



Fisheries
Transparency
Initiative

17th meeting of the FiTI International Board

23 May 2022, Conference Call

Meeting Minutes

ID: BM-17_2022_MM

Provided by: FiTI International Secretariat

Date: 18.07.2022

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Date	23 May 2022
Time	Noon – 2.15 p.m. (Greenwich Mean Time)
Venue	Global Conference Call (Zoom)
Supporting document(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cover letter and CV of proposed Independent Validator for Mauritania

Outcomes of meeting

1. Welcome and administration

The Chair of the FiTI International Board, Valeria MERINO, opened the 17th International Board meeting by welcoming all participating members.

Apologies were noted prior to the meeting from Board Member Mialy ANDRIAMAHEFAZAFY (stakeholder group: Government sector) as well as Observer Marcio CASTRO DE SOUZA (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)).

After all eligible participants joined, it was 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:
10.8 out of 18 votes	Yes	2 out of 4

2. Introduction of new member to the International Board

The FiTI Chair emphasised that the initiative is extremely pleased to welcome Ms. Annika MACKENSEN as its newest member to the FiTI association.³ Annika briefly introduced herself and highlighted relevant experiences and expectations.

The Chair also briefly introduced the other participating Board Members, Observers as well as the Executive Director of the FiTI International Secretariat.

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

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

As not all 18 seats have been filled for this Board meeting, the pro-rated voting powers for the 17th FiTI International Board meeting were determined as follows:

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

³ Based on decision BC-10_2022_D-01 of Board Circular No. 10. The sole responsibility of members is to serve in the FiTI International Board.

3. Updates from the International Secretariat

The FiTI Chair asked Sven BIERMANN, Executive Director of the FiTI International Secretariat to provide a brief update from the International Secretariat.

Sven reminded the participants that the International Secretariat is no longer providing regular updates as part of International Board meetings, as such information is circulated through quarterly updates, which cover information about countries' status, resources (including funding), programmes & outreach, as well as an outlook.

However, over the last few weeks several important *declarations or resolutions* have further acknowledged the importance of transparency as a critical foundational principle of good fisheries governance, and have even clearly recognised the role that the FiTI plays for such efforts, including the:

- Declaration of the 7th Meeting of OACPS Ministers of Fisheries and Aquaculture⁴
- Resolution of the European Parliament (3 May 2022) towards a sustainable blue economy in the EU: The role of the fisheries and aquaculture sectors (2021/2188(INI))⁵

For example, the resolution of the European Parliament '*calls for EU and Member State measures to step up efforts to improve global fisheries governance, notably through mechanisms such as the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI).*'

However, while these are acknowledged as important recognitions of transparency efforts, Sven also re-emphasised that many countries are still (at least at the moment) not inherently interested in transparency, or are overwhelmed in addressing several other critical priorities that are impacting marine fisheries. Thus, most country governments are not proactively approaching the FiTI International Secretariat to join the initiative. Instead, countries need to be constantly persuaded, which requires resources from the FiTI Secretariat. As the FiTI International Secretariat is at its full capacity at the moment, the initiative's growth of countries is clearly restricted by a lack of funding.

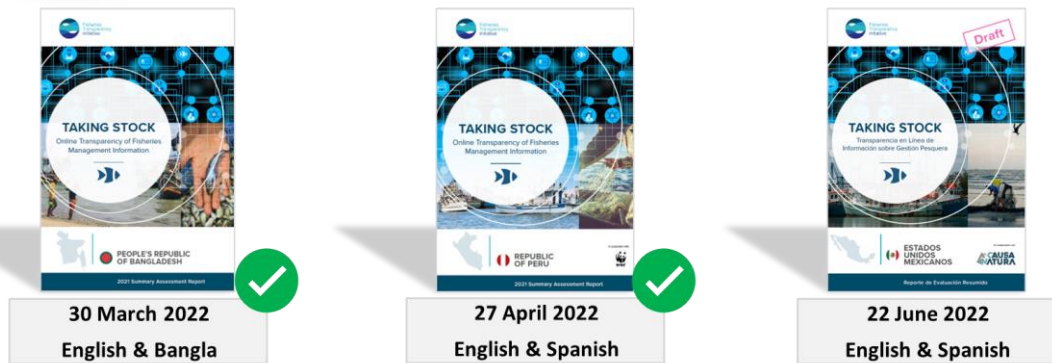
Furthermore, Sven highlighted that over the last eight weeks, the International Secretariat launched its first two *TAKING STOCK assessment reports* for Bangladesh and Peru. These assessments examine the level of information that a country's national authorities publish on government websites regarding the country's marine fisheries sector. This is done in line with the requirements of the FiTI Standard, broken down into 38 transparency elements.

