



Fisheries
Transparency
Initiative

22nd meeting of the FiTI International Board

7 December 2023, Conference Call

Meeting Minutes

ID: BM-22_2023_MM

Provided by: FiTI International Secretariat

Date: 04.05.2024

Table of Contents

OUTCOMES OF MEETING	3
1. WELCOME AND ADMINISTRATION	3
2. UPDATE ON REVIEW OF 'FiTI STANDARD 2.0' (PROCESS).....	4
3. APPROVAL OF CANDIDATE APPLICATION: SÃO TOMÉ AND PRÍNCIPE.....	8
4. APPROVAL OF AUDITED ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2022	9
5. DEVELOPMENTS AT THE COALITION FOR FISHERIES TRANSPARENCY.....	11
6. HR UPDATES FROM THE FiTI INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT.....	12
7. CLOSING	15
APPENDIX I: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS.....	16

Date	7 December 2023
Time	Noon – 3.10 p.m. Universal Coordinated Time (UTC)
Venue	Conference Call (Zoom)
Supporting document(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 'FiTI Standard 2.0 – Proposed changes to the procedural framework of the FiTI Standard' (dated: 24 November 2023) ▪ Annual Financial Statement 2022 of the FiTI, including Audit Report by Pool & Patel Chartered Accountant (dated: 10 October 2023) ▪ Information package for the candidate application of São Tomé and Príncipe (date: 2 December 2023), file: 'STP_CandidateApplication.zip'

Outcomes of meeting

1. Welcome and administration

The Chair of the FiTI International Board, Valeria MERINO (herein referred to as 'Chair'), opened the 22nd International Board meeting by welcoming all participating Members and Observers.

Before referring to the regular agenda, the Chair emphasised that in the early morning hours of this day, a large and terrible explosion took place in Mahé, Seychelles, combined with widespread floods that affected the island. The President of the Seychelles has declared a state of emergency. Mr Sven BIERMANN, Executive Director (ED) of the FiTI International Secretariat (herein referred to as 'Secretariat') added that due to the proximity of the Secretariat's headquarter office to the explosion site – a repository of explosives belonging to the Civil Construction Company of Seychelles (CCCL) – it must be assumed that the FiTI office is either severely damaged or fully destroyed. However, given that the explosion took place only in the early morning hours, it is too soon to determine the exact scope of the damage. However, most importantly, no Secretariat team member was injured, as the explosion occurred at around 2.00 a.m. The Chair requested the ED to provide an update on the situation as soon as possible.

The Chair and all participants shared their thoughts with everyone affected by this unfortunate event and stated their relief that none of the FiTI staff members were harmed. The Board thanked the ED for carrying out this meeting under these very particular circumstances.

Apologies were noted prior to the meeting from Board Members Keith ANDRE and Tony LAZAZZARA (stakeholder group: Business Sector) as well as Zacari EDWARDS and Ahmed SENHOURY (stakeholder group: Social Sector). Voting powers were delegated as shown in Appendix I. Furthermore, apologies were noted from the UN FAO and the Open Government Partnership as observer organisations.

The Chair also welcomed the new Board Members Dr Ketakandriana Rafitoson and Mr Umair Shahid (both Social Sector). Ketakandriana and Umair introduced themselves briefly to the other participants.

After all eligible participants joined, the ED determined that a quorum for this meeting was reached¹:

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*

Pro-rated attendance of Board Members ² :	At least two Board Members per stakeholder group?	Attendance of Observers:
14.1 out of 18 votes	Yes	1 out of 3

The Chair also emphasised that Board Members were requested to voice to her their concerns or anticipated contentious issues about any of the points included in this agenda before this meeting. This way, such aspects could be incorporated into the discussion, additional information could be gathered, and time in the agenda could be allocated if needed. Board Members communicated no such concerns or feedback before this meeting.

2. Update on review of 'FiTI Standard 2.0' (Process)

The Chair recalled that since its first release in April 2017, the FiTI Standard has been internationally accepted as a transparency framework to improve public access to government information regarding marine fisheries management. This has been demonstrated by, inter alia, institutional support and positive feedback from various stakeholder groups as well as countries joining the FiTI, which has entailed the publication of several FiTI Reports by the National Multi-Stakeholder Groups (MSGs) of Seychelles and Mauritania and several online TAKING STOCK assessments conducted by the Secretariat.

