



Fisheries
Transparency
Initiative

20th meeting of the FiTI International Board

16 February 2023, Conference Call

Meeting Minutes

ID: BM-20_2023_MM

Provided by: FiTI International Secretariat

Date: 28.04.2023

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Date	16 February 2023
Time	1.00 – 3.30 p.m. (Greenwich Mean Time)
Venue	Global Conference Call (Zoom)
Supporting document(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Information package for the determination of <i>Mauritania's final compliance status</i> (date: 7 February 2023)Information package for the <i>candidate application of Cabo Verde</i> (date: 3 January 2023)<i>2023 Workplan of the FiTI International Secretariat – draft</i> (date: 31 January 2023)

Outcomes of meeting

1. Welcome and administration

The Chair of the FiTI International Board, Valeria MERINO, opened the 20th International Board meeting by welcoming all participating Members and Observers.

Apologies were noted prior to the meeting from Board Member Annika MACKENSEN (stakeholder group: Government Sector) as well as Observer Julien MILLION (World Bank). Annika delegated her voting power to Joacim JOHANNESON, as shown in Appendix I.

After all eligible participants joined, Mr Sven BIERMANN, Executive Director (ED) of the FiTI International Secretariat, determined that a quorum for this meeting was reached¹:

Pro-rated attendance of Board Members ² :	At least two Board Members per stakeholder group?	Attendance of Observers:
18 out of 18 votes	Yes	2 out of 4

The FiTI Chair emphasised that the initiative is extremely pleased to welcome Andres ARENS, Roy CLARISSE, and Joacim JOHANNESON (all Government Sector), Tony LAZAZZARA and Dawda Foday SAINE (both Business Sector), as well as Maisie PIGEON and Annie TOURETTE (both Social Sector) as the newest member to the FiTI association.³

All new and existing Board Members as well as Observers briefly introduced themselves and highlighted relevant experiences and expectations.

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 this FiTI International Board meeting were determined as follows:

- *Government sector*: Currently four Board Members → each Board Member carries 1.5 votes
- *Business sector*: Currently five Board Members → each Board Member carries 1.2 votes
- *Social sector*: Currently three Board Members → each Board Member carries 2 votes

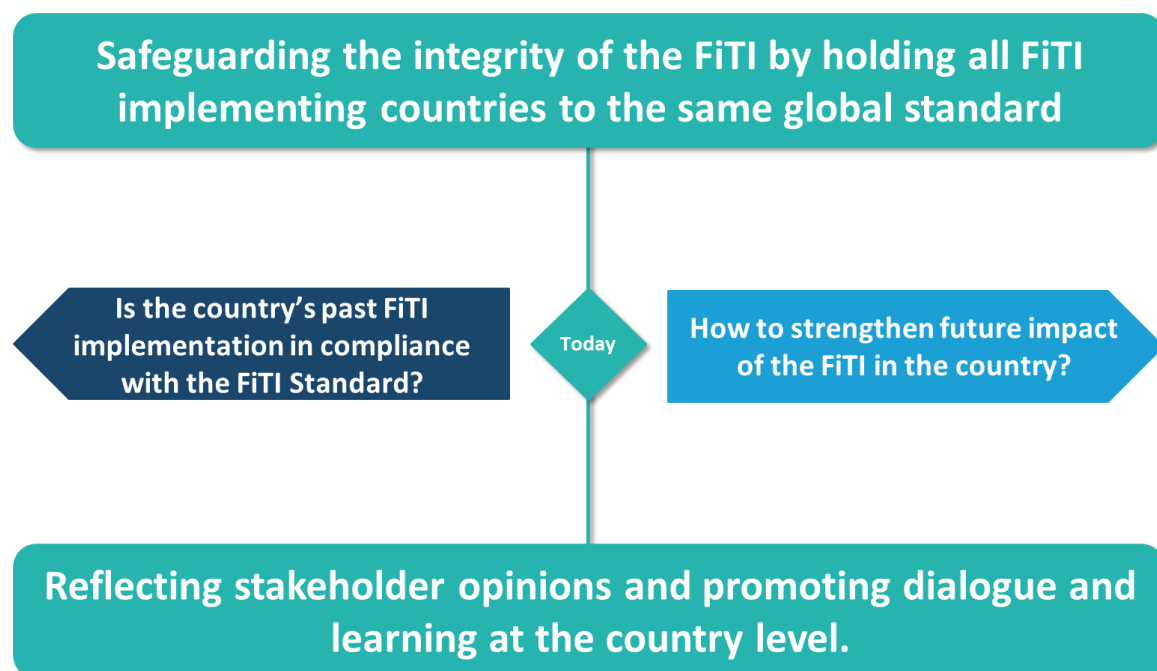
³ Based on decision BM-19_2022_D-07. The sole responsibility of members is to serve in the FiTI International Board.

2. Determination of compliance status of Mauritania

The FiTI Chair emphasised that validation is an essential part of the FiTI implementation process. Per the FiTI Standard, a FiTI Candidate country may choose to undergo the first validation prior to publishing its first FiTI Report. Still, it must undergo the first validation before publishing its second FiTI Report.⁴ Afterward, a FiTI implementing country must undergo regular validations at least every three years to determine if the country is compliant with the FiTI Standard.

