



Fisheries  
Transparency  
Initiative

# 18th meeting of the FiTI International Board

27-28 September 2022, Brussels/Belgium

## Meeting Minutes

ID: BM-18\_2022\_MM

**Provided by:** FiTI International Secretariat

**Date:** 21.11.2022

With financial support from:

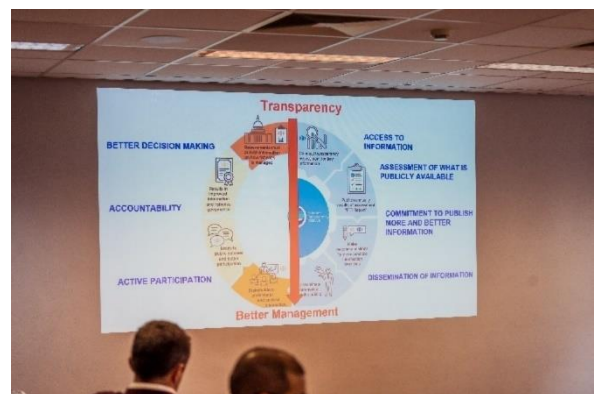
**PROBLUE**  
HEALTHY OCEANS • HEALTHY ECONOMIES • HEALTHY COMMUNITIES



Administered by  
**THE WORLD BANK**  
IBRD • IDA | WORLD BANK GROUP







## Table of Contents

<b>OUTCOMES OF MEETING .....</b>	<b>5</b>
1. WELCOME AND ADMINISTRATION .....	5
2. FROM BERLIN TO BRUSSELS: REFLECTIONS FROM FiTI INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT (2018 – 2022).....	6
3. PLENARY DISCUSSIONS .....	10
4. INTERNAL HOUSEKEEPING .....	17
5. STATUS OF SENEGAL AS A COMMITTED COUNTRY.....	20
6. THE WTO FISHERIES SUBSIDIES AGREEMENT: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FiTI STANDARD.....	23
7. NEXT MEETING(S), SUMMARY & CLOSING .....	24
<b>APPENDIX I: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>APPENDIX II: AGENDA OF THE MEETING.....</b>	<b>29</b>

<b>Date &amp; Time</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> of September (09.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.)</li> <li>▪ Wednesday, 28<sup>th</sup> of September 2022 (09.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.)</li> </ul>
<b>Venue</b>	NH Collection Brussels Centre Hotel, Brussels, Belgium
<b>Supporting document(s)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ None</li> </ul>

## Outcomes of meeting

### 1. Welcome and administration

The Chair of the FiTI International Board, Valeria MERINO, opened the 18<sup>th</sup> International Board meeting by welcoming all participating members. The FiTI Chair stated how delighted she was to meet everyone in person after almost 3 years of her election, mainly because of travel restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The FiTI Chair thanked PROBLUE, an umbrella 2.0 multi-donor trust fund administered by the World Bank, for providing the financial support to organise the meeting.

Apologies were noted prior to the meeting from Board Members Gaoussou GUEYE and Francisco LEOTTE (stakeholder group: Business sector), Alfred SCHUMM and Eduardo ROLÓN (stakeholder group: Social Sector), as well as Observers Marcio CASTRO DE SOUZA Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Theophilous CHIVIRU, Open Government Partnership (OGP) and Salimata SOUMARE, African Development Bank (AfDB).

Alfred and Eduardo delegated their voting powers to Francisco MARÍ.

After all eligible participants were present, 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:
13.5 out of 18 votes	Yes	1 out of 4

<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 18<sup>th</sup> FiTI International Board meeting were determined as follows:

- *Government sector*: Currently four Board Members → each Board Member carries 1.5 votes
- *Business sector*: Currently six Board Members → each Board Member carries 1 vote
- *Social sector*: Currently five Board Members → each Board Member carries 1.2 votes

The Chair also informed the participants that Mialy ANDRIAMAHEFAZAFY resigned from the FiTI International Board with immediate effect, due to ongoing and new working commitments. The resulting vacancy will be considered during the 2022 membership election for the FiTI association (see further below). The Board congratulated Mialy on her new position.

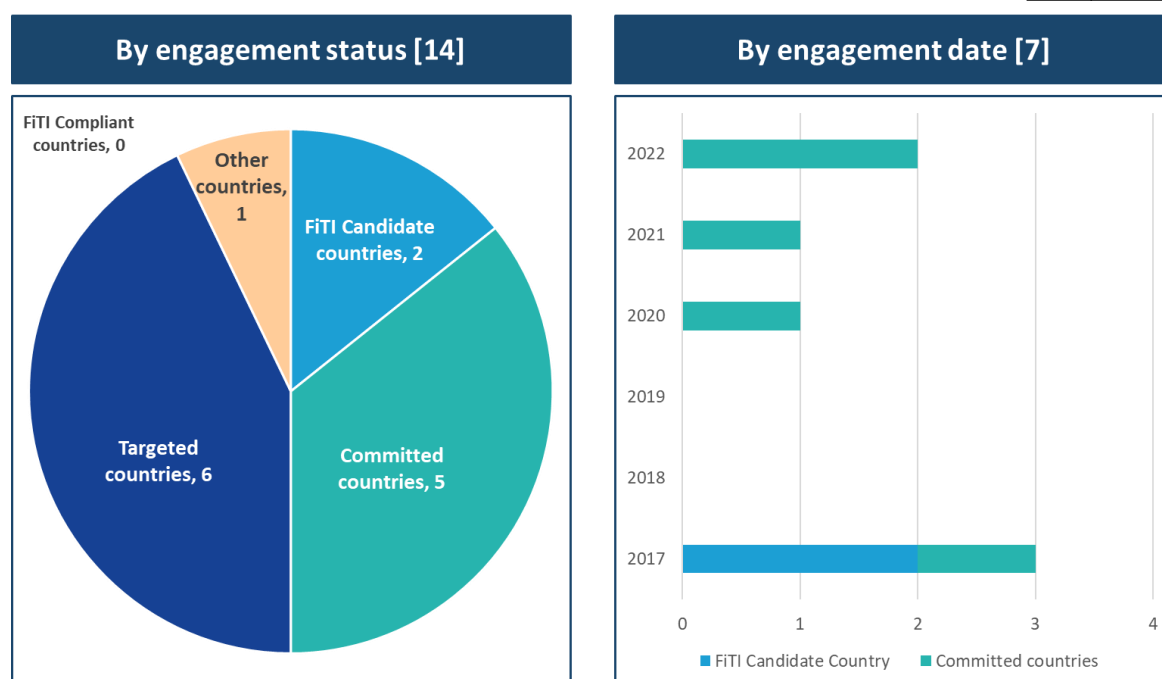
## 2. From Berlin to Brussels: Reflections from FiTI International Secretariat (2018 – 2022)