⁴ <http://www.acp.int/content/declaration-7th-meeting-oacps-ministers-fisheries-and-aquaculture>

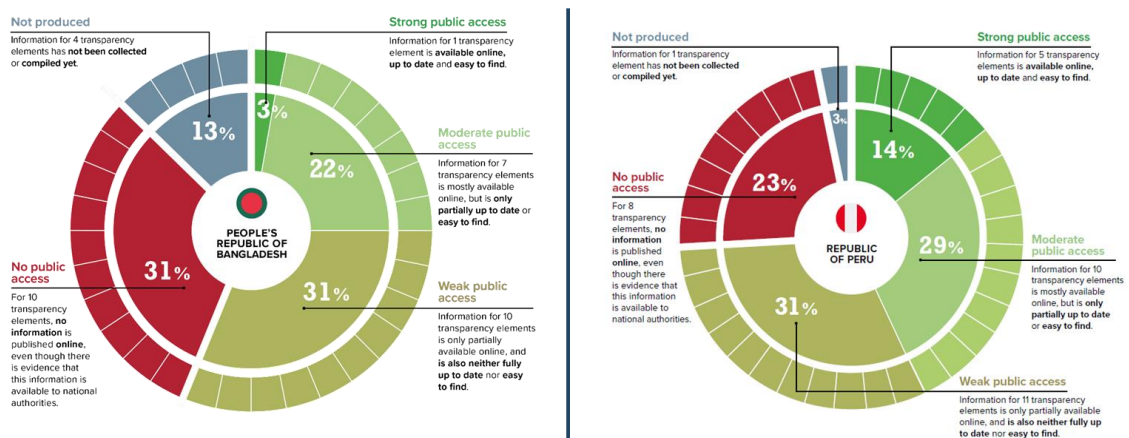
⁵ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0135_EN.pdf



TAKING STOCK: Online Transparency of Fisheries Management Information assesses the level of information that national authorities publish on government websites regarding the country's marine fisheries sector.



Sven further outlined that beyond simply investigating what is and is not published online by the country's government, the assessment also considers if information is freely accessible, up to date and easy for people to find – all important factors for properly understanding the current state of the sector. These assessments also document 'good transparency practices': instances where governments demonstrate innovative ways of communicating information and stimulating public debates from which other countries can draw inspiration.





Contextual information about marine fisheries in [country]
 'Deep Dive' into public access to fisheries information
 Giving meaning to transparency: Notable examples
 Recommendations to public authorities

Sven stated that these assessments are part of the FiTI's global efforts to deepen public understanding of how different governments around the world approach transparency in

fisheries management – including those that are not likely to join initiatives such as the FiTI. Furthermore, they will provide countries that are already in the process of joining the FiTI with baseline data to understand their current situation and assess future progress, and entice countries already thinking about joining the FiTI to make that decision.

Finally, upon previous requests from the International Board, Sven provided another brief update on the current situation regarding the FiTI’s *validation* procedures for Seychelles and Mauritania:

	 Seychelles	 Mauritania
Approval of Guidance Note #3:	Approved, as of 22 February 2022	
Baseline Assessment Report:	Completed, as of 25 March 2022	In progress, to be completed by June 2022
Engagement of Independent Validator:	Completed → Mr Jose Peiro Crespo	In progress → decision by FiTI International Board required
Independent Validation:	In progress, to be completed by July 2022	Open, to be completed by October 2022
Determination of compliance:	Open, to be completed by September 2022	Open, to be completed by November 2022

For the validation of Mauritania, and based on the financial support the FiTI receives from PROBLUE, an umbrella 2.0 multi-donor trust fund administered by the World Bank, the selection and procurement of an external consultant performing the duties of the Independent Validator as well as the financial compensation of services will be directly administered by the World Bank. No financial transfer occurs between PROBLUE and the FiTI regarding the cost coverage of the Independent Validator.

In February 2022, the World Bank determined Terms of Reference for the engagement of such an Independent Validator for Mauritania, in close collaboration with the FiTI International Secretariat. These Terms of References were widely disseminated between 5th and 30th of April 2022⁶.