The FiTI validation process offers a unique opportunity to conduct an objective and **standardised verification of a country's past performances** against the FiTI Standard (namely its transparency and procedural requirements) and the country's enabling environment for multi-stakeholder participation and oversight). It also helps to identify lessons learned, **enhancement opportunities**, and corrective actions to strengthen further the operational effectiveness of the FiTI implementation and the overall impact of the FiTI on the sustainable management of a country's marine fisheries.

Validation also promotes 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. As such, the validation process benefits national stakeholders in validated countries and the FiTI's international stakeholders (e.g., business partners, donors, etc.).



⁴ It was noted that during its 16th meeting (February 2022), the FiTI International Board approved that the country validation for Mauritania must be completed prior to the publications of the countries' third FiTI Report (instead of the second FiTI Report, as outlined in section D.4 of the FiTI Standard).

The FiTI Chair reminded the participations that the **FiTI International Board** is responsible for the validation process. The provisions that must be applied when conducting validations are outlined in section D of the FiTI Standard⁵ (as well as the corresponding Guidance Note #3 on ‘Validating countries’).

The **primary outcome of the validation process** is the decision regarding the country’s overall compliance level following the designation categories stated in section D.1.1 of the FiTI Standard, as outlined below.

Compliance designations	Description
Compliant	Validation demonstrates that all aspects of the requirement have been implemented and that the broader objective of the requirement has been fulfilled.
Meaningful progress	Validation demonstrates that significant aspects of the requirement have been implemented and that the broader objective of the requirement has been fulfilled.
Inadequate progress	Validation demonstrates that significant aspects of the requirement have not been implemented and that the broader objective of the requirement has not been fulfilled.
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.
Not collated	<i>Validation demonstrates that information for this requirement has not been collated by national authorities at all.</i>
Not applicable	<i>Validation demonstrates that this requirement is not applicable in the country.</i>

The FiTI Chair highlighted that to determine a country’s overall level of compliance, several core validation principles need to be considered, as documented in Guidance Note #3, such as:

- The validation process should **not be mistaken for a purely technical, audit-like exercise**. Instead, to determine a country’s level of compliance, the validation process must balance the outcomes of a detailed, evidence-based assessment of a


⁵ <https://www.fiti.global/fiti-standard>

country's performance against the individual requirements of the FiTI Standard (as outlined in its sections B.1 – B.3) with the overall perception of the country's performance against the spirit of the initiative – as documented in the FiTI Principles.

- Each validation must consider a **country's economic, cultural, and political context**. This is particularly relevant when considering a country's commitment to the principle of 'progressive improvement' and, ultimately, its overall level of compliance, as outlined in section D.1.2 of the FiTI Standard.
- Greater **flexibility during a country's first regular validation processes** should be applied where suitable.

The FiTI Chair recalled that for the **Islamic Republic of Mauritania** (short Mauritania), the FiTI International Board launched the country's first validation process in accordance with the FiTI Standard (section D.1) in September 2021, setting the validation timeframe from December 2018 until December 2021. This timeframe was later extended to March 2022.⁶ Consequently, Mauritania's first FiTI Report (calendar year 2018) and second FiTI Report (calendar years 2019 & 2020) fell within the validation timeframe.⁷

Mauritania's compliance assessment with the FiTI Standard was implemented in three phases – each building on the conclusions and recommendations of the previous one – as shown below:

FiTI Standard	Section D.2.1	Section D.2.2	Section D.2.3
			
Responsibility	FiTI International Secretariat	Independent Validator	FiTI International Board
Status for Mauritania	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (23 June 2022)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> (19 December 2022)	Open

Before the meeting, the Secretariat included in the Board preparatory documents sent to the Board members a brief overview of these subsequent phases regarding responsibilities, activities, and significant deliverables.

⁶ Decision ID: BM-16_2022_D-03.

⁷ Countries can request an extension to the FiTI International Board in accordance with section C.1.2 of the FiTI Standard. Mauritania did not request such an extension and the validation started as planned.

In the **first phase**, the FiTI International Secretariat prepared a Baseline Assessment Report, which provides the Secretariat's initial evaluation of progress against the requirements of the FiTI Standard.⁸ Primarily through desk-based research, the International Secretariat:

- Determined the level of compliance for each of the *21 individual validation requirements*:⁹
 - Transparency (comprised of 12 individual requirements),
 - Procedural related to the FiTI Report (comprised of 4 individual requirements),
 - National Implementation Framework (comprised of 5 individual requirements);
- Documented efforts that went beyond FiTI requirements;
- Provided recommendations to strengthen the FiTI implementation process further;
- Identified additional aspects for the consideration of the Independent Validator.

The International Secretariat finalised its Baseline Assessment Report for Mauritania on 23 June 2022.

