



Fisheries
Transparency
Initiative

9th meeting of the FiTI International Board

3 April 2020, Conference Call

Meeting Minutes

ID: BM-09_2020_MM

Provided by: FiTI International Secretariat

Date: 27.05.2020

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| OUTCOMES OF MEETING | 3 |
| 1. WELCOME AND ADMINISTRATION | 3 |
| 2. UPDATE FROM THE FiTI INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT | 4 |
| 3. FiTI IN TIMES OF COVID-19..... | 11 |
| 4. NEXT BOARD MEETING(S) & “TBRIEF” EDITORIAL COMMITTEE | 12 |
| 5. CLOSING | 14 |
| APPENDIX I: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS..... | 15 |
| APPENDIX III: COUNTRY UPDATES | 17 |

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| Date | 03 April 2020 |
| Time | 4.00 p.m. – 5.45 p.m. (Seychelles time) |
| Venue | Conference Call (Skype for Business) |
| Hosted by | |
| Input(s) | <p>Certificate of registration of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative as an association, as of 24 January 2020 (<i>only available in English</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Registered constitution for the association “Fisheries Transparency Initiative”, as of 23 January 2020 (<i>only available in English</i>) ▪ Resolution for the Fisheries Transparency Initiative, as of 23 January 2020 (<i>only available in English</i>) |

Outcomes of meeting

1. Welcome and Administration

The new Chair of the FiTI International Board, Valeria MERINO, opened the meeting by welcoming the Board Members to the 9th meeting of the Board. As introductory remarks, Valeria Merino emphasised again how honoured she is by this opportunity and expressed her sincere thanks to the International Board and also to her predecessor, Peter Eigen. She further highlighted that the sustainability of our fisheries is an existential issue for humanity and the planet, in particular in these challenging times and she is very much looking forward to work with all stakeholders to accelerate the growth of the initiative and make the FiTI the preeminent global platform for the publication of baseline national fisheries data.

No apologies were noted prior to the meeting; no proxies were assigned.

The Chair also informed the members that Maria José Cornax (Civil Society Group) resigned from the FiTI International Board in January 2020, as she took over a new responsibility at the European Fisheries Control Agency. As it was decided in the 7th Board meeting [BM-07_2019_D-03] that the size of the International Board will be reduced from 18 members to 12 members, her seat will not be filled.

After all members joined the call, the Chair identified that a Quorum was not reached, as not enough members (incl. proxies) of the Board attended the call.¹

| Current total size of Board: | 2/3 of total Board: | Actual attendance ² : | At least two Board Members per stakeholder group |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| 13 | 8,67 | 5 | No |

The Chair outlined that this situation typically calls for the postponement of a Board meeting. However, she recommended to the attending Board Members that provisional decisions should be made during this call and that all Board Members are able to object to the decisions recorded in these meeting minutes afterwards. The Board agreed to this procedure.

The Board also agreed on the Agenda.

¹ “Two-thirds of the total number of Board Members (including proxies), with at least two Board Members from each stakeholder group, forms a quorum.” Constitution of the association of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (as of 23 January 2020), Article 14 (8).

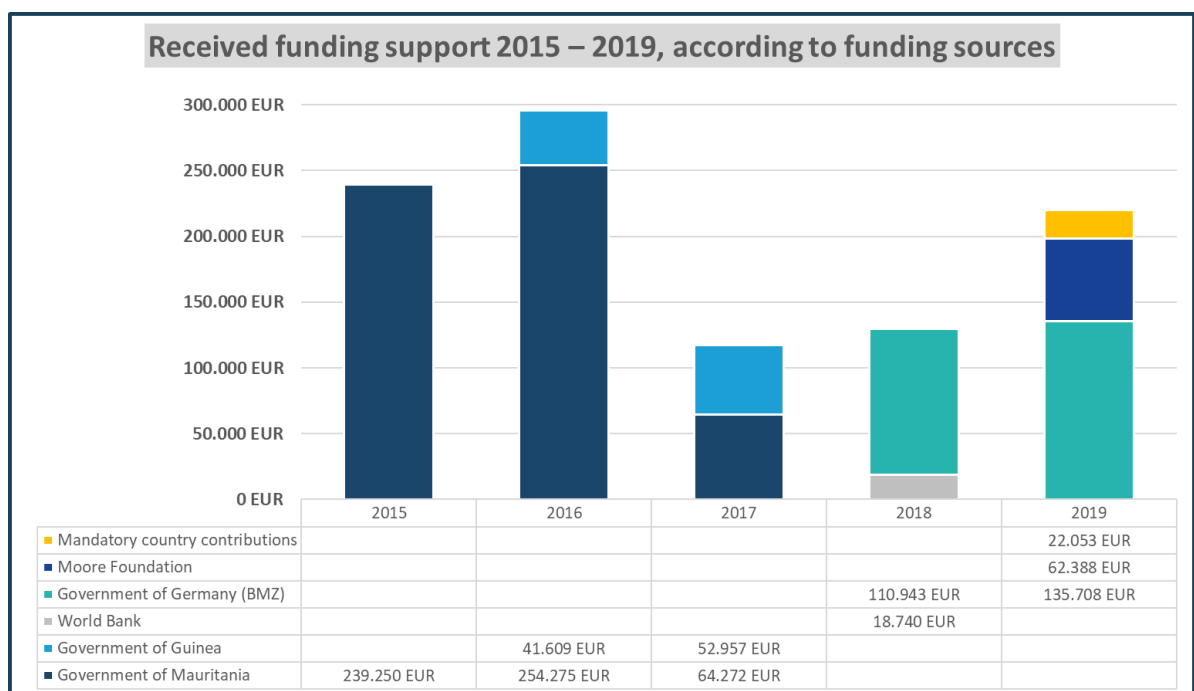
² Including proxy votes.