In total, seven applications were received. The initial evaluation of applicants by the World Bank – supported by the FiTI International Secretariat – determined Mr Stefaan DEPYPERE as the leading candidate to serve as the Independent Validator for Mauritania. His

⁶ For example: <https://www.linkedin.com/jobs/view/3008302180/?refId=yhZd0vUxSu6IHn5fi3bPjw%3D%3D>

application documents (i.e., cover letter and CV) were circulated to the Board Members prior to this meeting.

Sven stated further that the International Secretariat has not worked on an operational basis with Mr. DEPYPERE before – however, Mr DEPYPERE has been loosely involved in the development of the FiTI Standard (between 2015-17) during his time at the European Commission. He has also not been involved in Mauritania’s FiTI implementation process and the FiTI reporting processes. Therefore, there seems to be no concerns about a possible conflict of interest between Mr DEPYPERE, the International Secretariat or the government of Mauritania.

The FiTI Chair thanked the International Secretariat and the World Bank for their support of the validation process and emphasised the importance of this process for the reputation and the credibility of the FiTI as an initiative promoting good governance in fisheries. She also emphasised that the International Board holds ultimate responsibility over the validation process.

Responding to inquiries from several participants, the International Secretariat confirmed that the Independent Validator will travel to the Mauritania as part of his assignment to conduct interviews will representatives from all stakeholder groups, including actors that are currently not involved in the National Multi-Stakeholder Group (MSG).

The FiTI Chair also noted that there is an apparent conflict of interest in regards to a few Board members that should excuse themselves from voting on this decision: Mr Mohamed Salem NANY is the Chair of the FiTI National MSG in Mauritania; Ms Nedwa NECH is a member of the country’s FiTI National MSG; and Mr Ahmed SENHOURY has been significantly involved in the preparation of both FiTI Reports in Mauritania and has also financially supported the FiTI reporting processes through his organisation PRCM. Only Ahmed participated in this Board meeting, and he excused himself from voting in this particular decision as requested

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

Decision [BM-17_2022_D-01]:

The International Board approved contracting the consulting services of Mr Stefaan DEPYPERE to act as the Independent Validator for Mauritania’s validation (timeframe December 2018 to March 2022).

4. Election of new Board Member

The Chair recalled that Shellcatch Inc. submitted *Mr Alfredo SFEIR's nomination to become a member of the FiTI association* as part of the Business sector stakeholder group (Large-

scale fisheries). The FiTI Election Committee (comprising currently of Ylva MATTSSON, Valeria MERINO, Alfred SCHUMM) determined that Mr SFEIR fulfilled all the requisites established in the procedure for the 2021 membership election to the FiTI association. The Committee also requested the FiTI International Board to shortlist and authorize an interview with the nominee. This was approved by the Board through Board Circular No. 10 (Decision-ID: BC-10_2022_D-02) on 11 May 2022.

The Chair stated further that the Election Committee conducted a video interview on Friday, 13th of May 2022. Ylva shared briefly her impression from this interview and reconfirmed that Mr SFEIR could bring valuable experiences, ideas and contacts to the International Board, in particular through his previous and ongoing work in artisanal fishing and seafood electronic monitoring system and e-commerce, including:

- i. Establishing collaborative partnerships and regional transparency ocean initiatives with key actors (fishers, government, NGOs, universities, and business corporations);
- ii. Identifying, designing, and implementing sustainable development activities, policy-related data for the entire fisheries sector lifecycle, including technological development, certification implementation, marketing, and performance indicators; and
- iii. designing and implementing institutional and social structures conducive to attaining the objectives and goals of marine fisheries sustainability, to increase the transparency and participation in governance, and to enhance the fisheries' contribution to human welfare in over 14 countries.

The FiTI Election Committee therefore recommended to the Board that this candidate be elected as a member of the FiTI association for three years, starting on the date the Chair has concluded the reference check process and communicates the Board decision to the candidate.⁷

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

Decision [BM-17_2022_D-02]:

The International Board approved the election of Mr. Alfredo SFEIR as a member of the FiTI association (stakeholder group: Business sector/Industrial) for a first, three-year term, depending on the outcomes of the final reference check. If the feedback from the referees does not dispute a candidate's suitability, the election process will be considered complete, and the results will be publicly announced.

⁷ The Chair noted that before formally taking office, any new member of the FiTI association will be asked to provide up to three references, some of which will be contacted by the FiTI Chair.