At the same time, recent developments in global marine fisheries governance³ are showing several opportunities for improvements regarding the FiTI's transparency requirements. Furthermore, there are clear indications that the current procedural framework acts as a barrier to maximising FiTI's success, including getting new countries to join the initiative and demonstrating impact.

Therefore, during its 20th meeting in February 2023, the Board approved that the Chair reaches out to Board Members to request their participation in the Working Group 'FiTI

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:

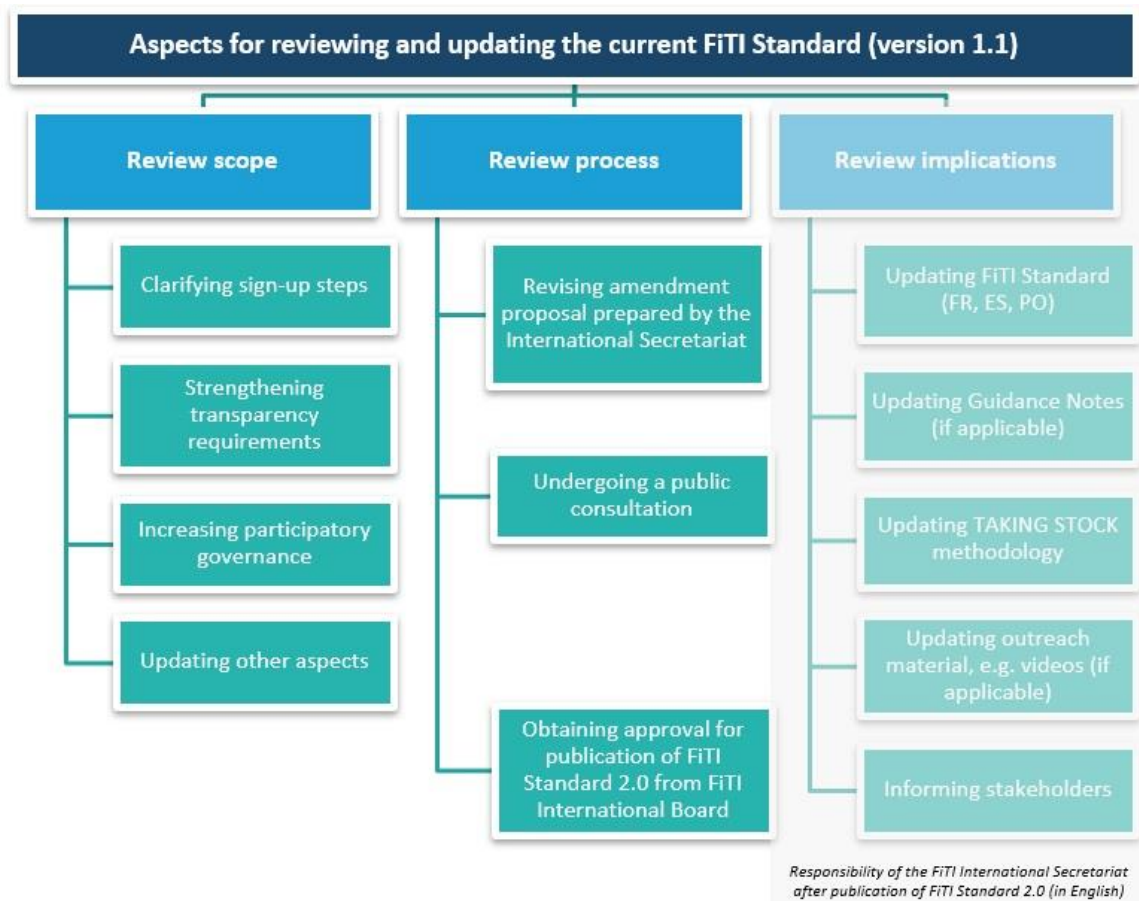
- **Government sector:** Currently four Board Members → each Board Member carries 1.5 votes.
- **Business sector:** Currently five Board Members → each Board Member carries 1.2 votes.
- **Social sector:** Currently six Board Members → each Board Member carries 1 vote.

³ Such as the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies by the World Trade Organisation (WTO), or extensive stakeholder expectations regarding beneficial ownership transparency.

Standard 2.0'. The purpose of this Working Group is to identify, discuss and recommend possible improvements to the FiTI Standard, in order to ensure that the FiTI Standard 2.0 remains widely accepted and becomes more effective, six years after its initial publication.