2. Update from the FiTI International Secretariat

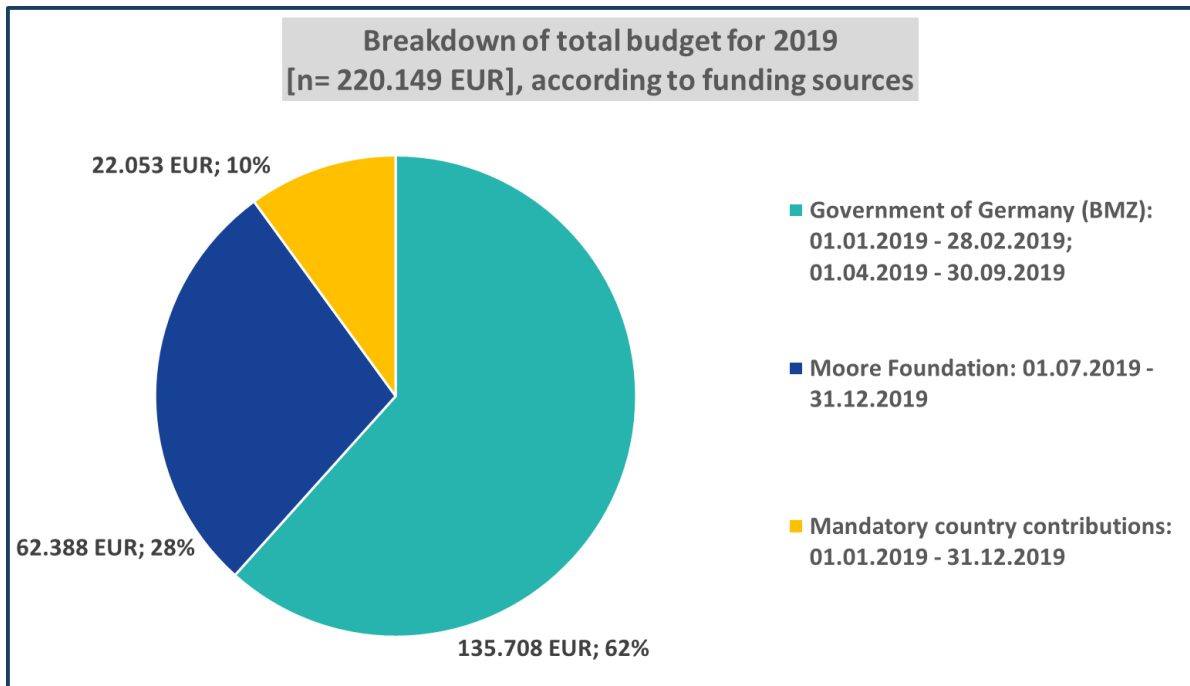
The Chair invited the International Secretariat to provide a brief update on the current funding situation (2019 and 2020), the transition of International Secretariat from Germany to Seychelles, and an update on country activities.

Funding situation (2019 and 2020)

As a starting point, Sven BIERMANN provided a quick overview of the funding received so far (2015-2019) for the FiTI International Secretariat:



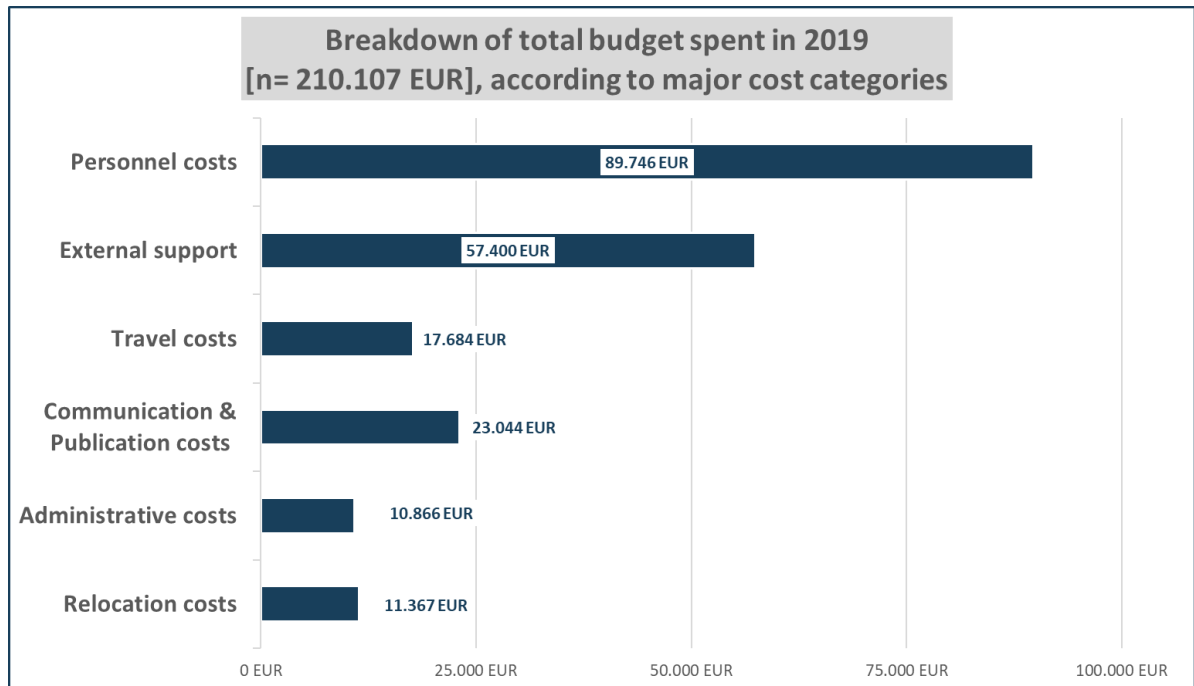
Sven highlighted that 2019 was the first fully funded calendar year for the FiTI International Secretariat since 2016, as there was no external funding for the period between May 2017 and September 2018. The funding for 2019, a total of 220.149 EUR came from the following three donor sources:



The budget for 2019 was still fully administered by the previous fiscal host of the FiTI, the non-profit organisation HUMBOLDT-VIADRINA Governance Platform gGmbH. Since March 2020, the newly established association of the FiTI administers all donor-related aspects, except for the current funding from the Moore Foundation, which will continue to be formally administered by the HUMBOLDT-VIADRINA. An allowance to transfer funds from the HUMBOLDT-VIADRINA (as the grant recipient) to the association in the Seychelles has been obtained from the Moore Foundation.

Sven further noted that the mandatory financial contributions for 2019 only included the payment from the Seychelles (25.000 USD); Mauritania's mandatory contribution for 2019 (20.000 USD) is still pending.

Sven continued presenting an overall breakdown of the 2019 budget according to major cost categories:

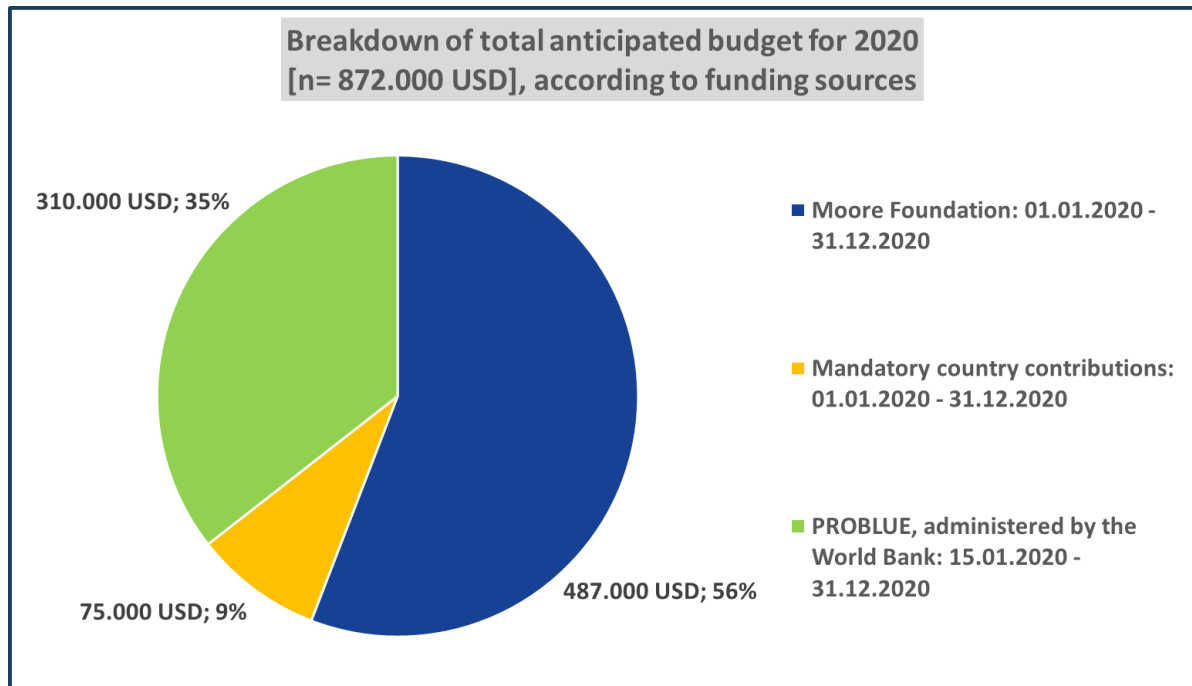


- Sven remarked that the difference of the total available budget for 2019 (220.149 EUR) and the total spent budget (210.107 EUR) is due to the facts that some relocation costs were less than expected (e.g. moving expenses), and that a number of costs materialised only in 2020. Therefore, the remaining budget of 10.042 EUR is carried forward into 2020.

Also, the cost category “External support” does not only include external consultants, but also the costs for the FiTI Regional Coordinator in West Africa as well as the FiTI Technical Advisor. Both are working for the FiTI International Secretariat based on long-term consulting contracts, and not on employment contracts.

For 2020, as an opening remark, Sven noted that for this year no operational workplan has been approved by the FiTI International Board, due to the relocation activities of the Secretariat. The International Secretariat will provide a regular annual workplan for 2021 and present it to the International Board on time for approval. Sven stated that the work plan for this year is primarily defined by the various grant agreements.

As of today, the total anticipated budget for 2020 is approx. 872,000 USD, broken down into three major funding sources:

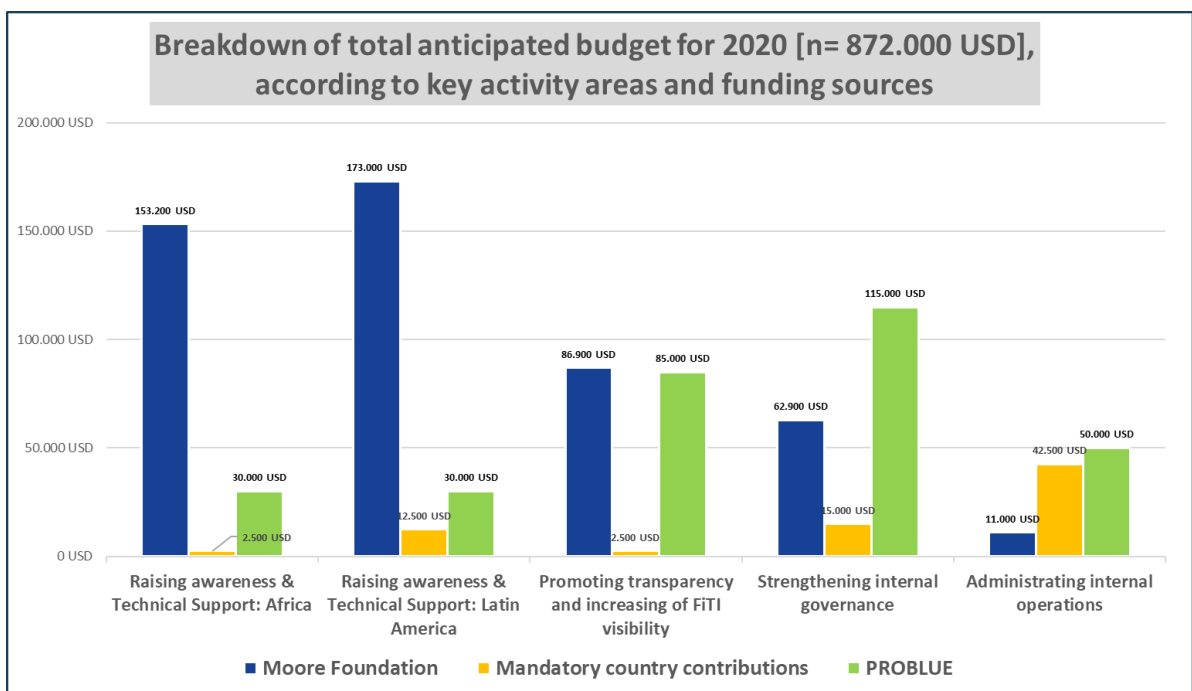
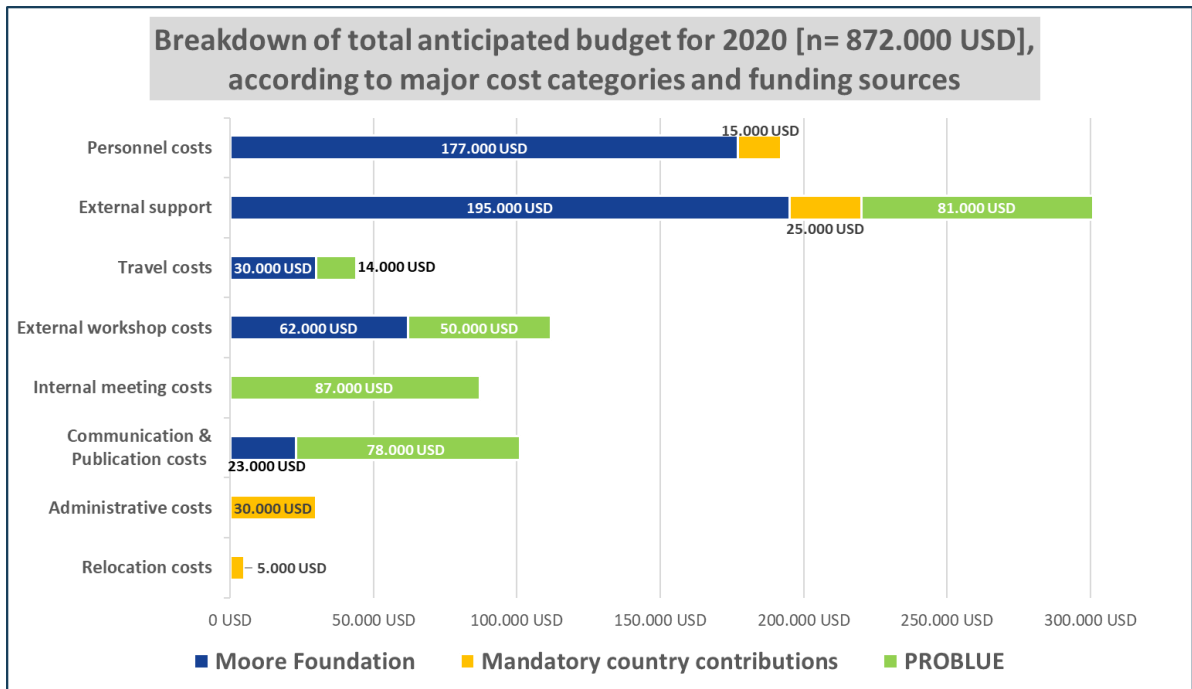