After an initial status overview of the initiative, conducted in the form of a 'Pub Quiz', the FiTI Chair asked Sven BIERMANN, Executive Director of the FiTI International Secretariat, to provide the Secretariat's reflection of the progress since the Board met last time in person (i.e. December 2018, in Berlin/Germany).

### Engaging countries and sustaining FiTI implementations

Sven emphasised that significant progress has been made over the last years, despite the COVID-19 pandemic – increasing the number of engaged countries (FiTI Candidate countries and committed countries) from three to seven, including the first country from Latin America. Furthermore, the FiTI is increasingly recognised as the primary global standard for levelling the playing field of transparency in fisheries management, among governmental as well as non-governmental stakeholders.

As of 15 September 2022





Despite these advancements, Sven stated that there is still *very little proactive demand from governments to join the FiTI* and emphasised that in times where many governments focus on post COVID-19 economic recoveries, ‘good governance’ approaches alone may not emphasise the importance (and political priority) that needs to be given to transparency to strengthen sustainable marine fisheries. Engaging new countries is therefore a huge portion of the Secretariat’s current workload.

Furthermore, Sven presented briefly the Secretariat’s internal *Coastal States database*, which seeks to provide guidance for future country engagements, based on the level of fisheries reliance for coastal States as well as their enabling environment for transparency. However, it was noted that FiTI’s strategy for engaging developing countries or entire regions are still influenced heavily by donor preferences. The need to increase unrestricted funding, to identify additional supporters that share FiTI’s priorities as well as ways for self-funding was emphasised.

With regards to sustaining country engagements (after their initial commitment to join the FiTI), Sven emphasised the following aspects:

- The engagement of *local partner organisations* (in particular those on a sub-contracting model) – acting as the Secretariat’s in-country support – has not yielded the expected results and will be reviewed in due time to define a better way of having in-country support.
- The *lack of a clear time limit* within in FiTI Standard that requires a country to move from its public commitment to reaching the FiTI Candidate needs to be addressed to avoid delayed FiTI implementations (e.g. in Senegal, see below).
- Mauritania and Seychelles, both FiTI Candidate countries, have made significant advancements in increasing transparency, but the *lack of operational support* for their FiTI National Multi-Stakeholder Groups (MSGs) may jeopardise the entire implementation process in the long run.<sup>3</sup> The need for strong, well-managed and proactive MSGs was clearly acknowledged.
- Feedback from several countries has shown that several stakeholders have *‘excessive’ expectations towards the FiTI*, in particular that public access to information should directly transform to enhanced public policies.<sup>4</sup> The participants recognised these expectations, but also emphasised the need to determine and

---

<sup>3</sup> This includes for example the organisation of regular MSG meetings or communication & outreach activities, which is lacking due to insufficient capacity and financial resources within the FiTI Lead Ministry.

<sup>4</sup> As an example, it was stated that while the FiTI Standard requests that governments publish documentation derived from any national stakeholder consultation undertaken with respect to the preparation, negotiation or monitoring of foreign fishing access agreements, the FiTI Standard itself does not currently mandate that non-governmental stakeholders are actually involved in such negotiations.

communicate better the impact of FiTI's work and to challenge the FiTI's own theory of change.

- Finally, it was also emphasised that the FiTI should not be perceived as a global initiative targeting only developing countries, but that outreach activities should also include *engaging developed coastal States*, for example from the European Union.

### Providing complementary FiTI programmes

Sven emphasised that in addition to engaging countries in the FiTI and sustaining their implementation process, the Secretariat is conducting several programmes that seek to promote an enabling environment that demands, understands, utilizes and incentivizes online government transparency in marine fisheries.



Sven's presentation focussed primarily on the tBrief series as well as the Secretariat's TAKING STOCK programme:

- The Secretariat's transparency briefing series (*tBrief*, for short) has proven a great and cost-effective way to strengthen the FiTI's position as a global knowledge provider in transparency of fisheries management.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, its publication – in English, French and Spanish – has been well appreciated by stakeholders.

<sup>5</sup> Editions of the tBrief series are typically written by the Secretariat's Technical Advisor (Andre Standing), reviewed by the Editorial Committee of the FiTI International Board and published every six months. tBriefs are translated into English, French and Spanish.  
<https://www.fiti.global/tbrief-series>



However, due to the limited capacity within the Secretariat, Sven mentioned several missed outreach opportunities to further promote these tBriefs and the initiative overall (e.g. lack of accompanying tBrief webinars, or the provision of these tBriefs in Portuguese).

- The FiTI's online transparency assessment of fisheries management information (so-called *TAKING STOCK assessments*) have already been published on the FiTI website for three countries (i.e. Bangladesh, Peru, Mexico) and several others are either in progress or planned for the coming years.<sup>6</sup> These assessments do not only support countries in analysing their current efforts in enhancing transparency in fisheries management, but also deepen public understanding of how different governments around the world approach this important topic. Sven highlighted that these TAKING STOCK assessments can be applied to all coastal countries globally, independent of whether a country has already joined the FiTI.