The Chair stated that after a request for participation among Board Members and Observers⁴, the Working Group 'FiTI Standard 2.0' was established, comprising the following representatives: Valeria MERINO, Joacim JOHANNESSON (Government sector), Hugh GOVAN and Dawda Foday SAINE (both Business sector), as well as Julien MILLION and Marcio Castro DE SOUZA (both from Observer organisations). Furthermore, two members of the Secretariat (i.e. Sven BIERMANN, Andre STANDING) accompany this Working Group, acting as the group's secretary.

In its Terms of Reference, the Working Group agreed to the following aspects for reviewing and updating the current FiTI Standard (v1.1.):



The Chair further stated that the Secretariat recommended to split the review scope of the FiTI Standard into two major workstreams in order to provide a comprehensive proposal to the Working Group:

⁴ Sent to all FiTI International Board Members and Observers on 24 April 2023.

- Workstream 1: Proposing changes to the **procedural framework of the FiTI Standard**, which includes the sign-up process, the regular reporting procedure as well as the validation.
- Workstream 2: Proposing changes to the **transparency requirements**.

The Chair emphasised that over the last 3-4 months, the Secretariat and the Working Group has been focussing their efforts on workstream 1, which culminated in the supporting document 'FiTI Standard 2.0 – Proposed changes to the procedural framework of the FiTI Standard'⁵, which was circulated to the Board prior to this meeting. The Chair explained that the document starts by making the case why changes to the current process are imperative and urgent to ensure that the FiTI Standard becomes more appealing for new countries and remains effective and impactful for implementing countries. Afterwards, the core of the document explains the rationales and the thinking behind the seven key recommendations for improving the FiTI implementation process (as highlighted further below).

The Chair thank the Secretariat and the Working Group for this significant deliverable, which was approved by the Working Group during its meeting on 2 November 2023. The document summarises discussions within the Secretariat over the last 2 years, with the Chair as well as with external stakeholders, such as members of FiTI National Multi-Stakeholder Groups.

- 1) *Engaging with the FiTI should be based on a partnership agreement – between the country's government and the FiTI – to emphasise the collaborative spirit of the FiTI.*
- 2) *Countries with an existing, suitable multi-stakeholder group should be able to use such a mechanism to act as the country's FiTI National Multi-Stakeholder Group (MSG).*
- 3) *Annual FiTI Reports should be produced by the FiTI International Secretariat for a limited time (see next recommendation), on behalf of a country's National MSG.*
- 4) *FiTI implementing countries should have a maximum timeframe of up to 5 annual reporting cycles to reach compliance with the FiTI Standard.*
- 5) *The provision of succinct summary information on governmental websites should become a compliance requirement.*

⁵ Recommendations for changes to the transparency requirements of the FiTI Standard will be addressed in a separate document and presented to the FiTI International Board during one of its next meetings.

- 6) *The scope of progressive improvement activities should not only include transparency-related aspects but also cover recommendations to improve participatory governance in marine fisheries, such as stakeholder participation. However, the implementation of recommendations to improve participatory governance should not become a compliance criterion.*
- 7) *FiTI implementing countries should undergo only one comprehensive 'Compliance Validation' to reach the status of a FiTI Compliant Country. Afterwards, regular 'Compliance Reviews' will be conducted to ensure ongoing compliance with this status.*

The Chair recalled that the Working Group recommended that during this Board meeting, priority should be given to discussing recommendation No. 3, and to addressing issues where Members/Observers of the Board disagree with the proposed changes or would like to have additional information. Board Members and Observers were requested to submit their questions or concerns prior to this meeting. The Chair stated that no questions or concerns were raised prior to the meeting. In the following discussion, various aspects were addressed:

- Several Members shared their opinions on how to further improve the process of FiTI Report compilation and also expressed their hope that the Secretariat's covering the costs for such compilations will entice new countries to join the FiTI in the future. At the same time concerns were raised regarding the financial implications on the Secretariat budget and fundraising responsibilities. The ED acknowledged these concerns and stated that future fundraising endeavours need to address this aspect, i.e. inclusion of costs for the Secretariat to act as the Report Compiler in funding proposals. Furthermore, the newly proposed 5-year rule of providing FiTI Reports will ensure a clear financial cap for each participating country and a clear deadline for compliance with the FiTI Standard.
- Furthermore, the ED stressed the importance of enhancing the online accessibility of government information. Currently, the FiTI Reports still provides a significant amount of information which cannot be found on government websites. Increasing the online accessibility in government websites will also be beneficial for the efficiency of national report compilation processes.
- The Chair clarified that countries do not need to wait until the newly proposed 5-year deadline to undergo a validation. Countries can also request a validation earlier, if deemed as eligible. This could motivate already advanced countries to join the FiTI.
- Also, there was a discussion about the new terminology that will be used by countries that join the FiTI in the different stages of the process, which will help anyone to

understand in which stage is a country and how is progressing until declared in full compliance.

