



Fisheries
Transparency
Initiative

15th meeting of the FiTI International Board

29 November 2021, Conference Call

Meeting Minutes

ID: BM-15_2021_MM

Provided by: FiTI International Secretariat

Date: 14.01.2022

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Date	29 November 2021
Time	1.00 – 3.15 p.m. (Greenwich Mean Time)
Venue	Global Conference Call (Zoom)
Supporting document(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Summary Chart Selection of New Board Members for Board Decision, 19 November 2021 ▪ CVs of recommended candidates

Outcomes of meeting

1. Welcome and Administration

The Chair of the FiTI International Board, Valeria MERINO, opened the 15th International Board meeting by welcoming all participating members.

Apologies were noted prior to the meeting from Ylva MATTSSON (Government sector stakeholder group) and Theophilous CHIVIRU (Observer). Ylva assigned Philippe MICHAUD as her proxy.

The Chair stated that only eligible Board Members could participate in the first hour of this meeting to discuss the nominations to the FiTI International Board. Other Board Members and Observers to the FiTI International Board were invited to join the second hour of this board meeting.

After all eligible participants joined, it was determined that a quorum for this meeting was not reached¹:

Pro-rated attendance of Board Members ² :	At least two Board Members per stakeholder group?	Attendance of Observers:
12 out of 18 votes	No	1 out of 4

The FiTI Chair noted that in accordance with article 14 (8) of the constitution of the association of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (as of the 13th of May 2021), aspects that are agreed during this Board meeting can become binding decisions by soliciting

¹ 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.'*

² 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 15th 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 five active Board Members → each Board Member would carry 1.2 vote. However, given that one active Board Member was not able to participate in the meeting (due to a conflict of interest), the remaining Board Members from the Social sector carried 1.5 votes.

absent members to join in the decisions afterward. For decisions to be binding, they shall require the support of at least the same number of members needed to establish a quorum.

Therefore, the FiTI International Secretariat solicited input from absent Board members on 6 December 2021 for their post-approval of the decisions taken during this meeting. Responses were received from Gaoussou GUEYE on 9 December 2021, confirming the decisions recorded in these meeting minutes as binding.

2. 2021 membership election for the FiTI association

The FiTI Chair gave a brief overview of the new board member's election process and started by thanking the Board, particularly Ylva MATTSSON and Alfred SCHUMM, members of the Board Committee, for their outstanding dedication and contribution during the process.

The Chair recalled that the nomination period was open for several months (i.e. 15 July – 30 September 2021). Extending the initial nomination period by one month (until September 2021, as approved by the FiTI International Board during its 14th Board meeting) allowed additional nominations to be submitted. All nomination documents included a cover letter, a letter of nomination, a nomination form, and the nominee's resume.

Afterwards, the Election Committee conducted the first round of selection based on the documentation received. The shortlisting process culminated with the Election Committee sending a list of vetted candidates to the Board for approval in October 2021. After the Board approved the list of shortlisted nominees through Board Circular No. 6, the Election Committee interviewed all candidates. Each interview was conducted by two members of the Committee and lasted one hour.

During these video-based interviews, candidates had the opportunity to speak about their track record, their commitment to FiTI's mission and vision, how they could contribute to FiTI activities, previous experience, time availability, etc. The Election Committee also responded to questions about the FiTI and International Board responsibilities.

After the interview phase was concluded, the Election Committee discussed their impressions about the candidates and approved five candidates. This list was submitted to eligible Board Members before this meeting.

The FiTI Chair, supported by Committee member Alfred, then briefly introduced all five candidates individually, shared her own impressions, and allowed for feedback, comments and questions from the participating Board members.

The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

Decision [BM-15_2021_D-01]:

The Board approved the nominations of the Election Committee for the election of five new members of the FiTI association for the term 1st of January 2022 to 31st of December 2024.

The FiTI Chair stated that before formally taking office, all new members of the FiTI association³ would be asked to provide up to three references, some of which will be contacted by the FiTI Chair. If the feedback from the referees did not dispute a candidate's suitability, the election process would be considered complete, and the results would be publicly announced. For this, the FiTI Chair requested the FiTI International Secretariat to prepare a draft press release to announce the election of the new members.

Additional information provided by the chair about the completion of the process and election of new board members:

Between the 21st of November 2021 and the 10th of January 2022, the Chair conducted individual interviews with the references provided by the candidates to FiTI Board members. The interviews confirmed the suitability of the following candidates that are considered now elected:

- **Keith ANDRE (Business sector (Small-scale fisheries), first term)**
- **Mialy ANDRIAMAHEFAZAFY (Government sector, first term)**
- **Hugh GOVAN (Business sector (Small-scale fisheries), first term)**
- **Ahmed SENHOURY (Social sector, second term)**

A fifth candidate withdrew from the process.