The methodology that the FiTI has developed for these assessments has proven effective. Sven stated that the first assessments also showed the need for researchers to have a deep contextual understanding of the assessed countries. However, initial attempts to use non-Secretariat, local researchers did not produce the expected results in terms of research quality. The methodology has therefore been adjusted to use Secretariat-internal researchers and to broaden the assessments' peer review process. So far, the results of the TAKING STOCK assessments have been beneficial to engage several governments in a dialogue about the need for further improvements on the public accessibility of fisheries information. At the same time, it was emphasised that the no 'naming and shaming' strategy of these assessments – providing an accurate, but often sombre analysis of a country's current situation – generates little recognition by media.

### Conducting fundraising

- Sven emphasised that the Secretariat currently does not employ a dedicated fundraiser, and that in order for the FiTI to continuously grow, a senior staff member would need to be added. However, the current funding situation does not allow for such an appointment. Furthermore, Sven highlighted that current *funding* for transparency in fisheries seems to be increasingly dominated by market-driven support for seafood supply chains as well as transparency for combating Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing activities and/or driven by national security concerns – in particular by US philanthropic donors. Transparency as an

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.fiti.global/taking-stock/countries>

indispensable tool to strengthen participatory governance for sustainable fisheries management – as the core objective of the FiTI – needs to be further promoted.

### 3. Plenary discussions<sup>7</sup>

Over the course of this two-day International Board meeting, the participants conducted various interactive sessions, primarily focussed on the following three critical issues and opportunities:

#### National implementations – Deeper direct technical assistance by the FiTI?

The objective of the first plenary session was to discuss the need for more comprehensive technical assistance from the International Secretariat to entice more robust participation by local stakeholders and offer operational and technical support to FiTI Lead Ministries. What kind of activities would this entail? How could these activities be delivered in each country? And what are the implications on funding, country commitment, and scope?

The session was opened by brief introductory remarks from Sven, outlining that – so far – countries implementing the FiTI Standard struggle fulfilling their various responsibilities, in particular with the continuous engagement of their National MSGs and their operational support (e.g. through a National Secretariat, ideally financed by the country's government).

Process	Transparency	Usability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>National MSG</i></li> <li>▪ <i>Candidate application</i></li> <li>▪ Annual workplan</li> <li>▪ Impact Report <i>(every 3 years)</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Publish and update information online</li> <li>▪ Annual FiTI Reports</li> <li>▪ Progressive improvement based on recommendations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Awareness raising</li> <li>▪ Public debates</li> <li>▪ Inclusive decision-making</li> </ul>
Continuous National MSG engagement		
Operational support		
Funding		

<sup>7</sup> Each plenary session was chaired by the FiTI Chair, Valeria MERINO.

Sven highlighted that all of the engaged countries have so far benefitted significantly from increased support by the International Secretariat, e.g. when drafting annual workplans, setting up National Multi-Stakeholder Groups, organising public events, supporting outreach & communication activities, reviewing and designing FiTI Reports, as well as monitoring FiTI Report recommendations and FiTI Standard requirements.

In particular, the importance of a well-functioning National Secretariat was noted, as it can have substantial impact on the integrity and quality of the process as a whole.

During the plenary discussion, it was therefore discussed whether the role of the International Secretariat needs to be expanded (e.g. acting as the de facto National Secretariat, at least for an interim initial period) and the implications of such an extended service model. The following analysis, conclusions and issues resulted from this plenary discussion:

- The need for *in-country operational support of the FiTI implementation process* was recognised as of utmost importance, in order for the process to be seen as beneficial to the country. Several participants clearly stated that increasing public access to credible information is only 'one side of the FiTI's objectives', and that local ownership – in particular through the National MSG – is instrumental in ensuring that such information reaches all relevant stakeholders and contributes to public debates, enhancing decision-making and effective oversight. It was further mentioned that while the FiTI Standard describes in detail the transparency requirements for a country's government, the same level of detail is not provided regarding the role and functioning of a National MSG, which is seen as of critical importance to ensure that the FiTI ultimately helps achieving sustainable management of fisheries.
- It was concluded that those countries that are unable to provide *effective operational support* to their MSG (through a National Secretariat) could therefore certainly benefit from an extended service model by the International Secretariat.
- At the same time, participants raised concerns about *potential conflict of interests*, if the International Secretariat were to become more involved in local operational support. For example, the International Secretariat is expected to provide a neutral assessment of the country's implementation progress, as part of the FiTI's validation process, which could be impacted if the Secretariat is too involved in providing national support.
- All participants clearly acknowledged the difficulties for countries, in particular developing countries, to allocate resources to the FiTI implementation process and stated that such a *lack of government support* should not be directly mistaken for a lack of commitment.

The examples of Seychelles and Mauritania were noted as committed countries, which have both made significant transparency advancements through the FiTI, while at the same time are not supporting their national multi-stakeholder process effectively.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, the lack of support for the FiTI process should also not be mistaken as a lack of government resources per se. Instead, it was agreed that even countries committed clearly to the FiTI may choose to prioritise other challenges of the country's fisheries sector, such as legal overfishing, IUU fishing, climate change, etc. The need to make transparent and participatory governance a priority within national authorities – for example through enhanced benefits, as discussed in the second session (see below) – was therefore seen as a critical aspect to ensure ongoing effective support by governments.