- Finally, there was a discussion about the fact that once countries are declared compliant based on the Compliance Validation process, the Secretariat will conduct regular 'Compliance Reviews' to verify that countries remain compliant over time, even when the Secretariat is not as engaged with them as before.

After the discussion, the participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

Decision [BM-22_2023_D-01]:

The International Board approves the seven recommendations from the Working Group 'FiTI Standard 2.0' regarding changes to the procedural framework of the current FiTI Standard (v.1.1, 27 April 2017) and tasks the Secretariat with drafting the new text for the FiTI Standard 2.0, which will undergo a public consultation in 2024.

3. Approval of candidate application: São Tomé and Príncipe

The Chair stated that she received the candidate applications from the government of São Tomé and Príncipe (on 2 December 2023), informing her that the country has completed the six sign-up requirements (as stated in section A of the FiTI Standard)⁶, and now wishes to be recognised as FiTI Candidate country.

The Chair noted that the country did not fully comply with submitting its application document at least one week before an FiTI International Board meeting⁷. However, Board Members agreed to nevertheless review the country's application documents.

The Chair asked the ED then to provide a brief summary of activities undertaken by stakeholders in São Tomé and Príncipe 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 Secretariat, the FiTI Lead Ministry (and its National Lead), and other stakeholders in the country, particularly the formation of the country's National MSG.

⁶ <https://fiti.global/sign-up-steps>

⁷ As stated in Guidance Note # 1 'Implementing the sign-up steps'.

Candidate Application: São Tomé and Príncipe 



- Two-island, lower-middle-income country → Population 220k
- Area: 964 km² | EEZ: 142,563 km² | Coastline: 269 km
- SIDS & LDC
- Fish for consumption: 29.3 kg/capita
- Artisanal fisheries, largely focused on small pelagics
- Poor level of fisheries transparency




Candidate Application: São Tomé and Príncipe 

FiTI sign-up requirements		São Tomé and Príncipe
Public commitment	A.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 22 November 2021, conveyed via official letter by H.E. Francisco Martins dos Ramos, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development Public announcement on 11 January 2022
Enabling Environment for Stakeholder Participation	A.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rated Free in Freedom in the World 2023 study 67.7/100 for IIG 'Participation, Rights & Inclusion' EITI country Not an OGP country
FiTI Lead Ministry	A.3	Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries (15 December 2022, _GM/MADRP/20220)
FiTI National Lead		Mr Ilair de Conceição (11 May 2023, 64/GM/MADRP/2023)

Candidate Application: São Tomé and Príncipe 

FiTI sign-up requirements		São Tomé and Príncipe
FiTI National Multi-Stakeholder Group	A.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governments [3]: Direcção das Pescas e Aquacultura; Direcção de Capitania e dos Portos; Instituto Marítimo e Portuário Business [3]: Associação dos Pescadores e Palaiéis de Neves; Associação Tlabá só cada té; Cooperativa de Pesca Semi-industrial Civil Society [3]: MARAPA, OIKOS, Associação Programa Tatô Observer: UN Development Programme
FiTI National Secretariat	A.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Located within the FiTI Lead Ministry Lead: Mr Manuel Jorge De Carvalho Do Rio (1/2023)
Workplan	A.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approved by the National MSG (30.11.2023) Budget not yet secured

Candidate Application: São Tomé and Príncipe 



After the presentation and a discussion, the participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

Decision [BM-22_2023_D-02]:

The International Board approves the candidate application of São Tomé and Príncipe and recognises it as an official FiTI Candidate country.

The Chair concluded this agenda item by expressing her delight with this decision, making São Tomé and Príncipe the sixth country to reach the important milestone of a FiTI Candidate Country.

4. Approval of Audited Annual Financial Statement 2022

The FiTI Chair recalled that during its 21st meeting in June 2023, the Board made the following decision [BM-21_2023_D-03]: *'The International Board approved the appointment of the Seychelles-based audit company Pool & Patel Chartered Accountants to conduct an independent audit of FiTI's 2022 Annual Financial Statement.'*

The Audit Report for the FiTI's Annual Financial Statement for 2022 has now been finalised by the engaged Seychelles-based auditor Pool & Patel Chartered Accountants, stating that *'In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements of the Association are prepared, in*

all material respects, in accordance with the requirements of the Seychelles Association Act. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs).

