-14\_2021\_D-01]:**

**The Board approved the extension of process step 1 ('Call for nominations') from 31 August 2021 to 30 September 2021 and tasked the FiTI International Secretariat to adjust the timeline for the other election steps so that the overall process finishes, as initially planned, on 30 November 2021.**

<sup>4</sup> 1 membership seat for individuals from large-scale/industrial organisations along the marine fisheries value chain, as well as 2 membership seats for individuals from small-scale/artisanal organisations along the marine fisheries value chain

<sup>5</sup> In accordance with article 14 (13) of the FiTI constitution.

Furthermore, the FiTI Chair stated that Board member Sebastian LOSADA did not attend the last three meetings. Sebastian informed the Chair in April 2021 that he will not be regularly available or checking emails for the foreseeable future due to personal reasons. The Chair stated that she has reached out to Sebastian several times to explore when he will be able to return to the Board, without any response. In her last email, sent on 3 September 2021, she informed Sebastian that the process to recruit new Board members was underway, and stated that if he was not in the capacity to dedicate time to the FiTI, his seat would be declared vacant and included in the current election process. Sebastian did not send a response to the Chair's email, as he had not responded to any of several emails sent to him previously. The Board Members discussed the situation, recognised Sebastian's important contributions to the organization and the Board (as well as the preceding Advisor Group), confirmed the need for active involvement of all members, and declared the seat vacant. The Chair informed the Board that she had invited Sebastian to consider re-joining the Board once his situation had changed by participating in the 2022 Board members selection process.

The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

**Decision [BM-14\_2021\_D-02]:**

**In line with Article 18 of the FiTI's constitution, the Board approved declaring vacant Sebastian LOSADA's seat on the FiTI International Board, with immediate effect.**

**This vacant seat within the stakeholder group 'Social sector' will be included in the 2021 membership election for the FiTI association.**

Finally, as part of the 2021 membership election process, the FiTI received an Expression of Interest from the Open Government Partnership (OGP) to become a permanent observer to the FiTI International Board. This letter was circulated to all Board members prior to the meeting and is made publicly available as part of these meeting minutes. The Board Members welcomed enthusiastically OGP's interest, and discussed the many benefits of working together with the OGP to promote access to information and public participation in marine fisheries, as well as to deepen open government reforms.

The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

**Decision [BM-14\_2021\_D-03]:**

**The FiTI International Board agreed to invite the Open Government Partnership, represented by Mr Theo Chiviru, OGP Regional Lead for Africa and the Middle East, as a permanent observer to the FiTI International Board with immediate effect.**

### 3. Upcoming country validations

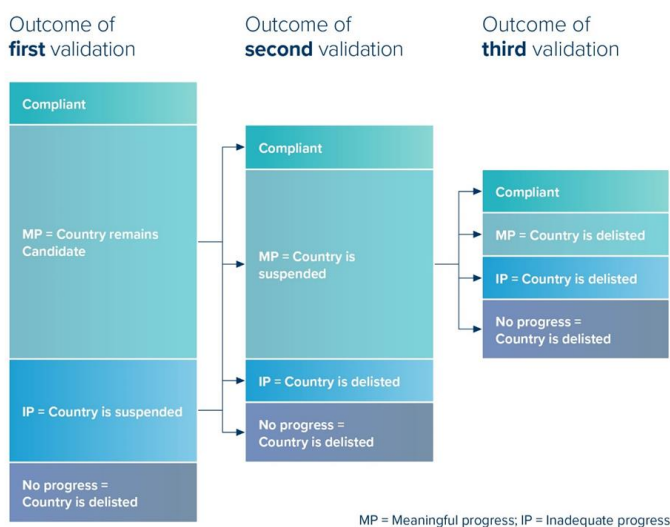
The FiTI Chair asked Sven BIERMANN, Executive Director of the FiTI International Board, to introduce the next agenda item. Sven briefly outlined the purpose and scope of the validation process.