In the **second phase**, Mr Stefaan DEPYPERE was appointed by the FiTI International Board as the country's Independent Validator.¹⁰ Primarily through stakeholder consultations (and complementary research), the Independent Validator:

- Reviewed the Secretariat's baseline assessment of each individual requirement as well as the country's progress performance;
- Identified opportunities to improve further the operational effectiveness as well as the impact of the national FiTI implementation in terms of promoting sustainable fisheries management; and

⁸ During its 15th meeting (November 2021), the FiTI International Board approved that the first process step of the validation process for 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, was given to the Independent Validator.

⁹ Additional background information was provided to all participants prior to the meeting, as outlined in Annex II.

¹⁰ Decision ID: BM-17_2022_D-01

- Provided a recommendation for the overall compliance designation, in accordance with the categories stated in section D.1.1 of the FiTI Standard.

The Independent Validator documented his findings in a Validation Report. Mauritania's National MSG was given the opportunity to comment on the Validator's preliminary findings. Unfortunately, the National MSG did not provide any comments to the Validator.¹¹

The Independent Validator submitted his final Validation Report for Mauritania to the FiTI Chair on 19 December 2022.

In the **third and final phase**, the FiTI International Board has to review now the assessment and recommendation documented in the Independent Validator's Validation Report to make a final determination:

- whether the individual requirements of the FiTI Standard have been met or not;
- whether any breach of the principles or the spirit of the FiTI – in accordance with section E.2.2 of the FiTI Standard – has occurred;
- regarding the implementing country's overall compliance designation in accordance with section D.1.2 of the FiTI Standard (see below); and
- regarding corrective actions (if applicable).

For assessing the **overall level of compliance**, the FiTI International Board must take into account provision **E.2.2** of the FiTI Standard ('Breach of Principles and Spirit of the Initiative'), as well as the following factors:

- i. The advice and recommendations of the Independent Validator;¹²
- ii. The nature of the outstanding requirements and how close the requirements are to being met;
- iii. The magnitude and complexity of the fisheries sector of the country;
- iv. Other barriers to meeting requirements, such as but not limited to state fragility and recent or ongoing political change, and the extent to which the National MSG has undertaken actions to resolve barriers encountered;

¹¹ Only one comment was received from the Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Economy (MPEM) regarding additional factual information.

¹² The International Board should primarily take the Independent Validator's Validation Report into account and, where necessary, consult the Secretariat's Baseline Assessment Report, as well as the requirements and guidelines established by the FiTI Standard and the Guidance Note # 3. The FiTI International Board is not required to conduct additional research or stakeholder interviews, though these can be scheduled if deemed necessary.

- v. The good faith efforts undertaken by the National MSG to comply with the requirements;
- vi. The reasons and justifications for not complying with the requirements; and
- vii. Any plans agreed by the National MSG to address the requirements in the future.

Furthermore, the FiTI International Board must observe that in order to grant the **overall compliance designation of 'Compliant'** (see above), the country must have obtained:

- A 'Compliant' designation on the assessment of the individual requirements regarding an enabling environment for stakeholder participation (B.3.1.) and multi-stakeholder oversight (B.3.3), and
- At least 'Meaningful progress' designations on the assessment of all of the 12 individual transparency requirements (B.1.1 to B.1.12).¹³

The Independent Validator, Mr DEPYPERE, was then invited to participate in the meeting. He gave a brief overview of his main findings:

- Mr DEPYPERE stated that it is fair to recognise that the Government of Mauritania has made transparency one of its major policy objectives. Over the last years – admittedly starting from a low base – very good results have been achieved, in particular through the implementation of the FiTI. The country is now adhering to a significant number of requirements from the FiTI Standards. He mentioned that civil society and media representatives testified that, somehow unexpectedly, they now found data that were unavailable a few years ago.
- According to feedback obtained during his stakeholder consultations, there is a broad appreciation for the FiTI process and recognition of the progress made in Mauritania. There is also a general expectation (or at least hope) that the FiTI process will lead to policy improvements and lay the foundation for good governance in the country.
- Furthermore, the FiTI process is widely and generally acknowledged by operators in the country and by international operators as having contributed to creating awareness about the value of transparency and leading to concrete results. Anecdotal comments indicated that the investment climate in Mauritania's fisheries is now seen as more favourable due to a decreased risk of uncertainty caused by a lack of information.

¹³ No other provisions are given in the FiTI Standard regarding a minimum compliance designation than those stated here. Therefore, the FiTI Standard is silent on the minimum scores of the other requirements (for example the four procedural requirements related to the FiTI Report).