5. Updates on new transparency in fisheries coalitions

The FiTI Chair stated that while marine fisheries have been slow to catch on to the transparency wave, significant momentum has been witnessed over the last 2-3 years. This includes transparency regarding the activities of fishing vessels, product traceability within seafood supply chains, as well as the FiTI's core focus and unique approach: public access to fisheries management information. The recent growth of the FiTI – with three new countries publicly committing to the initiative in the last 9 months – is a clear testament to this momentum.

One of the more recent developments is the formation of a new *Global Fisheries Transparency Coalition*, primarily driven by Oceana and the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF). The FiTI International Secretariat, on behalf of the FiTI Chair, invited guests from these two organisations to attend this meeting and present information about this coalition (e.g. objectives, current situation).

Mr Max SCHMID from EJF thanked the FiTI for the opportunity to participate in the Board meeting, and emphasised that this new global coalition of civil society partners seeks to reform the national and international policies that manage our fisheries and conserve our seas. The main focus of this coalition is on using transparency as a tool to counter Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) fishing, with emphasis on illegal activities, as well as associated abuses, such as human rights violations. For this, the coalition is currently developing a *Global Charter for Fisheries Transparency*, which is inspired by EJF's ten principles for global transparency.



Further information was provided by Mr SCHMID as well as Kathryn MATTHEWS from Oceana regarding the envisioned Steering Committee⁸ for this coalition, funding⁹ and next steps, which include – inter alia – the organisation of side events on 'Increasing transparency to eradicate IUU fishing and deliver SDG 14' during the upcoming *UN Ocean*

⁸ Comprising currently of Oceana and EJF as the co-chairs, as well as WWF, Global Fishing Watch, PRCM, CIES and Seafood Legacy.

⁹ Primarily Oceans 5 and Bloomberg Philanthropies' Vibrant Oceans Initiative (VOI)
<https://www.oceans5.org/project/global-transparency-coalition/>

Conference in Lisbon/Portugal (27 June – 1 July 2022). The FiTI International Secretariat will participate in one of these side events as a panellist.

Afterwards, Members and Observers of the International Board asked further questions and shared the following feedback with the guests from EJF and Oceana:

- Transparency as one of the most essential pre-conditions for democratic ocean governance was clearly acknowledged. Thus, the importance of forging a global coalition that would mobilise civil society to strengthen their advocacy activities for enhanced transparency in marine fisheries was welcomed as an *important and much needed contribution*. At the same time, the Coalition's current focus on *limiting transparency as a tool to fight crime*, instead of a holistic approach to utilise transparency to contribute to the sustainability of marine fisheries by increasing the accessibility, quality and credibility of national fisheries management information, was criticised.
- Further, it was mentioned that in several important fishing regions, although *fishing is done legally* (e.g. with fishing licenses) it is often not managed well by the authorities because of lack of relevant and accessible information, capacity, stakeholder participation, and in some cases due to corruption and self-dealing. Therefore, a broad approach to transparency is needed.
- The *unequal distribution of economic benefits from fisheries* was mentioned also as a significant problem in achieving sustainable fisheries, and which is not covered under the topic of IUU fishing.
- It was further noted that the Coalition's current *branding* – as a Global Fisheries Transparency Coalition – might create some confusion with existing transparency endeavours, such as the FiTI, due to its limited scope of targeting primarily IUU fishing. This is a particular concern as the new Coalition plans seems to ask governments to endorse their Charter. This could potentially allow governments to commit to a limited set of information to be published (as the scope of information required to combat IUU fishing is significantly less than to support overall sustainable fisheries), while at the same time obtain the public recognition of participating in a global fisheries transparency endeavour.
- Also, it was mentioned that the FiTI requires from governments that they go through a demanding process to join the Initiative, in order to *avoid possible 'free riding'*. It was not clear from the presentation about the Coalition what would be the process that the Coalition will create to accept endorsements and what is the level of commitment expected from the signees.

- It was emphasised that the current focus of IUU-related transparency topics, as the basis for the Coalition’s transparency charter, as well as the composition of the Coalition’s Steering Committee and partners seem to exclude *representatives from small-scale fisheries*. It was noted by the colleagues from EJF and Oceana that the current partner network described included only the initial cohort of members, and that the role and participation of small-scale fisheries need to be further considered once the Coalition progresses.
- All participants recognized the need for several approaches to provoke a profound shift towards better and more transparent marine fisheries management. The importance of *aligning core messages* – and avoid conflicting messages – about the objectives for using transparency in marine fisheries was emphasised in order ‘to steer in the same direction’ and ensure success of these endeavours.