- Some participants mentioned that occasionally, a lack of government support could be a sign that the government or individuals are indeed trying to *sabotage the FiTI implementation process*, while appearing to be striving for transparency. The International Secretariat must be careful to accurately assess each situation.
- Participants also inquired about the possibility of the *FiTI National Secretariat being hosted outside of the FiTI Lead Ministry*, for example by a non-governmental organization. Sven stated that while this is not explicitly mentioned in section A.5 of the FiTI Standard, the accompanying Guidance Note #1 clearly outlines the possibility of the National Secretariat being hosted by another stakeholder (e.g. industry association or civil society organisation), or outsourced to a third party.

At the end of this session, the participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

**Decision [BM-18\_2022\_D-1]:**

**The International Board requested the International Secretariat to continue exploring the possibility of providing more extensive technical and operational services to countries, in particular to those starting with the implementation process. Ideally, such a service model could be piloted in one targeted country (subject to funding). The Secretariat must also clearly document potential implications of such a new strategy, in particular to the scope of activities, options to mitigate conflict of interests, funding requirements, as well as operational needs (e.g. in-country presence of International Secretariat staff).**

---

<sup>8</sup> The impacts of the COVID19 pandemic on the MSG's ability to hold meetings in person over the last 2 years was clearly recognized.



**The International Secretariat should report back to the International Board within the next 6-9 months.**

*BeneFiTInq – Incentives for government transparency in fisheries*

The objective of the second plenary session was to elaborate if and how market or non-market-based benefits could incentivize governments to publish information proactively. Who would provide such benefits (e.g. fishing companies, marine seafood retailers, international organizations, funders)? What kind of benefits could this include? How can we communicate more effectively the value of implementing the FiTI Standard to these incentive providers and ensure their buy-in and support?

The session was opened with brief introductory remarks from Julien MILLION and Annika MACKENSEN, before participants engaged in group discussions. The following main outcomes of these discussions were reported back to the plenary:

- A major argument for businesses to support government transparency of fisheries management seems to be the aspect of *business continuity*, by having sufficient access to information in order to sustain working in the country. The FiTI could therefore be seen as a risk management tool, allowing businesses to avoid bad investment decisions and to forecast better the long-term sustainability of the sector. One participant stated that ‘bad data is bringing in bad fish’.

Following the previous point, it was emphasised that the business sector should not be seen as a homogenous group; instead, different actors within business-driven supply chains have different requirements and needs. It was emphasised that in particular those businesses with *direct investments in a coastal state or fishing region*, such as commercial artisanal fishers or processing companies, may be more interested in supporting the FiTI than those commercial entities that are not exclusively tied to a country or a region (e.g. international wholesalers or fishing companies) – as they could adjust their operational models in case of difficulties.

Also, the role of investors and insurers were briefly discussed, elaborating on the idea of making government transparency a criterion for investments in the sector (e.g. loans).

- It was clearly recognised that arguments to support the FiTI must also demonstrate how the FiTI can *save costs and/or increase revenues* for businesses within the fisheries supply chain. The pros and cons of a price premium for increased government transparency was questioned, as recent examples for seafood certifications indicated that – in particular consumers – are interested in such assurances, but at the same time not always willing to pay a higher price.

- Following the previous point, the relevance of *preferred market access* was discussed by the participants. It was recognised that due to the complexity of such programmes (e.g. the Seafood Import Monitoring Program (SIMP) of the US government), a more detailed and thorough review needs to be undertaken in order to clearly establish how enhanced government transparency in fisheries management could bring benefits to exporting, FiTI implementing countries.

In this regard, the participants also briefly highlighted the importance of linking government transparency in fisheries with more business-oriented traceability efforts in seafood supply chains. Ylva MATTSSON stated that the Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management is currently conducting a study on the benefits of government transparency in fisheries according to the FiTI Standard for *eco-certification of fisheries*.

- Several participants recognised that implementing the FiTI Standard can raise a *country's profile and prestige* among national stakeholders (including small-scale fishing associations) as well as international business and development partners. Other identified benefits for governments included:
  - Improving accountability across national authorities (e.g. between Ministry of Fisheries and Ministry of Finance);
  - Enhancing data quality due to regular public accessibility;
  - Strengthening of the country's negotiation power and accountability;
  - Obtaining additional funding for research to close identified information gaps.

In addition, the International Board pointed out that the FiTI needs to develop a strategy to engage the private sector at the global, regional and country level.

- Finally, in addition to the recognition that more business-triggered incentives need to be explored to stimulate interest by governments to implement the FiTI, it was also recommended that the International Secretariat should undertake a study that highlights how information that is made publicly available through the FiTI process can *support governments in fulfilling other reporting obligations* more easily, such as to the FAO, relevant Regional Fisheries Management Organisations, or under the new Agreement for Fisheries Subsidies of the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

At the end of this session, the participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

**Decision [BM-18\_2022\_D-2]:**

**The International Board requested the International Secretariat to explore funding opportunities to conduct the following studies:**

- **How information published by governments through the FiTI Standard can facilitate access to seafood import programmes of major markets, such as the United States and the European Union; and**
- **How information published by governments through the FiTI Standard can facilitate other reporting obligations, such as envisioned under the new WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies.**

**The International Secretariat should report back to the International Board within the next 6-9 months regarding the possibility of conducting such studies.**

*Reframing the narrative – Bringing attention to management and governance of fisheries as key to sustainability*

The objective of the third plenary session was to learn from Board Members and Observers about the negative economic impact of legal but poorly managed fisheries and use that information to strengthen the FiTI's narrative of its impact on sustainable fisheries management. The aim is to create a competing narrative and a clearer demarcation with other transparency efforts, which are also important but influence priority setting (e.g. to combat IUU fishing). How can we communicate our values better? To whom? And how can FiTI Board Members support such communication activities?