- No breaches of the principles and spirit of the FiTI were identified during the stakeholder consultation phase. For example, all the Validator's requests were attended to, including access to private agreements, FiTI work plans, etc., and clear explanations were given in cases where information was not published, e.g., by acknowledging administrative constraints, lack of data, etc.
- While compiling and publishing data through FiTI Reports should be seen as a significant achievement for Mauritania, two aspects were emphasised by Mr DEPYPERE that require further consideration:
 - Transparency must not be seen as an activity to satisfy the information curiosity of stakeholders but as a catalyst for reforms in the sector. The National Multi-Stakeholder Group (MSG) must play an essential role in this. Yet, while the group was well functioning during the second reporting process, it seems to have paused now, somehow pending a renewal of its mandate. It was frequently mentioned during the validation process that the resource base of this group was too modest in the past to allow the group to play a more significant role.
 - It is currently unclear how these notable transparency efforts will be sustained. More clarity regarding the necessary resources – financial, human, logistical and in terms of political capital – is needed to base the FiTI process in Mauritania on a long-term foundation. This also includes the long-standing issue of moving the FiTI Lead Ministry from the current Ministry of Economic Affairs to the Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Economy.
- Furthermore, Mr DEPYPERE mentioned several weak points he perceived which require corrective actions, such as:
 - There is a certain degree of dissatisfaction – among several stakeholders – that the recommendations of the second FiTI Report have not, or have not sufficiently quickly, been implemented yet.
 - The operational basis for the FiTI process in Mauritania needs to be strengthened. This includes, inter alia, endowing the National MSG and the FiTI National Secretariat with a modest but reliable operational basis in terms of logistics, human and financial resources, appointing a FiTI National Lead that shows commitment to the process, and reviewing the composition of and participation in the National MSG.
 - With support from the FiTI International Secretariat, the National MSG has established a dedicated website to provide online access to detailed information. This information is categorised into the 12 thematic areas of the FiTI Standard. However, this website is not well known. The National MSG

should therefore launch a regular awareness campaign about the website and ensure that the content of the website is kept up to date.

- The National MSG might also consider utilising physical media channels to distribute the information, such as articles in the written press, coverage on Mauritanian television, leaflets, or discussion meetings. This could also be done on a decentral basis, e.g., in Nouadhibou.
- Mr DEPYPERE emphasised that to his knowledge, there are several international donors interested and ready to further support the FiTI implementation process in Mauritania, but such funding opportunities are not always utilised by the national authorities.
- Finally, Mr DEPYPERE thanked the FiTI International Secretariat for an excellent Baseline Assessment Report.

In summary, Mr DEPYPERE recommended to the FiTI International Board to recognise Mauritania's efforts with an overall designation of **'meaningful progress.'** This designation is recommended because Mauritania has made significant efforts and has achieved a more than reasonable degree of transparency. It has implemented important aspects of most criteria and has thus fulfilled the broader objective of such criteria. He added that with sustained effort, the country is well on its way to becoming compliant.

The FiTI Chair thanked Mr DEPYPERE for his excellent report and thoughtful recommendations.

The meeting continued without Mr DEPYPERE's attendance by the FiTI Chair emphasising that after reviewing the Independent Validator's report and comparing it with the International Secretariat's assessment, **only one minor disagreement was identified among the scores of the individual requirements.**

The Chair presented to the Board an overview table comparing the individual scores of the International Secretariat (included in its Baseline Assessment Report) and those of the Independent Validator (included in its Validation Report). The table showed that just one of the individual requirements (B.1.4 – The State of Fisheries Resources) reviewed by the Independent Validator was assigned a higher score than the score the FiTI International Secretariat gave.

The FiTI Chair recommended accepting the score proposed by the Independent Validator since the administrators have planned to update the stock assessments and intend to publish them.

Phase 1
Scoring by International
Secretariat

Date: 23 June 2022

Phase 2
Scoring by Independent
Validator

Date: 19 December 2022

B.1. ASSESSMENT OF 'TRANSPARENCY REQUIREMENTS'

B.1.1	PUBLIC REGISTRY OF NATIONAL FISHERIES LAWS, REGULATIONS AND OFFICIAL POLICY DOCUMENTS	Compliant	Compliant
B.1.2	FISHERIES TENURE ARRANGEMENTS	Compliant	Compliant
B.1.3	FOREIGN FISHING ACCESS AGREEMENTS	Meaningful progress	Meaningful progress
B.1.4	THE STATE OF THE FISHERIES RESOURCES	Meaningful progress	Compliant
B.1.5	LARGE-SCALE FISHERIES	Meaningful progress	Meaningful progress
B.1.6	SMALL-SCALE FISHERIES	Compliant	Compliant
B.1.7	POST-HARVEST SECTOR AND FISH TRADE	Meaningful progress	Meaningful progress
B.1.8	FISHERIES LAW ENFORCEMENT	Meaningful progress	Meaningful progress
B.1.9	LABOUR STANDARDS	Meaningful progress	Meaningful progress
B.1.10	FISHERIES SUBSIDIES	Meaningful progress	Meaningful progress
B.1.11	OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE	Meaningful progress	Meaningful progress
B.1.12	BENEFICIAL OWNERSHIP	Compliant	Compliant

B.2. 'ASSESSMENT' 'PROCEDURAL REQUIREMENTS FOR FITI REPORTS'

B.2.1	REPORTING REQUIREMENTS	Compliant	Compliant
B.2.2	REPORTING DEADLINES AND PERIODS	Compliant	Compliant
B.2.3	REPORTING PROCESS	Compliant	Compliant
B.2.4	REPORT DISSEMINATION AND PUBLIC DEBATE	Meaningful progress	Meaningful progress

B.3. ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS FOR 'NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK'

B.3.1	ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION	Compliant	Compliant
B.3.2	GOVERNANCE AND SUPPORT	Meaningful progress	Meaningful progress
B.3.3	MULTI-STAKEHOLDER OVERSIGHT	Compliant	Compliant
B.3.4	ANNUAL WORKPLAN	Inadequate progress	Inadequate progress
B.3.5	IMPACT REPORT	Not applicable	Not applicable

After a brief discussion, the participating Board Members reached the following decisions by consensus:¹⁴

Decision [BM-20_2023_D-01]:

The International Board approved the individual scores and the overall compliance designation of 'meaningful progress' for Mauritania, as recommended by the Independent Validator.