Additionally, all new Board Members will be requested to sign a Conflict of Interests Declaration Form and be appraised on the content of FiTI's core governance documents, the FiTI Standard, and other information about the FiTI's current and future programmatic goals. This will be done in January 2022. All current Board members, the Chair, and the Executive Director of the FiTI International Secretariat will also be asked to sign the same Conflict of Interests Declaration Form.

Furthermore, the FiTI Chair stated that with the election of these four new candidates, only four member seats remain vacant: two for the Government sector, one for the Business sector (Large-scale fisheries), and one for the Social sector. The FiTI Chair reemphasized the importance of a fully occupied Board and recommended that in case stakeholders

³ The sole responsibility of members is to serve in the FiTI International Board.

proactively provide nomination documents for these vacant seats over the course of the next months, they should be considered and processed, using the same election procedure as highlighted above.

The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

Decision [BM-15_2021_D-02]:

The Board approved that any Board candidate nominations for filling the currently vacant seats [Government, Business (Large-scale fisheries), or Social sector] received until the 31st of May 2022 be considered and processed following the 2021 election procedures.

In addition, a regular new election cycle will be launched in July 2022, which will again be widely publicly announced.

3. Changes to validation procedures

The Chair asked Sven BIERMANN, Executive Director of the FiTI International Board, to introduce this topic. Sven recalled that in accordance with the FiTI Standard, validation is an essential part of the FiTI implementation process, serving to:

- assess an implementing country's compliance with the FiTI Standard;
- safeguard the integrity of the FiTI by holding all FiTI implementing countries to the same global standard;
- evaluate the impact of the FiTI in the country, reflect stakeholder opinions, and lists recommendations for progressive improvement; and
- promote dialogue and learning at the country level.

The provisions that must be applied when conducting validations are set forth in section D of the FiTI Standard⁴, stating that the validation procedures include the following three steps (in short):

First, the FiTI International Secretariat initiates the validation process, as requested by the FiTI International Board, by reviewing a country's relevant information and provides an initial evaluation of compliance for each individual requirement of the FiTI Standard.

Second, the FiTI International Board will appoint an Independent Validator, who reviews the initial evaluation of the International Secretariat, conducts stakeholder interviews

⁴ <https://www.fiti.global/fiti-standard>

(including feedback from a country's National MSG) and provides a report to the FiTI International Board.

Third, the FiTI International Board will review the Validator's report. The FiTI International Board will then make the final determination whether the individual requirements are met or not and determine the implementing country's overall level of compliance.

Based on the International Board's decision BM-14_2021_D-04, the FiTI International Secretariat has already started the validation process for:

- Seychelles (validation timeframe: April 2020 until December 2021), and
- Mauritania (validation timeframe: December 2018 until December 2021).

This includes, in accordance with section D.2.1 of the FiTI Standard, that the FiTI International Secretariat is tasked to:

"... initiate the validation process, as requested by the FiTI International Board, by reviewing a country's relevant information, visiting the country and consulting with stakeholders. This will include meetings with the country's National MSG, the Report Compiler and other key stakeholders, including stakeholders that are not directly participating in the National MSG.

The FiTI International Secretariat will prepare a report making an initial evaluation of progress against requirements in accordance with the Validation Guide. The report will not include an overall assessment of compliance. The National MSG will be invited to comment on the report. The report will then be submitted to the Validator."

Given the close collaboration of the FiTI international Secretariat with the National MSGs of both countries (in particular during the preparations of the countries' FiTI Reports), and as a result of this, the possibility of a perceived conflict of interest that might arise from such a close collaboration, the FiTI International Secretariat recommends a change in the responsibility of obtaining feedback from stakeholder consultations. For this, Sven stated that the FiTI International Secretariat would conduct the validation process step 1 primarily as a desk evaluation, whereas the responsibility of obtaining feedback from national and international stakeholders would be shifted to the second validation process step, and executed by an Independent Validator.

The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

Decision [BM-15_2021_D-03]:

The FiTI International Board approved that the first process step of the validation process for Seychelles and Mauritania, tasked to be conducted by the FiTI International Secretariat, involves only a detailed desk review of the countries' compliance with the individual requirements of the FiTI Standard. Consequently, the responsibility of conducting stakeholder interviews to provide an objective verification of the assessment

of each individual requirement (as conducted by the FiTI International Secretariat), as well as to determine lessons learned and a recommendation for the overall compliance designation, will be given to the Independent Validator. The Independent Validator's draft report will be provided to the countries' National MSG for feedback before the final version is submitted by the Independent Validator to the FiTI International Board.