The session was opened by brief introductory remarks from Hugh GOVAN and Alfredo SFEIR, before participants engaged in a plenary discussion with the following main outcomes:

- In order to better articulate the FiTI's narrative of its impact on sustainable fisheries management, it was clearly recognised to determine the FiTI's level of influence and more precisely, what a *successful FiTI implementation* looks like in a country. As an example, it was mentioned that if the purpose of the FiTI is primarily linked to the enhanced availability and accessibility of fisheries information in the public domain, the examples of Seychelles and Mauritania – both having already released their first two FiTI Reports – can be seen as a success story for the FiTI. At the same time, it was clearly acknowledged that information in the public domain, without public debates, improved decision-making and enhanced public oversight, falls short of stakeholders', donors' and also FiTI's own expectations.

This was also highlighted in preliminary feedback obtained from the two ongoing country validations (in Seychelles and Mauritania), where several stakeholders voiced their disappointment that the increased public information has not yet led to any *tangible management or policy adjustments* by the implementing governments.

The discussion continued to centre on the fact that while the FiTI Standard is given very clear and detailed guidance on what countries need to be transparent about (captured in the 12 transparency requirements of section B.1 of the FiTI Standard), the FiTI Standard is less normative about how such information must be used to *strengthen participatory governance*. The participants agreed that the upcoming revision of the FiTI Standard (2023) should take this aspect into account and explore, if and how this aspect could be strengthened (e.g. by obliging governments to consult all bona fide stakeholders in the preparation, negotiation or monitoring of foreign fishing access agreements, extending the current transparency-focussed obligation of whether this has taken place).

- Further, some participants were particularly concerned about elevating the conversation and prioritization of sustainable participatory governance of fisheries in the government's agenda. Thus, the need to reframe the narrative putting more emphasis on 'good and transparent management', other than mostly of illegal activities, which are covered under IUU fishing. It was proposed the FiTI should identify existing *success stories* to strengthen the FiTI narrative. Several participants explained that, in their opinion and experience, there are several countries that have already made their information transparent and therefore widely available to the public, that have built participatory management systems that rely heavily in collaboration amongst interested groups to use such data to improve governance and management. As a result, sustainability of specific fisheries has been achieved. The proposal is to identify models and experiences that share the same elements that underline the FiTI process and used them to demonstrate the value of the FiTI's theory of change. This will also position the FiTI as a platform to scale and spread a model already proven as successful. After all, the FiTI Standard and therefore its process was built upon the experience of many experts and practitioners that shared and incorporated into the FiTI Standard their valuable learnings and insights and that were eager to help create an initiative that would put such learning to good use globally.
- Furthermore, it was mentioned that in order to support the need for sound and transparent, participatory governance, the availability of *information that shows the financial loss that legal but badly managed fisheries impose to countries* and the society as a whole was seen as very useful. It was recommended that the International Secretariat should utilize opportunities to share FiTI's concerns about the lack of such data with governmental and non-governmental organisations that might have the capacity to pursue such a study.

The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:



**Decision [BM-18\_2022\_D-3]:**

The International Board approved that requirements to further strengthen the aspect of participatory governance as part of the FiTI Standard should be explored. The International Board recommended that such discussions could become part of a dedicated Working Group 'FiTI Standard 2.0' in order to develop recommendations on how to improve and update the various requirements of the current FiTI Standard.

- Furthermore, participants recognized the need to initiate discussions whether the current FiTI implementation process – as required under the FiTI Standard – should be adopted to include an *exit point for countries* (e.g. based on outstanding performance), or whether a country's FiTI implementation continues to be treated as an ongoing (infinite) process. This was not only emphasized as an important discussion to provide a long-term vision to implementing countries, but also for discussions with supporting partners and donors.

The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

**Decision [BM-18\_2022\_D-4]:**

The International Board approved the establishment of the temporary Working Group 'Exit Strategy' to provide an overall recommendation to the Board whether an 'exit strategy' should be included in the upcoming revision of the FiTI Standard (in 2023).

It was further agreed that this Working Group comprises of the following members: Ylva MATTSSON, Julien MILLION, Philippe MICHAUD, Alfredo SFEIR. The FiTI Chair will participate in this Working Group as an Observer. A member of the International Secretariat will accompany this Working Group, acting as the group's secretary.

The International Board tasked the International Secretariat to establish Terms of Reference for this group and to support its operation.

## 4. Internal housekeeping

*Approval of transition date for ten outgoing Board Members (2nd term)*

Per article 10 (2) of the constitution of the association of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (as of 13 May 2021): *'All members shall retire at the end of their term, but shall be eligible for re-nomination and re-election once.'* The FiTI Chair noted that ten Board

Members will reach the end of their second term on the 23rd of January, 2023.<sup>9</sup> In order to ensure a smooth transition with new incoming members<sup>10</sup> – as it is currently planned that they start their terms on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, 2023 – the end date of the period for the outgoing members has to be slightly adjusted.

The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

**Decision [BM-18\_2022\_D-5]:**

**The International Board approved the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2022 as the date in which the second term of the ten outgoing Board Members ends.**

*Approval of Annual Financial Statement 2020 (including Audit Report)*

During its 14<sup>th</sup> meeting in September 2021, the FiTI International Board made the following 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.'*

After several, COVID-19-related delays, the Audit Report for the FiTI's Annual Financial Statement for 2020 has now been finalised by the engaged Seychelles-based auditor Pool & Patel Chartered Accountants, stating that *'In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements of the Association are prepared, in all material respects, in accordance with the requirements of the Seychelles Associations Act.'* The key parameters of the FiTI's Annual Financial Statement for 2020 were presented to the participants.<sup>11</sup>

The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

**Decision [BM-18\_2022\_D-6]:**

**The International Board approved the FiTI's Annual Financial Statement for 2020 (including the Audit Report, as provided by Pool & Patel Chartered Accountants of Seychelles) with a total equity, deferred grants and liabilities sum of SCR 13,848,780.**

*Approval of Auditor for Annual Financial Statement 2021*

Per article 23 (1) of the constitution of the association of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (as of 13 May 2021): the *'FiTI International Board shall appoint an external,*

---

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.fiti.global/fiti-international-board>: Ylva MATTSSON, Philippe MICHAUD, Mohamed Salem NANY, Alexander BIRYUKOV, Gaoussou GUEYE, Francisco LEOTTE, Francisco J. MARÍ, Nedwa NECH, Alfred SCHUMM, Eduardo ROLÓN.