¹⁴ There was one apparent conflict of interest for this Board decision: Mr Ahmed SENHOURY. Ahmed is not only a national of Mauritania, but his organisation – the Regional Partnership for Coastal and Marine Conservation (PRCM) – has been deeply involved in the FiTI implementation process in Mauritania, including financing the country's first two FiTI Reports. Consequently, Ahmed was asked to recuse himself from this particular decision-making procedure.

To conclude Mauritania's first validation process, a Board Committee needs to be established to draft and approve the final Compliance Statement, which will be made publicly available afterward.

The participating Board Members reached the following decisions by consensus:

Decision [BM-20_2023_D-02]:

The International Board approved that the FiTI Chair can invite Board Members to join a Board Validation Committee for Mauritania, and that the FiTI Chair facilitates such a Committee to work on and approve a Compliance Statement.

The ED stated that as Mauritania's first overall validation outcome is less than 'complaint' – but no breaches of the FiTI Principles and the spirit of the initiative were found – the FiTI International Board must apply the following consequences of non-compliance to Mauritania, in accordance with section E.2.3 of the FiTI Standard:

[Outcome of first validation is] *Meaningful progress: The country will remain a FiTI Candidate country and be requested to undertake corrective actions until the second validation within the timeframe set forth by the International Board.*

If the country achieves:

- *Compliant progress in the assessment of overall compliance in the second validation, the country will become a 'FiTI Compliant country'.*
- *Meaningful progress in the assessment of overall compliance in the second validation, the country will be suspended and requested to undertake corrective actions until the third validation within the timeframe set forth by the FiTI International Board (E.1.1). When the overall outcome of the country's third validation is less than 'compliant', the country will be delisted.*
- *Inadequate progress or no progress in the assessment of overall compliance in the second validation, the country will be delisted.*

The FiTI International Board requested that the FiTI International Secretariat and Mauritania's National MSG will actively disseminate the outcomes of the validation process to the public so that the findings and recommendations of the validation process can contribute to public debates. Furthermore, the FiTI International Secretariat and/or FiTI Chair was tasked to schedule a meeting with Mauritania's National MSG to discuss the Board's Compliance Statement, corrective actions, and future steps.


3. Candidate application of Cabo Verde

The FiTI Chair informed all participants that she received the candidate applications from the government of **Cabo Verde** (on 3 January 2023), informing her that the country has completed the six sign-up requirements (as stated in section A of the FiTI Standard), and now wishes to be recognised as a FiTI Candidate Country.¹⁵

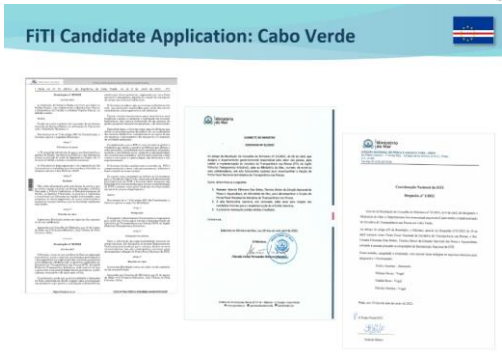
The FiTI Chair asked the ED to provide a summary of activities undertaken by stakeholders in Cabo Verde to comply with the initial sign-up requirements. The ED outlined that the application received complies with section A of the FiTI Standard. He also highlighted several activities undertaken by the FiTI International Secretariat, the FiTI Lead Ministry (and its National Lead), and other stakeholders in the country, particularly the formation of the country's National MSG.




FiTI sign-up requirements	Status	Madagascar
Public commitment	A.1	12 February 2020, conveyed via an official letter sent by Dr Paulo Lima Veigo, former Minister for Maritime Economy
Enabling Environment for Stakeholder Participation	A.2	
FiTI Lead Ministry	A.3	Ministry of the Sea
FiTI National Lead	A.4	Ms Iolanda Brites
FiTI National Multi-Stakeholder Group	A.4	15 members, equally distributed among representatives from Cabo Verde's government, business and civil society
FiTI National Secretariat	A.5	Located within the National Directorate of Fisheries Lead: Emílio Sanches (+ 2 support staff)
Workplan	A.6	Approved by the National Multi-Stakeholder Group (2023)



Public sector	Business sector *	Civil society sector
National Directorate of Fisheries and Aquaculture (DINPA)	Association of the Fishermen of Salamina	BIOCOPSA
National Institute of Statistics (INE)	Cabo Verde Fishing Owners Association (APFSC)	LANTUNA
National Environment Directorate (JND)	Cabo Verde Fishing Owners Association (APFSC)	Land and Sea Association
National Association of Municipalities of Cabo Verde	Freemom	Association for the Defence of the Environment and Development (ADCE)
Maritime and Port Institute	Association of Fishermen and Fishmongers of Pedro Bafelo	Escola do Mar (Emar)





Does the FiTI International Board approve the candidate application of Cabo Verde and recognise it as an official FiTI Candidate country?