The Annual Financial Statement for 2022, including the Audit Report from Pool & Patel Chartered Accountants, were circulated to the Board prior to this meeting.

The Chair asked the ED to present the key parameters of the FiTI's Annual Financial Statement for 2022 to the participants. The ED offered the following opening remarks:

- The responsibility to prepare annual financial statements lies with the Executive Committee of the FiTI association (which is part of the Secretariat).
- The approval of annual financial statements by the Board is required by the FiTI constitution as well as the Seychelles' Registers Office.
- The reporting currency of the financial statement is Seychelles Rupees (SCR), whereas the operating currencies of the FiTI are Seychelles Rupees (SCR), US Dollars (USD), and Euros (EUR).
- In compliance with donor requirements, the financial statement includes an overview of expenses by type of costs and grants.

After an overview of key financial indicators and supporting notes by the ED, several questions from the participants were answered. Particular attention was again given to the implications of currency fluctuations during 2022, which showed that the fluctuation of the EURO and the USD against the SCR was more stable in 2022 than in the previous two years.

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

Decision [BM-22_2023_D-03]:

The International Board approves the FiTI's Annual Financial Statement for 2022 (including the Audit Report, as provided by Pool & Patel Chartered Accountants of Seychelles) with a total equity, deferred grants and liabilities sum of SCR 4,699,295.

The ED stated that the approved statement will be made publicly available on the FiTI's website and submitted to the Registrar General's Office Seychelles.

Furthermore, the Board stated its expectations that the FiTI's Annual Financial Statement for 2023, including an Audit Report, should be completed and presented to the Board for approval by mid of 2024.

In addition, the Chair noted that after this 2022 audit of the FiTI's Annual Financial Statement, it might be considered to engage a new audit company in order to follow generally accepted good practices.

The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

Decision [BM-22_2023_D-04]:

The International Board requests the FiTI International Secretariat to compile a list of up to three reputable audit companies based in Seychelles to be presented to the FiTI International Board at its next (23rd) meeting.

5. Developments at the Coalition for Fisheries Transparency

The Chair opened this agenda item by recalling that the Coalition for Fisheries Transparency (CFT) is *‘an international community of non-governmental advocacy organizations and regional coalitions that work together to improve transparency and accountability in fisheries governance and management.’*⁸ According to its mission, the Coalition seeks to *‘support the efforts of civil society organizations on the national and regional level, and to drive progress in fisheries transparency on a global scale.’*

The CFT, which is collaborative project, is governed by a Steering Committee (SC) of selected NGO campaign leaders in fisheries transparency, co-chaired by Oceana and the Environmental Justice Foundation (EJF). The Secretariat of the Coalition is hosted by Oceana.

During its initial interactions with members of the Steering Committee in May 2022⁹, the Board recognised positively the CFT’s ambition of forging a global coalition that would mobilise civil society to strengthen their advocacy activities to enhance transparency in marine fisheries. This was seen as an important and much-needed contribution (similar to the civil society-driven ‘Publish What You Pay’ campaign for extractive industries). At the same time, the Board voiced its concerns, such as the CFT’s initial focus on limiting transparency as a tool to fight IUU fishing, or the lack of attention given to small-scale fisheries.

While some of these aspects have since been addressed in the CFT’s Charter—which covers 10 advocacy priorities regarding vessel information, fishing activity, governance, and management—the Coalition’s Charter does not directly reference the FiTI Standard. This situation might negatively impact FiTI’s work.

Furthermore, the Secretariat, as well as members of the Board, have recently noticed that the CFT is now targeting more directly governments in order to obtain their endorsements

⁸ <https://fisheriestransparency.net/about-us/>

⁹ Mr Max SCHMID from EJF and Ms Kathryn MATTHEWS attended the FiTI International Board’s 17th meeting in May 202 and presented the Coalition’s long-term ambition as well as current status. For more information, see here: https://fiti.global/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/FiTI_BM-17_2022_MM_EN_20220523.pdf

for the Coalition's Charter. This aspect was confirmed during a call between the two Co-Chairs of the CFT's SC (Philip CHOU from Oceana and Max SCHMID from EJF), the FiTI Chair, several members of the FiTI International Board (Hugh GOVAN, Umair SHAHID, Maisie PIGEON¹⁰) and Sven BIERMANN from the Secretariat in November. This new direction on how the CFT works at the country level might create confusion when the FiTI attempts to engage the same governments and other constituencies.