6. 18th International Board meeting (Brussels/Belgium)

During its 12th meeting in April 2021, the FiTI International Board approved the preparation of a 2-day, face-to-face Board meeting to take place in Brussels/Belgium. Given the impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting – initially scheduled for October or November 2021 – had to be postponed several times.

Given the positive trends in vaccination progress, declines of corona virus cases in several parts of the world and subsequently, noticeable reductions in travel restrictions, the opportunity to organise such a physical FiTI International Board meeting presents itself again. Regarding the proposed date in the last week of September, Sven stated that:

- the months of October/November/December should be avoided, as the possibility of COVID-19 impacted travel is seen as higher in these Fall/Winter months;
- the month of August should also be avoided, as it is still a summer vacation month for several of FiTI’s Board members; and
- within the month of September, the first week (calendar week 35) is already dedicated to the 35th session of the FAO’s Committee on Fisheries in Rome¹⁰, and the two subsequent weeks (calendar weeks 36 and 37) are not ideal to meet members of the European Parliament. Calendar week 38 was therefore recommended.

Sven reminded the Board Members that such a face-to-face meeting would be financially supported by the World Bank’s Multi Donor Trust Fund PROBLUE, and that the

¹⁰ <https://www.fao.org/about/meetings/cofi/en/>

International Secretariat is currently exploring several options regarding logistics, travel bookings and financial support. An update will be provided within the next 3-4 weeks.

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

Decision [BM-17_2022_D-03]:

The International Board reconfirmed that the meeting should take place in Brussels/Belgium and requested the FiTI International Secretariat to organise a 2-day face-to-face Board meeting on 27-28 September 2022.

7. Election process for FiTI Chair

The first term of the current FiTI Chair – Dr Valeria MERINO – ends on 31 December 2022.¹¹ In accordance with Article 17 (2) of the constitution of the association of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (as of 13 May 2021) ‘the FiTI Chair shall be eligible for re-election once’.

The Chair expressed her willingness to serve for one more term and her continued commitment to serve the FiTI. She pledged to keep steering the organization on the path of growth and expansion that has been started under the current Board and thanks to the excellent work of the International Secretariat. Valeria expressed her appreciation to the Board for the support received over the last two and half years and asked the Board for their confidence to serve as Chair for one more term.

Prior to the discussion among the participants, the Chair excused herself from this portion of the meeting and thanked everyone for their participation in this meeting.

Alfred SCHUMM led the discussions, which resulted in an unequivocal support to re-elect Valeria for a second term as the Chair of the FiTI International Board. It was further noted that no separate election process needs to be pursued.

Therefore, the participating Board Members reached the following decision:

Decision [BM-17_2022_D-04]:

The International Board elected Dr Valeria Merino for a second term as the Chair of the FiTI International Board, starting 01 January 2023 until 31 December 2025.

¹¹ Based on decision id: BC-01_2018_D-01 of Board Circular No. 2.

8. Closing

17th International Board Meeting ended

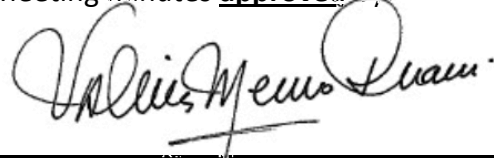
Meeting minutes **provided** by:



Mr Sven Biermann

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

Meeting minutes **approved** by:



Dr Valeria Merino

Chair of the FiTI International Board.

APPENDIX I: List of Participants

Chair

Valeria MERINO

Stakeholder group: Government sector

Annika MACKENSEN [Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]

Ylva MATTSSON [Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]

Philippe MICHAUD [Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]

Excused:

Mialy ANDRIAMAHEFAZAFY

Not excused:

Mohamed Salem NANY

Stakeholder group: Business sector

Hugh GOVAN [Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]

Francisco LEOTTE [Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]

Not excused:

Keith ANDRE

Alexander BIRYUKOV

Gaoussou GUEYE

Stakeholder group: Social sector

Francisco MARI [Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]

Eduardo ROLÓN [Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]

Alfred SCHUMM [Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]

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

Not excused:

Nedwa NECH

Observers

Theophilous CHIVIRU, Open Government Partnership (OGP)

Julien MILLION, The World Bank Group

Excused:

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

Not excused:

Salimata SOUMARE, African Development Bank (AfDB)

FiTI International Secretariat

Sven BIERMANN

Guests

Kathryn MATTHEWS, Oceana (only partially)

Max SCHMID, Environmental Justice Foundation (only partially)