After listening to the ED's presentation, the Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

Decision [BM-20_2023_D-03]:

The International Board approved the candidate application of Cabo Verde (received on 3 January 2023) and recognised it as an official FiTI Candidate Country.

¹⁵ In accordance with Guidance Note # 1 'Implementing the sign-up steps', Cabo Verde complied with the requirement to submit its Candidate Application at least one week before an FiTI International Board meeting.

The FiTI Chair concluded this session by expressing her delight with this decision, making Cabo Verde the fifth country to reach the important milestone of a FiTI Candidate Country.

4. 2023 Workplan of the FiTI International Secretariat

The Chair asked the ED to present the key parameters of the 2023 Workplan of the FiTI International Secretariat. The ED noted that the purpose of this annual workplan is to document the Secretariat's pursued objectives, core activities, and anticipated financial budget to advance transparency in marine fisheries management globally for the period 01 January until 31 December 2023, based on a realistic resources framework.

Furthermore, the workplan serves as a **planning tool** for the Secretariat to ensure the efficient use of resources to achieve its objectives. The workplan also serves as an **accountability tool** for the FiTI International Board, through which it can approve the Secretariat's priorities, activities, and budgets, as well as monitor the Secretariat's performance against performance indicators.

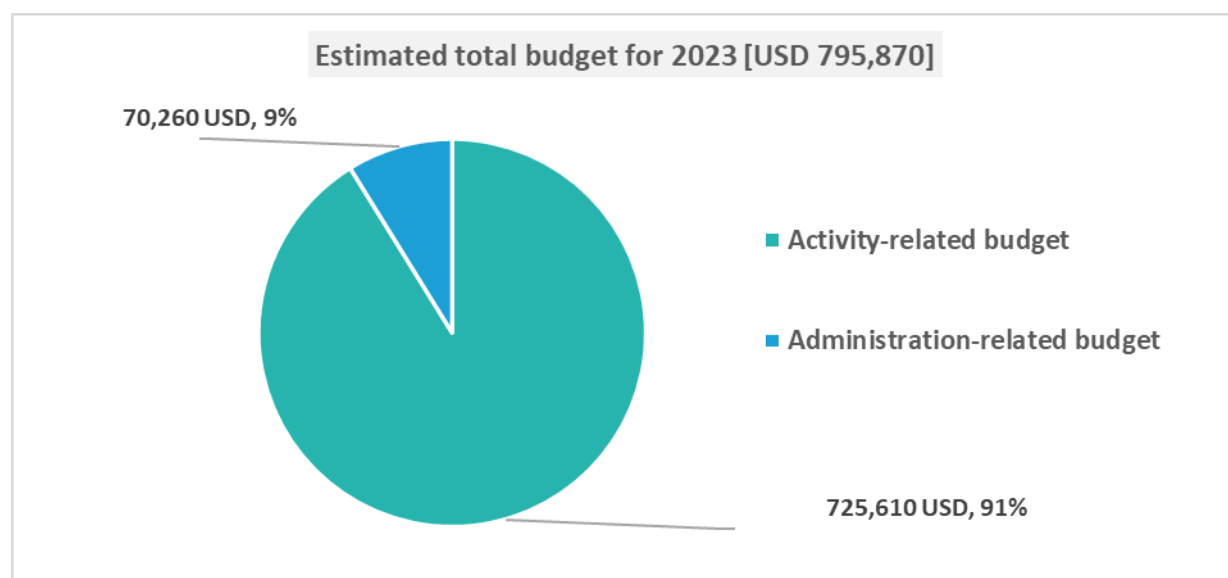
Based on this proposed workplan, the FiTI International Secretariat plans to pursue **three objectives [O]** with a total number of **11 target areas [T]** in 2023:



In pursuing these objectives, the International Secretariat strives to accomplish the following highlights within the calendar year 2023:

- Obtain public commitments from 2x new governments;
- Obtain candidate applications from 2x National Multi-Stakeholder Groups;
- Support the release of 6x FiTI Reports;
- Release 4x TAKING STOCK assessment reports;
- Publish 3x tBriefs;
- Establish a 'Community of Practice' among African Small Island Developing States;
- Launch an updated version of the FiTI Standard;
- Raise up to USD 3.5 million in additional activity-related funding.

The ED highlighted that to pursue these objectives and target areas, an annual budget of USD 795,870 is required to cover activity-related and administration-related activities.¹⁶



The ED highlighted that 80% of the required activity-related budget and over 90% of the administration-related budget for 2023 have already been secured.

Additional information was provided to the International Board regarding the detailed breakdown of these objectives and target areas into concrete activities, deliverables, and cost allocations.