Please note the change in lead currency (from EUR to USD)

Sven provided the following explanatory remarks on the anticipated budget for 2020:

- The support from the *Moore Foundation* is already secured by a grant agreement, see also <https://www.moore.org/grant-detail?grantId=GBMF8722>.
- The anticipated country contributions including the following: *Seychelles* (50.000 USD, but reduced by 50% due to classification as SIDS), *Mauritania* (20.000 USD), *Senegal* (20.000 USD) and *Cabo Verde* (20.000 USD, but reduced by 50% due to classification as SIDS).
- The FiTI is able to conduct a number of activities through the financial support of the *Multi-Donor Trust Fund PROBLUE*. This support is secured based on an official Grant Funding Request. All PROBLUE-funded activities will be administered by the World Bank; therefore, FiTI has to request procurement and disbursement. No financial transfer takes place between PROBLUE and FiTI. This means that this amount will not be shown in the financial statements of the association. Also, according to PROBLUE regulations, the support for activities can only cover material costs (e.g. travel, meetings, consultants), but no staff costs.

Sven provided an overview of the anticipated breakdown of the 2020 budget according to *cost categories and activities*. He also remarked that the budget does currently not reflect any changes to the global COVID-19 pandemic.



Transition of International Secretariat from Germany to Seychelles

Sven informed the International Board that the transition of the International Secretariat from Germany to the Seychelles has been almost completed and the Secretariat is now fully operational.

- The *legal registration* of the FiTI as an association under Seychelles law has been completed by 24 January 2020. The registration number is A431648. As part of the actual registration, the constitution and the first resolution document were approved by the Seychelles Registrars' office. The FiTI Chair remarked that she worked in closed collaboration with the FiTI International Secretariat to establish a legal basis for the FiTI. Nevertheless, the International Board will be asked to confirm in particular the first resolution, e.g. through a Board Circular.
- The Secretariat obtained the necessary *fiscal and legal permits*, including an initial 2-year work permit for the Executive Director, as well as tax and national pension fund registrations, and made relevant *operational arrangements*, such as opening of bank accounts in SCR, EUR and USD (at Mauritius Commercial Bank), engagement of an accountant for monthly payroll (Baker Tilly) and the engagement of a lawyer regarding questions of employment laws and liability regulations.
- Beginning of February 2020, the International Secretariat also moved into its new designated *location* in Providence, Mahé³. The Secretariat occupies two rooms for a total of 5 people, and the rooms are provided free of charge by the Blue Economy Department of the Seychelles. All other administration costs, such as internet charges and office supplies are born by the Secretariat.
- The only remaining item to be resolved is the approval of an official *Headquarters' Agreement* between the government of Seychelles and the FiTI. The FiTI is seeking to obtain tax privileges for foreign employees and consultants in order to ease pressure on its current budget and ensure cost coverage through donor funding (e.g. withholding tax). This process has been significantly delayed by the current COVID-19 crisis, and it is currently expected that this matter will not be addressed before end of May by the Seychelles authorities.
- As of today, the *FiTI International Secretariat* comprises of 5 full-time and 1 part-time staff:
 - Executive Director: Sven BIERMANN (full-time, based in Seychelles)