<sup>10</sup> Based on the current 2022 election process.

<sup>11</sup> The FiTI's Annual Financial Statement for 2020 was already presented in detail during the FiTI International Board's meeting on April 15, 2021 (12th meeting).

*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.'*

It was proposed to reappoint the Seychelles-based audit firm Pool & Patel Chartered Accountants to perform the audit of FiTI's Annual Financial Statement for 2021.

The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

**Decision [BM-18\_2022\_D-7]:**

**The International Board approved the appointment of the Seychelles-based audit company Pool & Patel Chartered Accountants to conduct an independent audit on the FiTI's 2021 annual financial statement.**

*Approval of a time extension of the process step 'Call for nominations' for the 2022 membership election for the FiTI association*

The International Secretariat launched the global call for the 2022 membership election to the FiTI association on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June, 2022. The call was published on the FiTI website<sup>12</sup>, sent by email to more than 1,500 contacts from the Secretariat's global database, and distributed via social media, e.g. Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. Additionally, individual persons were contacted by the Secretariat as well as the FiTI Chair to either consider applying for this membership or to distribute this call within their own networks.

In accordance with the agreed timetable, the first process step ('Call for nominations') has been closed after the 31<sup>st</sup> of August, 2022. The following applications have been received:

Stakeholder group	Membership seats to be filled	Received applications
Government sector	4 membership seats	2 applications
Business sector (LSF)	2 membership seats	1 application
Business sector (SSF)	1 membership seat	1 application
Social sector	5 membership seats	5 applications

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.fiti.global/2021-membership-election-for-the-fiti-association>

The FiTI Chair stated that during August, various important stakeholders have expressed their interest in submitting application documents for this election process, but requested an extension of the initial deadline.

Participants also critically discussed the benefits of risks for engaging new Board Members from nominating organisations that may have an impact on the FiTI's ability to collaborate with all stakeholders, e.g. due to their vocal advocacy goals.

The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

**Decision [BM-18\_2022\_D-8]:**

**The International Board approved the extension of Phase 1 ('Call for nominations') of the 2022 membership election process from 31<sup>st</sup> of August to 30<sup>th</sup> of November 2022. This extension will be documented on the FiTI website only.**

*Approval of vetted short-listed candidates for the 2022 membership election for the FiTI association*

The Election Committee for the 2022 membership election process reviewed the applicants' documentation and created a short-list of qualified candidates to submit to the International Board.

Information on the review process as well as the list of short-listed candidates were presented by the FiTI Chair and Board Member Ylva MATTSSON in detail.

Afterwards, the participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

**Decision [BM-18\_2022\_D-9]:**

**The International Board approved all of the vetted candidates, except for one application nominated by a social sector organisation that does not fulfil the FiTI's formal requirements regarding having operations in multiple countries. The remaining eight short-listed candidates will proceed to the next phase of the election process ('Interview with shortlisted candidates').**

## 5. Status of Senegal as a committed country

Sven recalled that for Senegal, the process of joining the FiTI was initiated following the public commitment of H.E. Macky SALL, President of the Republic of Senegal, on 3 February 2016 in Nouakchott, during the first FiTI International Conference. Since then, the country has made no progress in finalising the six sign-up steps, despite significant endeavours from



the International Secretariat<sup>13</sup>, its partners and other national and international stakeholders.

A key obstacle in moving Senegal forward remains the pending legal decree for the FiTI, which needs to be issued either by the President of Senegal, the Prime Minister or an appointed senior government official. This decree is essential to provide not only a legal framework for the FiTI, but also to appoint the FiTI Lead Ministry within the government.

A major accomplishment has been the inclusion of the FiTI in the draft National Action Plan (NAP) of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) for Senegal, following citizen consultations<sup>14</sup> and under the leadership of the Ministry of Justice. The implementation of the FiTI is one of several national commitments<sup>15</sup>, and according to the specified timetable, Senegal's application for membership to the FiTI International Board should be completed no later than August 2023. However, very little progress has been made under this NAP since its publication in August 2021.

Given the country's public commitment, Senegal is listed as one of the current seven FiTI countries, referred to as a committed country. However, the FiTI is receiving increasing criticism from national and international stakeholders regarding Senegal's status in the initiative.

Sven requested therefore from the International Board guidance on the most suitable action to address the situation as well as related communication activities (e.g. press release), if any.

Ahmed SENHOURY confirmed the Secretariat's assessment of the current situation in Senegal, but also highlighted that due to recent changes in the Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Economy there might be an opportunity to revitalise this collaboration. Furthermore, Ahmed mentioned that the planned sub-regional workshop on transparency in fisheries management (hosted by Mauritania's Ministry of Maritime Economy in Nouakchott in November) may present an opportunity for the FiTI Chair to extend her travel also to Senegal and meet with several governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

Julien MILLION added further that the World Bank is currently pursuing activities in Senegal on improving information systems on fishing and fish farming activities for transparency and monitoring of these sectors, including a clear reference to move towards compliance with the FiTI criteria.