¹⁶ The administration-related budget covers general and administrative costs, which are not covered by specific activities (e.g. grants). This includes e.g. accounting and auditing costs, insurances, rent, office supplies.

The ED gave a particular focus to the planned **update of the FiTI Standard**. Almost six years after its initial launch, the FiTI Standard is widely seen as the only internationally recognised framework that defines what information on fisheries management should be published online by national authorities. Since then (April 2017), the FiTI Standard has shown to be an effective framework for improving the availability and credibility of fisheries information. This has been demonstrated by, inter alia, the first FiTI Reports published by the National Multi-Stakeholder Groups (MSGs) of Seychelles and Mauritania, various online transparency assessments conducted by the Secretariat¹⁷, as well as lessons learned from the first two country validations (i.e., Seychelles and Mauritania).

At the same time, these activities and new developments in global marine fisheries governance are providing several improvement opportunities, which need to be addressed to ensure that the FiTI Standard remains widely accepted. This includes several procedural and transparency-related aspects, such as:

- Improving the current six **sign-up step requirements** (as outlined in section A of the FiTI Standard);
- Ensuring that the recently released **Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies** by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) is included in the FiTI Standard;
- Including stakeholder expectations and regulatory advancements regarding **beneficial ownership transparency** in the FiTI Standard;
- Strengthening the aspect of transparency leading to **participatory governance** within the enabling environment required under the FiTI Standard¹⁸; and
- Identifying **new thematic areas** to include in the Standard, if applicable.

It is therefore anticipated to review and update the FiTI Standard throughout 2023 to publish a FiTI Standard 2.0 version by the end of the year/early next year.

Finally, several important objectives and ideas were presented, which the FiTI International Secretariat wishes to pursue in the near future, but for which funding is currently not available. This includes, amongst others, the need to establish a data analytics department to provide further data insights and quality assurances to National Multi-Stakeholder Groups (MSG). Such a new department would not only be able to analyse information published through FiTI Reports to present National MSGs and other relevant stakeholders with suggestions for public debates or further analysis. It could also help to validate the published information further, for example, by cross-referencing the nationally-published

¹⁷ FiTI's TAKING STOCK transparency assessments evaluate the level of information that national authorities publish on government websites regarding the country's marine fisheries sector: <https://www.fiti.global/taking-stock>

¹⁸ This may also include outcomes from the current Working Group 'Exit Strategy'.

information with regional or international data sets (such as IUU ‘blacklists’ or FAO’s Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels).

The FiTI Chair thanked the ED and the International Secretariat for preparing the workplan, and expressed her expectations that these objectives and target areas will again contribute to the overall growth and sustainability of the initiative.

Afterward, Members and observers of the FiTI International Board provided their feedback on the workplan:

- The FiTI Chair emphasised that this workplan displays an annual, operational plan for the Secretariat (based on a scope of work that is primarily defined by existing grant obligations) and not a long-term strategy about the envisioned growth and impact of the FiTI.
- The FiTI Chair also mentioned that as long as the funding of the FiTI relies predominantly on grant-based funding, its capacity to react to new (unforeseen) promising or strategic opportunities remains limited. Therefore, particular attention and effort must be placed on raising unrestricted institutional funding.
- Several participants cautioned on the continuous high workload of the FiTI International Secretariat, which continues to deliver significant progress despite a small team of just around 7 FTEs (full-time equivalents). The aspect of ‘work-life balance’ should therefore be closely monitored.
- Several participants proposed that the FiTI supports local capacity-building activities (e.g., for civil society organisations and small-scale fishing associations), ensuring that they can either advocate governments to join the FiTI or contribute meaningfully to national FiTI implementation processes and policy discussion. Annie TOURETTE and Theo CHIVIRU volunteered to discuss further funding options with the FiTI International Secretariat.

All voting Board Members present approved the workplan reaching a consensus, while one Board Member abstained (Hugh GOVAN):

Decision [BM-20_2023_D-04]:

The FiTI International approved the 2023 Workplan of the FiTI International Secretariat, including the overall budget of USD 795,870 and the proposed allocation into an activity-related and administration-related budget.

5. Board Committees and Working Groups

The final agenda item for this meeting – the identification of members to participate in the Editorial Committee for the FiTI tBrief series and the upcoming Working Group ‘FiTI Standard 2.0’ – could not be discussed during this Board meeting for lack of time.

Nevertheless, the Board Members made the following decision by consensus:

Decision [BM-20_2023_D-05]:

The FiTI International approved that the FiTI Chair reaches out to Board Members to request their participation in the Working Group ‘FiTI Standard 2.0’ and designate a three members Editorial Committee of the FiTI tBrief series.