³ New address of FiTI International Secretariat: Fisheries Transparency Initiative, Highway Complex Building, PO Box 6079, Providence, Mahé/Seychelles

- Regional Coordinator West Africa: Mansor NDOUR (full-time, based in Senegal)
- Regional Coordinator Latin America: Martin ZAPATA (full-time, based in Bolivia)
- Membership Coordinator: Veronica BRISTOL (full-time, based in Seychelles)
- Administrative Assistant: Christina FONDAMIERE (full-time, based in Seychelles)
- Technical Advisor: André STANDING (part-time, based in Kenya)

Mid of April, a part-time procurement officer for the World Bank will start with the Secretariat in the Seychelles (Michele Andre, based in Seychelles). Furthermore, the Secretariat is still recruiting a full-time Public Relations Coordinator, ideally be based in the Seychelles.

- Sven expressed his sincere gratitude to Board Member *Philippe MICHAUD*, who supported this relocation process tirelessly and contributed significantly to a very smooth transition.

Country updates

Seychelles

The Candidate Application of Seychelles was official approved by a Board Circular #03 on 30 March 2020 [ID BC-03_2020_D-01]. Seychelles also initiated the reporting process already, with a kick-off National MSG meeting already scheduled. Unfortunately, the meeting had to be postponed due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. It is however still expected that Seychelles will provide its first FiTI Report by October 2020. Sven outlined that a colleague from Transparency International Seychelles has recently been appointed the Chair of the Seychelles Fishing Authority (SFA). Also, Sven outlined the positive impacts of the Seychelles linking their FiTI activities with their wider activities of the Open Government Partnership. The Secretariat already sees positive indications that other countries will follow the Seychelles example.

Mauritania

Sven reminded the Board again that Mauritania was due end of December 2019 to submit its first FiTI Report. However, Mauritania did not provide this report and also submitted the extension request for more time too late. Therefore, in accordance with the FiTI Standard, the country is now being referred to as suspended and must deliver this first report by 30 September 2020. If Mauritania fails to meet this deadline again, the FiTI Standard foresees

a delisting of the country. Sven further outlined that a number of stakeholders have already inquired about the current status of the country.

According to discussions between the International Secretariat and Mauritania's FiTI National Lead, Mohamed Salem NANY, who is also a member of the FiTI International Board, Salem is currently seeking to increase the political leverage for the FiTI in Mauritania, by elevating the responsibility of the FiTI from the current Ministry of Economy and Industry to the Prime Minister's office, where the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) for Mauritania is also located. This could have a long-term positive effect for the FiTI in Mauritania.

Yet, at the same time Sven outlined that he strongly emphasised (in verbal and written form) that the timeline for report submissions must be adhered to by Mauritania. In fact, Sven reminded the Board that Mauritania has to provide two reports within 2020: its first FiTI Report for 2019 (containing data from 2018) and its second report for 2020 (containing data from 2019). With support from the International Secretariat, the organisation "Regional Partnership for Coastal and Marine Conservation (PRCM)" has volunteered to fund the first reporting process and also provide funding for an operational support consultant. Discussions are currently under way between PRCM, the Ministry of Economy and Industry as well as the Ministry of Fisheries to start this process soon.

Due to the fact that a few Board Members had to leave the call early, it was agreed that the country update for *Senegal*, *Cabo Verde* and *Latin America* will not be discussed during this call, but that the status will be part of these meeting minutes (for more information, please refer to Appendix III).

3. FiTI in times of COVID-19

The FiTI Chair noted that as an initiative that is based on stakeholder participation and collaboration, the global pandemic of the COVID-19 virus is not only impacting the FiTI's current operations (e.g. home office for its staff), but will also have an impact on envisioned timelines, outreach approaches, and donor targets. To name just one of many examples: the FiTI International Secretariat was invited to hold a seminar on the FiTI at the African Development Bank's headquarter in Abidjan/Ivory Coast, but the session is now postponed indefinitely.