Furthermore, as illustrated above in section D.2.1 of the FiTI Standard, the validation process must be based on the FiTI Standard as well as a complementary Validation Guide. This Validation Guide is currently being finalised by the FiTI International Secretariat and requires approval of the FiTI International Board (similar to the previous Guidance Notes on the sign-up steps for countries, as well as the compilation of FiTI Reports).

The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

Decision [BM-15_2021_D-04]:

The FiTI International Board approved that the required Validation Guide (i.e. Guidance Note No. 3 'Validating countries') will be approved through a Board Circular.

Sven stated that it is currently expected that a draft Guidance Note will be made available to the FiTI International Board by mid December 2021. Given the length and complexity of this topic, an extend approval timeframe of up to 3 weeks will be granted.

4. Report from the FiTI International Secretariat

The FiTI Chair asked Sven to provide a brief overview of recent activities of the International Secretariat.

Sven started by providing an overview of the current status of engaged countries. It was noted that the FiTI continued to gain significant attention and momentum, not only in the international recognition of the initiative but also in the number of countries the FiTI is engaged in. The public commitment from Madagascar end of September 2021 was highlighted as a noteworthy example, which resulted in significant positive stakeholder reactions. Furthermore, the International Secretariat has very recently received the official public commitment letter from the government of Sao Tome and Principe to join the FiTI. As soon as this commitment is complemented by communication activities of the government, the FiTI will announce this new engagement as well.

Several other engagements were also briefly highlighted, such as those in Latin America. Francisco MARI also emphasised that due to Mauritania's first FiTI Report, as well as Senegal's commitment to the FiTI as part of its National Action Plan to the Open Government Partnership (OGP), additional stakeholder interests are triggered in West

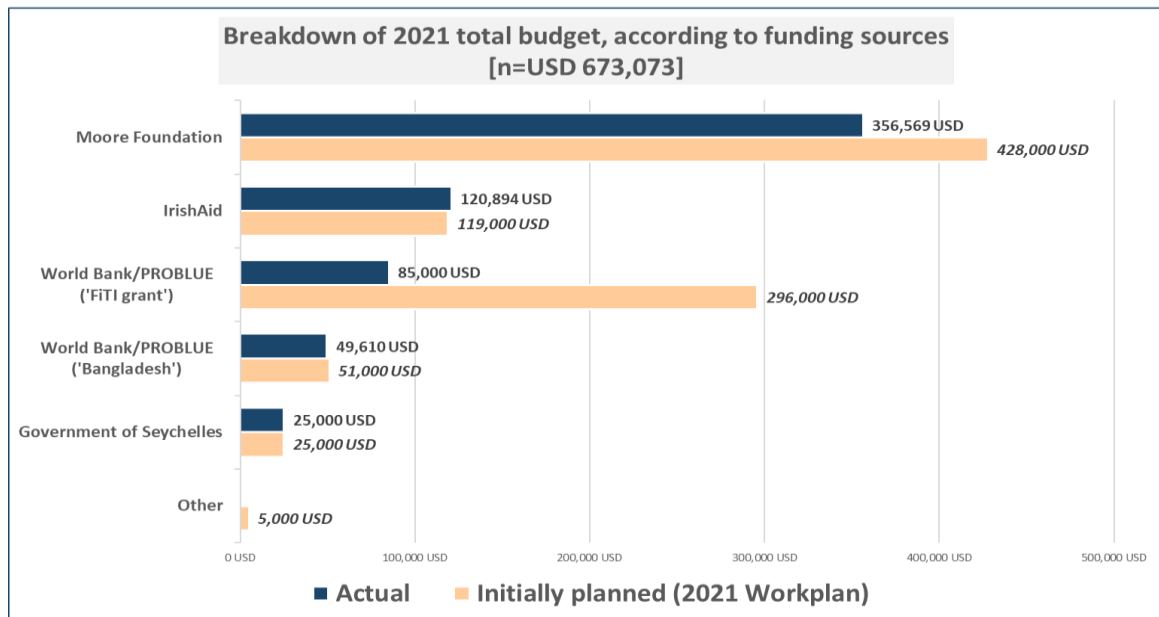
Africa. He also mentioned that next year’s ‘International Year of Artisanal Fisheries and Aquaculture’ could further drive stakeholder awareness and engagement across countries in West Africa, due to vibrant small-scale fishing communities.