---

<sup>13</sup> A brief, but incomplete, overview of such activities can be found here:

<https://www.fiti.global/category/countries/senegal>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/senegal/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/senegal/commitments/SN0004/>

The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

**Decision [BM-18\_2022\_D-10]:**

**The International Board stated its discontent with the level of progress demonstrated by Senegal's national authorities over the last years – despite recent advancements, such as the inclusion of the FiTI commitment in the country's National Action Plan of the Open Government Partnership.**

**The International Board instructed the International Secretariat to publish a blog on its website to summarise the current situation, stating the Board's discontent and disseminating this information to stakeholders in Senegal and through social media.**

**Furthermore, the FiTI Chair was requested to visit Senegal in the upcoming months to discuss with the national authorities a concrete and reliable workplan for the country to honour its commitment towards transparency in fisheries management.**

**An update on Senegal's implementation progress should be given to the International Board within the next 3-6 months.**

Furthermore, Ahmed and Sven provided a brief overview of recent developments in *Guinea*. Due to PRCM's persistent outreach over the last years, Guinea's national authorities have now requested a country mission by the International Secretariat to resume discussions about the country's engagement in the FiTI.

Several members of the Board raised strong concerns about such a request, in particular after the Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) recent decision of sanctions on Guinea, due to the fact that the transition government has not made progress towards establishing a transition timeline and organizing elections.

At the same time, it was critically discussed that the FiTI should support local stakeholders in the country to enhance transparency in fisheries and contribute to the sustainable development of the sector – even in difficult situations.

The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

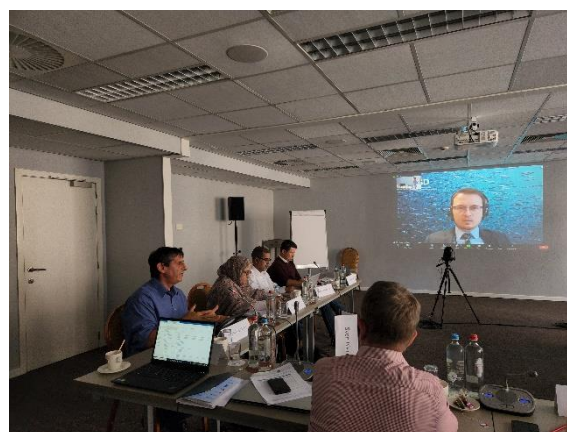
**Decision [BM-18\_2022\_D-11]:**

**The International Board instructed the International Secretariat to conduct a fact-finding mission to Guinea to assess the current environment for transparency and multi-stakeholder participation. For this, interviews and workshops with governmental as well as non-governmental actors should be conducted, with the clear predication that the country's particular situation will need to be reviewed afterwards by the International Board to determine a realistic plan forward.**

## 6. The WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement: Implications for the FiTI Standard

After more than two decades of negotiations, the 12<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference (MC12) of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) adopted in June 2022 the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. Once operational<sup>16</sup>, this agreement will establish new binding multilateral rules on fisheries subsidies. It represents both the first set of global disciplines on governments' financial support to their fishing sector and the first WTO agreement with an environmental objective at its core.

Given the importance of fisheries subsidies to the sustainable management of marine fisheries – also documented as a dedicated transparency requirement under the FiTI Standard (B.1.10) – Mr Tristan IRSCHLINGER, Policy Advisor for Fisheries Subsidies from the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) was invited to participate in the Board meeting as a guest.



Mr IRSCHLINGER started by providing an overview of the three areas in which new rules have been agreed: The first being a prohibition to subsidise fishing vessels and operators engaged in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing; the second being a prohibition to subsidise the fishing of stocks that are in an overfished condition, meaning that their level of biomass is alarmingly low; and the third area regrouping three rules (i.e. prohibition to subsidise fishing in the unregulated high seas, and a particular caution when providing subsidies to a vessel that does not fly the flag of the subsidising member, and when the status of fish stocks is unknown, because they are not assessed). In addition, he focussed on the obligations to provide some fisheries-related information in subsidy notifications, as outlined in Article 8.

---

<sup>16</sup> For the Agreement to become operational, two-thirds of members have to deposit their “instruments of acceptance” with the WTO.

In the following discussion, the International Board recognised that *several necessary reporting obligations for countries are already featured in the FiTI Standard*, while at the same time, the upcoming revision of the FiTI Standard presents an important opportunity to include the missing requirements (e.g. the inclusion of a new attribute for the large-scale vessel registry (B.1.5), making transparent whether a vessel or its operator are the subject of an IUU fishing ‘determination’).

It was also recognized that positioning the FiTI as a reporting tool for countries under this new Agreement is of critical importance and could significantly increase the number of countries engaged in the FiTI, as all countries globally providing subsidies to their fisheries sector must follow the WTO obligations, once ratified and into force.

**Decision [BM-18\_2022\_D-12]:**

**The International Board instructed the International Secretariat to explore opportunities among its partner organisations (e.g. FAO, World Bank) on how the FiTI Standard can be positioned as a global tool for countries to facilitate their reporting obligations under the WTO.**

**An update on this opportunity should be given to the International Board within the next 6 months.**

## 7. Next meeting(s), Summary & Closing

At the beginning of the meeting’s last session, the FiTI Chair called upon the four participating Board Members whose second term will end at the end of 2022: Francisco MARÍ, Ylva MATTSSON, Philippe MICHAUD, and Nedwa NECH. On behalf of the entire initiative, she thanked all outgoing Board Members for their tremendous commitment to the FiTI and expressed her hope that these members will remain close to the initiative.







Board Member Keith ANDRE raised the proposal of bestowing a dedicated title to these outgoing Board Members (e.g. ‘Honorary Board Members’) to acknowledge their outstanding contribution in the founding and establishment of the initiative. The FiTI Chair stated that several alternative ideas of recognition should be discussed within the International Board and should be made within the framework of the FiTI association’s own constitution.