Board Members and members of the FiTI International Secretariat shared their experiences and approaches to guide the FiTI through these challenging times, for example:

- Travel restrictions limit the International Secretariat in conducting country missions to raise awareness and motivation towards the FiTI. Also, National Multi-Stakeholder

Groups are unable to conduct meetings due to restrictions of group gatherings. Both aspects are currently mitigated by virtual meetings and increased bilateral discussions (via phone or online), but it is clear that the effectiveness of these distant discussions is lower than face-to-face meetings.

- The economic fallout from the pandemic could lead to many governments (and donor organisations) deciding that resources for voluntary good governance initiatives, such as the FiTI, should not be prioritised. It is difficult to know how extensive this will be; however, it is important for the FiTI to keep active with a range of countries during this period and ensure that it remains relevant to the process of the post-pandemic recovery. Sven mentioned that the FiTI International Secretariat is currently working on developing a scalable desktop assessment to analyse the public disclosure of fisheries information against the FiTI Standard.
- In the process of economic recovery, the FiTI needs to clearly communicate that transparency in the fisheries sector is needed more than ever to (re)build a resilient fisheries sector. This is because governments may respond to the crisis by recommitting to a number of unsustainable fishing practices, such as increasing subsidies, offering preferential regulations to fishing companies or increasing fishing authorisations (more licenses, more generous catch allocations etc.). Public information on these policy responses stemming from COVID-19 is likely to be of high interest and relevance to all stakeholder groups.
- As it was evident that the time was not sufficient during this call to discuss all aspects and ideas, the FiTI Chair proposed to conduct an informal brainstorming session amongst Board Members, dedicated to this topic. The Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

Decision [BM-09_2020_D-01]:

The Board agreed to conduct an informal brainstorming session on the implications of the COVID-19 crisis on the FiTI and sustainable fisheries management at the end of April. This meeting will not be classified as an official International Board meeting. The FiTI International Secretariat is tasked with providing the logistical information (e.g. dial-in information).

4. Next Board meeting(s) & “tbrief” Editorial Committee

The Chair asked Sven to present the final agenda points for this meeting. Sven informed the Members of the International Board that due to the financial support from the World

Bank's Multi Donor Trust Fund PROBLUE, the FiTI International Board is now able to conduct three face-to-face *meetings* between April 2020 and June 2021.

Considering the increasing outreach of FiTI and the number of governance-related aspects to be discussed by the Board, but at the same time taking note of the current travel restrictions, he proposed the following meeting schedule for 2020 to the Board:

- 10th Board meeting, Global Conference call, May/June
- 11th Board meeting, 2-day onsite meeting, September/October
- 12th Board meeting, Global conference call, November/December

Sven further outlined that an approval of this schedule implies that in the first half of 2021 (January to June) two on-site meetings have to be conducted, in order to utilize the current (non-transferrable) budget.

The Chair then asked the International Board whether the proposed schedule is approved. The Board members reached the following decision by consensus:

Decision [BM-09_2020_D-02]:

The Board approved the following tentative meeting schedule for 2020:

- **10th Board meeting, Global Conference call, to be scheduled for May/June**
- **11th Board meeting, 2-day onsite meeting, to be scheduled for September/October**
- **12th Board meeting, Global conference call, to be scheduled for November/December**

The Chair also asked the International Board whether a location should already be determined for the 11th Board meeting. There was consensus among all Board Members that the next onsite meeting should be held in a country that demonstrates significant commitment towards FiTI.

Decision [BM-09_2020_D-03]:

The Board approved that the next 2-day onsite meeting (scheduled for September/October 2020) will be held in West Africa, either in Senegal or Cabo Verde.

It was further highlighted that the two Board meetings for 2021 could be scheduled in a Latin American country as well as in Brussels/Belgium to intensify contacts with the European Commission.

Furthermore, Sven informed that the first *tBrief edition* ("Transparency in fisheries: Not as clear as it seems?") was sent to over 300 recipients and positive feedback and click rates were obtained.

In general, these briefings are written by the FiTI's Technical Advisor Dr. André STANDING (but published under FiTI) in close collaboration with the International Secretariat. The Board has decided in its September meeting that a 3-person Editorial Committee will be setup by Members of the International Board. Due to the resignation of Ms. Maria José CORNAX as a Board member, her vacant position in the Board's Editorial Committee needs to be filled now by a member from the Civil Society stakeholder group. Furthermore, the seat for the Business stakeholder group remains also vacant.

As no Board Member for the business stakeholder group was presented at this meeting, the Chair asked the participating members from the Civil Society group to participate in the Editorial Committee. Mr. Eduardo ROLON volunteered for this position, for which the FiTI Chair thanked him sincerely.

Decision [BM-09_2020_D-04]:

The Board appointed Mr. Eduardo ROLON to serve on the Editorial Committee until June 2021 as a representative for the civil society stakeholder group.

5. Closing

The Chair thanked the Members of the Board for their participation in the 9th meeting.