As of 26 November 2021

FiTI Compliant countries	FiTI Candidate country	FiTI Committed countries	In discussions / Targets countries
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mauritania ▪ Seychelles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ [Bolivia] ▪ Cabo Verde ▪ Madagascar ▪ São Tomé and Príncipe – <i>in progress</i> ▪ Senegal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ecuador ▪ Peru ▪ Mexico ▪ Guinea – <i>on hold</i> ▪ Guinea-Bissau ▪ Comoros ▪ Mauritius ▪ Bangladesh ▪ Lebanon

Sven continued by highlighting the current and anticipated funding situation. Sven stated that the initially budget of USD 924k for 2021 (as stated in the Secretariat’s workplan) was not fully spent, due to ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemics. This affected in particular the financial support provided by PROBLUE, which included several national multi-stakeholder workshops, which either had to be cancelled or postponed to 2022. It is therefore anticipated that the actual budget for 2021 used by the FiTI International Secretariat will be around USD 673k.

As of 26 November 2021



Furthermore, Sven stated that the current funding situation for 2022 foresees several possible challenges, as only 25% of the necessary minimum financial resources for the FiTI International Secretariat for 2022 are currently secured through grant agreements. This is in particular because the Moore Foundation is currently FiTI's major donor. The current grant with the Moore Foundation is ending in December 2021, and a new 3-year grant request has been issued. It is expected that a decision will be communicated to the FiTI International Secretariat by mid/end of December 2021.

The FiTI Chair emphasized this challenging short-term funding situation, despite several significant efforts throughout the year to broaden FiTI's funding base.

Sven also recalled that the current grant from Irish Aid runs until September 2022, and stated that the International Secretariat is in promising discussions with the German government regarding financial support for a short-term (i.e. 7-9 months) project in Madagascar.

The FiTI Chair shared with the Board Members her appreciation and congratulations to the Executive Director, Sven Biermann, and the team at the FiTI International Secretariat, for accomplishing the following milestones in the year 2021:

- a) Growing FiTI's recognition as a respected actor in the field of transparency of marine fisheries management.
- b) Contributing effectively to the body of knowledge about the impact of transparency in the sustainability of fisheries, its challenges, and opportunities.

- c) Expanding the work of the FiTI to several new countries and establishing a solid and ongoing relationship with new governments in Latin American, African and the Western Indian Ocean.
- d) Supporting countries in delivering the first two FiTI Reports (i.e. Seychelles, Mauritania) and now supporting the FiTI International Board in executing the final procedural step of the FiTI Standard: country validations.
- e) Developing the new TAKING STOCK program, an exciting and potentially very impactful new program, which required considerable time and demanded novel technical contributions from the staff.
- f) Fundraising effectively to cover all our operations and program expenses in 2021, not a small accomplishment, given the negative impact of the pandemic; and taking all the necessary steps to develop new fundraising sources for the organization.

The Chair emphasized that fundraising is a significant challenge for all organizations, and the FiTI is not an exception. The institution needs more support from the Board Members to increase its fundraising revenue. A discussion about additional funding options will be set early in 2022.

5. Closing

The Chair thanked the Members of the Board for their participation in the 15th meeting as well as for their contributions throughout this calendar year, which enabled the FiTI to thrive and further grow, not only in the geographical scope but also in the quality and depth of its impact in and for countries and stakeholders.

15th International Board Meeting ended

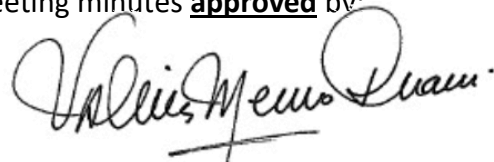
Meeting minutes **provided** by:



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

Philippe MICHAUD [Voting power for this meeting: 4 votes]⁵

Excused:

Ylva MATTSSON

Not excused:

Mohamed Salem NANY

Stakeholder group: Business sector

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

Not excused:

Gaoussou GUEYE

Francisco LEOTTE

Stakeholder group: Social sector

Francisco MARI (*partly present*) [Voting power for this meeting: 1.5 votes]

Nedwa NECH [Voting power for this meeting: 1.5 votes]

Eduardo ROLÓN [Voting power for this meeting: 1.5 votes]

Alfred SCHUMM [Voting power for this meeting: 1.5 votes]

Excused:

Ahmed SENHOURY

⁵ Due to a proxy vote assigned by Ylva MATTSSON.

Observers

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

Excused:

Theophilous CHIVIRU, Open Government Partnership (OGP)

Not excused:

Salimata SOUMARE, African Development Bank (AfDB)

Julien MILLION, The World Bank Group

FiTI International Secretariat

Sven BIERMANN

Guests

None