6. Closing

The 20th International Board Meeting Ended

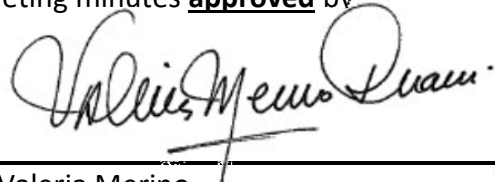
Meeting minutes **provided** by:



Mr Sven Bielmann

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

Andres ARENS	[Voting power for this meeting: 1.5 votes]
Roy CLARISSE	[Voting power for this meeting: 1.5 votes]
Joacim JOHANNESON	[Voting power for this meeting: 3.0 votes] ¹⁹

Excused:

Annika MACKENSEN

Stakeholder group: Business sector

Keith ANDRE	[Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]
Hugh GOVAN	[Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]
Tony LAZAZZARA	[Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]
Dawda Foday SAINE	[Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]
Alfredo SFEIR	[Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]

Stakeholder group: Social sector

Maisie PIGEON	[Voting power for this meeting: 2.0 votes]
Ahmed SENHOURY	[Voting power for this meeting: 2.0 votes]
Annie TOURETTE	[Voting power for this meeting: 2.0 votes]

Observers

Marcio CASTRO DE SOUZA, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
Theophilous CHIVIRU, Open Government Partnership (OGP)

¹⁹ Annika MACKENSEN assigned her voting power (1.5 votes) to Joacim JOHANNESON as her proxy in an email to the FiTI International Secretariat on 13 February 2023.

Excused:

Julien MILLION, The World Bank Group

FiTI International Secretariat

Sven BIERMANN

Guests

Stefaan DEYPERE, Independent Validator for Mauritania (only partially)

APPENDIX II: Additional clarifications for validation scoring

Given the comprehensibility of the FiTI Standard, each of the 21 validation *requirements* is further broken down into unique and assessable validation *indicators*. For example, the transparency requirement ‘Foreign Fishing Access Agreements’ includes three validation indicators, as defined in the FiTI Standard.

3) Foreign Fishing Access Agreements

The objective of this requirement is to ensure public access to all contractual arrangements that the country has entered into with any foreign party. Transparency around access agreements provides the basis for public awareness of the rights enjoyed and responsibilities assumed by foreign fishing vessels operating in the country’s marine jurisdictional waters, as well as national-flagged fishing vessels operating in the waters of third countries.²⁶

ID	Validation indicator	Scoring
B.1.3_1	The implementing country must publish the contracts of all foreign fishing access agreements, including their associated protocol(s). ²⁷	
B.1.3_2	The implementing country must publish studies or reports undertaken by national authorities or foreign parties to an agreement providing evaluation or oversight of the agreement, if available.	
B.1.3_3	The implementing country must publish documentation derived from any national stakeholder consultation undertaken with respect to the preparation, negotiation or monitoring of the agreements, if available.	

The concept of ‘best available’ information, as outlined in Guidance Note #2, must be addressed for this transparency requirement, relating to assessments of the impact of these agreements.

In order to determine the level of compliance for each validation requirement (e.g. Foreign Fishing Access Agreements), a country’s performance is assessed and scored on the level of validation indicators. This allows for a more granular and objective assessment.

The scoring of each of the validation indicators must follow the same compliance designations as used for determining a country’s overall level of compliance. In order to determine the compliance designation for each validation requirement, each validation indicator is assigned a point, based on its compliance designation (as shown below):

Compliance designations	Description	Points
Compliant	Validation demonstrates that all aspects of the requirement have been implemented and that the broader objective of the requirement has been fulfilled.	3
Meaningful progress	Validation demonstrates that significant aspects of the requirement have been implemented and that the broader objective of the requirement has been fulfilled.	2
Inadequate progress	Validation demonstrates that significant aspects of the requirement have not been implemented and that the broader objective of the requirement has not been fulfilled.	1
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.	0
Not collated	Validation demonstrates that information for this requirement has not been collected or compiled by national authorities at all.	N/A
Not applicable	Validation demonstrates that this requirement is not applicable in the country.	N/A

Afterwards, an average score is calculated, which determines the validation requirement's compliance designation (as shown below):

Compliance designation	Calculated score range
Compliant	≥ 2.5
Meaningful progress	< 2.5 to ≥ 1.5
Inadequate progress	< 1.5 to ≥ 0.5
No progress	< 0.5
Not applicable/Not collated ¹⁸	N/A

In the case of **Mauritania**, for example, the Secretariat determined that the compliance designation for validation requirement 'B.1.3 Foreign Fishing Access Agreements' should be 'meaningful progress', based on the following:

ID	Validation indicator	Scoring
B.1.3_1	The implementing country must publish the contracts of all foreign fishing access agreements, including their associated protocol(s). ³⁴	Compliant [3]
B.1.3_2	The implementing country must publish studies or reports undertaken by national authorities or foreign parties to an agreement providing evaluation or oversight of the agreement, if available.	Meaningful progress [2]
B.1.3_3	The implementing country must publish documentation derived from any national stakeholder consultation undertaken with respect to the preparation, negotiation or monitoring of the agreements, if available.	Inadequate progress [1]
		Meaningful progress [Avg. 2.0]

The ultimate designation determined for each validation *requirement* is documented in a Validation Scorecard. Numerical scores are not included in this scorecard.

For more information on the assessment and scoring of validation requirements, please refer to [FiTI's Guidance Note #3: Validating countries](#).