9th International Board Meeting ended

APPENDIX I: List of Participants

Chair

Valeria MERINO

Stakeholder Group of Governments

Ylva MATTSSON

Philippe MICHAUD

Mamadou GOUDIABY (represented by M. Cherif Sambou, FiTI interim focal point)

Not excused

Mohamed Salem NANY

Stakeholder Group of Business

Not excused:

Alexander BIRYUKOV

Francisco LEOTTE

Gaoussou GUEYE

Marthin HADIWINATA

Stakeholder Group of Civil Society

Sebastián LOSADA

Eduardo ROLÓN (joined later)

Not excused:

Alfred SCHUMM

Francisco MARI

Nedwa NECH

Observers

None

FiTI International Secretariat

Sven BIERMANN

Veronica BRISTOL

Christina FONDAMIÈRE

Mansor NDOUR

Martin ZAPATA

Guests

None

APPENDIX II: Country updates

Senegal

During the past months, consultations have further increased stakeholders' interest in FiTI, especially the private sector and the public administration. Mansor NDOUR, Regional Coordinator for West Africa, highlighted a few examples:

- A Winrock International-implemented project, funded by USAID, is now advocating for FiTI and also showing willingness to support certain implementing activities.
- In March, the National Advocacy Coalition for Fisheries Transparency sent a letter to the President of the Republic, Macky Sall, asking him to fulfil his commitment and to issue necessary decrees for the FiTI.
- The Artisanal Fisheries Women Network also sent a letter asking the President's wife to support the FiTI implementation in Senegal.
- The Minister of Fisheries and the Maritime Economy (MPEM) appointed an interim FiTI Focal. An information note was recently sent to the Minister of Fisheries and highlighted the need of decrees for the FiTI. This note was sent by Dr. Goudiaby whom Mansor thanked for his support and commitment.

Mansor also engaged in various discussions with the Open Government Partnership (OGP). He outlined that the Director of Good Governance under the Ministry of Justice expressed sincere commitment to register "The Senegal candidate application and the implementation of the FiTI Standard " in the Senegal Action Plan for the OGP.

Cabo Verde

Sven briefly highlighted again the public commitment from the government of Cape Verde to implement the FiTI. An initial stakeholder workshop has been scheduled for May, but will be postponed due to the current travel restrictions. No new date has been set yet.

Latin America (Mexico, Ecuador, Peru)

Martin ZAPATA, Regional Coordinator for Latin America, summarised the current activities in Latin America as follows: the outreach activities in Latin America started with a preliminary assessment of the prospects and opportunities for a number of countries. Three main aspects have led the Secretariat to choose target countries: the importance of the country's marine fisheries sector, existing opportunities and contacts, and prospects for implementation,

especially in regard to transparency and open government policies. Based on this evaluation, the Secretariat, in close collaboration with the FiTI Chair, decided to start activities in Peru, Ecuador and Mexico.

For *Ecuador* and *Peru*, a number of preparatory activities were carried out during January until mid-February, in particular the identification of relevant stakeholders, institutional frameworks and policies on transparency and open government. During February, together with the Chair of the International Board, Martin conducted a one-week mission to both countries. More than 20 meetings with 40 actors from government, civil society and private sector were held. The main outcomes of this mission were:

- An identification of stakeholders and organizations that can support the implementation of FiTI.
- A preliminary understanding of the marine fisheries sector in each country, the prospects for implementation of FiTI and definition of the action road map.
- Commitments from various actors from governments and civil society to jointly implement activities to promote the implementation of FiTI.

It was initially planned to visit both countries and hold a number of workshops in April, but current travel restrictions prohibit this. Therefore, the International Secretariat is now focusing its efforts on contracting communications and outreach partners in both countries that can work with the FiTI to promote the initiative through teleconferences, virtual workshops and online meetings. Also, information about the FiTI should be further disseminated through publications, interviews and other activities via online portals, blogs and other media. There is also the concept of doing something like a “transparency diagnosis” for these two countries, a desktop study of the countries’ current online information against the FiTI Standard.

In the case of *Mexico*, the Secretariat engaged Causa Natura as its Communications and Outreach Partner. Causa Natura is currently preparing a detailed country assessment that will provide the Secretariat with a clear view of the marine fisheries sector and the actions needed for FiTI. Again, it was planned to visit the country during May, but the plans had to be suspended. Changes to the work plan are currently undergoing.

In summary, an initial momentum has been built in all three countries towards FiTI, but the current situation is impacting short and mid-term plans. The International Secretariat is now making even more increased use of available technologies to continue connecting with stakeholders in each country. The Secretariat is also working with relevant stakeholders to identify the opportunities and risks arising from the current crisis, and how they can have an effect on the fisheries sector. This identification can help to convey a clear message to actors, especially from the public sector, to acknowledge that good oceans governance will be key to recover from the effects of the current pandemic (e.g. in regards to food security), and therefore, implementing an initiative like FiTI has a positive impact.