Validation is an essential part of the FiTI process. It serves to assess an implementing country's compliance with the FiTI Standard. Validation also helps promote dialogue and learning at the country level, and safeguards the integrity of the FiTI by holding all FiTI implementing countries to the same global standard.



Sven stated further that the FiTI Standard clearly defines that a country's level of compliance with each FiTI requirement, as well as the overall level of compliance, needs to be determined by applying one of the following four designations outcomes.

- i. Compliant:** Validation demonstrates that all aspects of the requirement have been implemented and that the broader objective of the requirement has been fulfilled.
- ii. Meaningful progress:** Validation demonstrates that significant aspects of the requirement have been implemented and that the broader objective of the requirement has been fulfilled.
- iii. Inadequate progress:** Validation demonstrates that significant aspects of the requirement have not been implemented and that the broader objective of the requirement is not fulfilled.
- iv. No progress:** Validation demonstrates that all or nearly all aspects of the requirement have not been implemented, and that the broader objective of the requirement is far from being fulfilled.



Finally, Sven explained that the validation procedures include the following three steps:

*First*, the FiTI International Secretariat initiates the validation process, as requested by the FiTI International Board, by reviewing a country's relevant information, visiting the country, and consulting with stakeholders. Sven stated that consultation with stakeholders might have to be conducted virtually due to ongoing travel restrictions.

*Second*, the FiTI International Board will appoint an independent Validator, who reports to the FiTI International Board. Financial support for such validators has already been allocated within the PROBLUE funding for the FiTI.

*Third*, the FiTI International Board, or a committee of Board members designated by the Board, will review the Validator's assessments and recommendations and any feedback from the National MSG. The FiTI International Board will then make the final determination whether the individual requirements are met or not and determines the implementing country's overall level of compliance (as shown above).

The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

**Decision [BM-14\_2021\_D-04]:**

**The FiTI International Board tasked the FiTI International Secretariat to launch the validation process in accordance with the FiTI Standard (section D.1) for**

➤ **Seychelles (validation timeframe: April 2020 until December 2021) and**

➤ **Mauritania (validation timeframe: December 2018 until December 2021),**

**which includes, inter alia, conducting initial data collections, providing Initial Evaluation Reports and identifying Independent Validators for both countries.**

Furthermore, given the operational challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic brought on the operations of the FiTI International Secretariat as well as FiTI implementing countries, Sven stated that it is unfortunately currently not foreseen that these first validation processes will be concluded on time, which, in accordance with the FiTI Standard, would have to be latest by 31 December 2021.

The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

**Decision [BM-14\_2021\_D-05]:**

**The FiTI International Board agreed to extend the overall validation timeframe for Seychelles and Mauritania until 31 March 2022. Both countries will remain FiTI Candidate countries until the entire validation process is completed.**

#### 4. Appointment of auditors (FYs 2020 & 2021)

The FiTI Chair emphasised that in accordance with the FiTI constitution<sup>6</sup>, an external, independent auditor must be appointed to audit the finances of the FiTI annually. Furthermore, the Chair recalled that in September 2020, the Board approved that a dedicated financial audit for fiscal year 2020 will be deferred due to a lack of unrestricted funding. Hence, this audit will be conducted in 2022 in conjunction with the 2021 fiscal year audit.

The FiTI Chair stated further that currently, in the Seychelles, only a limited number of audit firms have official affiliations with international audit companies. One of these audit firms (Baker Tilly Seychelles) currently provides accounting and payroll services to the FiTI and hence, cannot be appointed as the FiTI's auditor to avoid conflict of interests. The FiTI International Secretariat obtained quotes and proposals, respectively, from two other Seychelles-based auditing companies. The main parameters were presented to the Board by Sven.