Finally, the FiTI Chair requested a brief discussion about the time and location for the Board’s next in-person meeting (in the first half of 2023). The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

**Decision [BM-18\_2022\_D-13]:**

**The International Board approved that a 2-day, in-person meeting should be organised in April or May 2023. In case one of the currently committed countries will be approved as a FiTI Candidate country within the next months, this meeting should be organised in one of these countries. A final decision of the target location for this meeting will be taken in one of the following online FiTI International Board meetings.**



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

Meeting minutes **provided** by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sven B.', written over a horizontal line.

Mr Sven Biermann

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

Meeting minutes **approved** by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Valeria Merino', written over a horizontal line.

Dr Valeria Merino

Chair of the FiTI International Board

## APPENDIX I: List of Participants

### Chair

**Valeria MERINO**

### Stakeholder group: Government sector

**Annika MACKENSEN** [Voting power for this meeting: 1.5 votes]

**Ylva MATTSSON** [Voting power for this meeting: 1.5 votes]

**Philippe MICHAUD** [Voting power for this meeting: 1.5 votes]

### Not excused:

**Mohamed Salem NANY**

### Stakeholder group: Business sector

**Keith ANDRE** [Voting power for this meeting: 1.0 votes]

**Hugh GOVAN** [Voting power for this meeting: 1.0 votes]

**Alfredo SFEIR** [Voting power for this meeting: 1.0 votes]

### Excused:

**Francisco LEOTTE**

**Gaoussou GUEYE**

### Not excused:

**Alexander BIRYUKOV**

### Stakeholder group: Social sector

**Francisco MARÍ** [Voting power for this meeting: 3.6 votes]

**Nedwa NECH** [Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]

**Ahmed SENHOURY** [Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]

Excused:

**Eduardo ROLÓN<sup>17</sup>**

**Alfred SCHUMM<sup>18</sup>**

Observers

**Julien MILLION**, The World Bank Group

Excused:

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

**Theophilous CHIVIRU**, Open Government Partnership (OGP)

**Salimata SOUMARE**, African Development Bank (AfDB)

FiTI International Secretariat

**Michele ANDRE**

**Sven BIERMANN**

Guests

**Tristan IRSCHLINGER** (Policy Advisor for Fisheries Subsidies, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)) – *only for relevant session / via Zoom*

---

<sup>17</sup> Eduardo assigned Francisco MARÍ as his proxy in an email to the FiTI Chair on 26 September 2022.

<sup>18</sup> Alfred assigned Francisco MARÍ as his proxy in an email to the FiTI Chair on 27 September 2022.

## APPENDIX II: Agenda of the meeting

The 2-day meeting was chaired by Dr Valeria MERINO, Chair of the FiTI International Board.

### Tuesday, 27th of September 2022

- 08:30 – 09:00 Arrival of participants

		Type <sup>19</sup>
09:00 – 09:15	[I.1] Welcome & Administration	① / ☑
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Valeria MERINO</li> <li>Identification of attendance</li> <li>Determination of a quorum</li> <li>Refer to section 'Additional information'</li> </ul>	

09:15 – 10:15	[I.2] Pub Quiz: 'How well do you know the FiTI?'	①
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Michele ANDRE</li> </ul>	

- 10:15 – 10:30 Coffee & Tea break

10:30 – 12:00	[I.3] From Berlin to Brussels: Reflections from the FiTI International Secretariat (2018 – 2022)	①
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sven BIERMANN</li> <li>Engaging countries and sustaining FiTI implementations</li> <li>Providing complementary FiTI programmes</li> <li>Conducting fundraising</li> <li>Questions &amp; Answers</li> </ul>	

<sup>19</sup> ① Agenda item is primarily for information/discussion; ☑ Agenda item requires decision





- 12:00 – 13:00 Lunch break

13:00 – 14:45	[I.4] Plenary discussion on challenges and opportunities	ⓘ
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Refer to section 'Additional information'</li></ul>	

- 14:45 – 15:15 Coffee & Tea break

15:15 – 16:50	[I.4] Plenary discussion on challenges and opportunities (cont.)	ⓘ
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Refer to section 'Additional information'</li></ul>	

16:50 – 17:00	[I.5] Outlook for Day 2, Closing	ⓘ
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Valeria MERINO</li></ul>	

- 19:00 – 21:30 Dinner [Chez Leon, Rue de Bouchers 18, 1000 Brussels]

## Wednesday, 28th of September 2022

- 08:30 – 09:00 Arrival of participants

09:00 – 10:00	<b>[II.1] Internal housekeeping</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Valeria MERINO</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approval of transition date for ten outgoing Board Members (2<sup>nd</sup> term)</li> <li>Approval of Annual Financial Statement 2020 (including Audit Report) and approval of Auditor for Annual Financial Statement 2021</li> <li>Approval of time extension of process step 'Call for nominations' for the 2022 membership election for the FiTI association</li> <li>Approval of a list of vetted short-listed candidates for the 2022 membership election for the FiTI association</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refer to section 'Additional information'</li> </ul>	

10:00 – 10:45	<b>[II.2] Status of Senegal as a committed country</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sven BIERMANN, Ahmed SENHOURY</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discussion of Senegal's performance in implementing the FiTI sign-up steps and its current status in the FiTI</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refer to section 'Additional information'</li> </ul>	

- 10:45 – 11:00 Coffee & Tea break

11:00 – 12:00	<b>[II.3] The WTO Fisheries Subsidies Agreement: Implications for the FiTI Standard</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
---------------	---	--------------------------

- Tristan IRSCHLINGER, Policy Advisor for Fisheries Subsidies, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) – via Zoom

- 12:00 – 13:00 Lunch break (incl. group photo)

13:00 – 15:45

[I.4] Plenary discussion on challenges and opportunities (cont.)



- Refer to section 'Additional information'

- 15:45 – 16:00 Coffee & Tea break

16:00 – 17:00

[II.4] Next meeting(s), Summary & Closing



- Valeria MERINO