The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

##### **Decision [BM-14\_2021\_D-06]:**

**The FiTI International Board appointed the audit company Pool & Patel Chartered Accountants to conduct the financial audit of the FiTI's annual financial statements for the calendar year 2020.**

**The FiTI International Board will appoint an auditor for the 2021 annual financial statements in early 2022.**

#### 5. Next Board meeting(s)

The Chair recalled that during the meeting in April 2021, the International Board approved that the FiTI International Secretariat start preparing a 2-day face-to-face Board meeting in October or November 2021. To promote the first two FiTI Reports further, it was agreed that the meeting should take place in Brussels/Belgium, accompanied by possible side meetings at the European Commission and with members of the European Parliament.

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<sup>6</sup> Article 23 (1) of the FiTI constitution: *'The FiTI International Board shall appoint an external, independent auditor to annually audit the finances of the FiTI, and to present a written audit report to the FiTI International Board, subject to funding availability. The financial inability to perform an annual audit must be substantiated by the Executive Director to the FiTI International Board and the allocation of funds for the annual audit should be given priority in the budgeting process.'*



Unfortunately, significant travel restrictions are still in place and the outlook for the next few months indicates that this situation might not improve. Furthermore, members of the Seychelles-based International Secretariat may face quarantine obligations when travelling, particularly to Europe. The Chair emphasised that she is eager to have the Board meeting in person soon, but proposed that given the current circumstances, no face-to-face Board meeting should be conducted in 2021.

The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

**Decision [BM-14\_2021\_D-07]:**

**The International Board agreed to postpone the 2-day face-to-face Board meeting, scheduled for November 2021 in Brussels/Belgium, to a later date in 2022.**

The FiTI Chair also reminded the Board Members to ensure that a sufficient travel budget is allocated for 2022 to be able to attend two in-person meetings paid by their own organizations. Furthermore, various members of the Board identified several meetings/conferences in 2022, which could be of interest to hold a FiTI International Board meeting in parallel (as well as organising side events), including the Annual Meeting of the World Bank/IMF, the Oceans Forum in Geneva (March 2022), or the Global Fishery Forum in St. Petersburg.

## 6. Closing

The Chair thanked the Members of the Board for their participation in the 14<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### 14<sup>th</sup> International Board Meeting ended

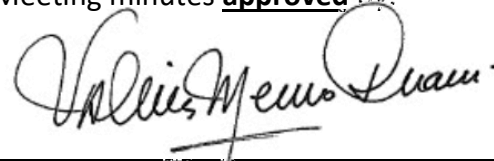
Meeting minutes **provided** by:



Mr Sven Biermann

Secretary of the meeting; Executive Director of the  
FiTI International Secretariat

Meeting minutes **approved** by:



Dr Valeria Merino

Chair of the FiTI International Board.

## APPENDIX I: List of Participants

### Chair

**Valeria MERINO**

### Stakeholder group: Government sector

**Ylva MATTSSON** [Voting power for this meeting: 2 votes]

**Philippe MICHAUD** [Voting power for this meeting: 2 votes]

#### Not excused:

**Mohamed Salem NANY**

### Stakeholder group: Business sector

**Alexander BIRYUKOV** [Voting power for this meeting: 2 votes]

**Gaoussou GUEYE** (*partly present*) [Voting power for this meeting: 2 votes]

**Francisco LEOTTE** [Voting power for this meeting: 2 votes]

### Stakeholder group: Social sector

**Alfred SCHUMM** [Voting power for this meeting: 2 votes]<sup>7</sup>

**Ahmed SENHOURY** [Voting power for this meeting: 1 vote]

#### Excused:

**Francisco MARI**

#### Not excused:

**Sebastián LOSADA**

**Nedwa NECH**

**Eduardo ROLÓN**

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<sup>7</sup> Due to a proxy vote assigned by Francisco MARI.

### Observers

**Marcio CASTRO DE SOUZA**, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

**Philippe TOUS**, African Development Bank (AfDB)

**Julien MILLION**, The World Bank Group

### FiTI International Secretariat

**Sven BIERMANN**

### Guests

None