Based on this call, the Chair informed the participants that the FiTI has been invited to attend the CFT's SC meeting on the 10th of January 2024, and it is therefore recommended to form a temporary Working Group to, inter alia,

- Prepare the FiTI's participation in the upcoming CFT's SC meeting;
- Agree on a strategy to advocate for a clear reference of the FiTI Standard in the CFT's Charter and other ways to avoid confusion; and
- Monitor future developments at the CFT.

Several Board Members and Observers expressed their concerns about these developments and suggested not only to engage with the SC of the CFT, but also with its member organisations and donors. Afterwards, the participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

Decision [BM-22_2023_D-05]:

The International Board approves that the FiTI Chair forms and facilitates a Working Group on this matter to provide guidance and advice and regularly update the FiTI International Board.

6. HR updates from the FiTI International Secretariat

The Chair noted that primarily due to the secured financial support from the Government of Germany for the next 5 years¹¹, the Secretariat is in the process of actively recruiting new colleagues. The Chair asked the ED to provide an update on the current situation.

The ED started by stating that currently, the Secretariat is seeking to recruit up to 6 new colleagues (e.g. Grant Manager, Regional Coordinators, Communications Coordinator). The recruitment process should be completed by the first quarter of 2024, doubling the staff of the current Secretariat.

¹⁰ Maisie is the Director of the Coalition for Fisheries Transparency.

¹¹ <https://fiti.global/germany-supports-fiti-through-5-year-grant>

Several Board members voiced their delight in this significant expansion of the Secretariat (in terms of total staff as well as regional coverage).

The ED mentioned that given that the FiTI is a global organisation, the Secretariat has previously used three different engagement models for team members of the Secretariat: employed, contracted, or seconded. In simple term, the engagement model of an employee-employer relationship has been used exclusively for Seychelles-based colleagues of the Secretariat, whereas the engagement model of a customer-consulting relationship had to be used for all other (non-Seychelles-based) colleagues of the Secretariat, e.g. Regional Coordinators.

The ED emphasised that this distinction is important for the FiTI to avoid the risk of employee misclassification. In the past, several non-Seychelles-based colleagues had to be engaged through sub-contracts (instead of employment contracts) despite their employee-employer relationship with the FiTI. For example, Regional Coordinators based outside of the Seychelles could not directly be employed through the FiTI association, due to their lack of work permit and residency in Seychelles. Given that the FiTI relies on a network of globally-distributed experts, but at the same time does not have as part of its expansion strategy the creation of local entities in all countries where team members reside, the ED stated that the FiTI will be utilising a so-called 'Employer-of-Record' (EoR) service provider in 2024. An EoR is an organization that helps organisations like the FiTI to expand internationally by hiring and paying employees on behalf of another organisation. EoRs assume the responsibility for all formal employment tasks, including payroll processes and compliance documentation.

The ED informed the Board that after an extensive selection process over several weeks, the international EoR company Remofirst¹² was selected as the FiTI's service provider. Remofirst relies on a global network of partner organisations in over 170 countries, which officially hire employees in other countries on behalf of the FiTI. This is done through local employment contracts, which are in compliance with local employment laws. Nevertheless, the FiTI remains in full control of day-to-day operations and managerial supervision of the hired team member.

The ED emphasised that this creates a significant burden for the FiTI's budget, given that the average monthly service fee per engaged employee is around 350 EUROS. This kind of fees typically need to be included in the Secretariat's administrative budget, similar to regular accounting or auditing fees. Furthermore, as a regular employer the FiTI also needs to calculate mandatory employer costs, such as social security, in addition to monthly gross

¹² <https://www.remofirst.com/employer-of-record>

salaries. Despite this significant burden, the ED stressed the necessity of such a service in order to avoid several key compliance risks for the FiTI:

- Virtually every government around the world has at least some definitions for how workers should be treated and classified, and these often include rules for employment contracts. In case of an actual case of misclassification, the FiTI could be faced with several financial consequences, including retroactively pay mandatory employer contributions required under local employment laws, civil penalties or even criminal penalties.
- For non-governmental organisation like the FiTI donor funds often come with strict requirements for how money may be used, including hiring, so any legal issues with a local government (even if they do not result in any financial consequences) could potentially jeopardise future funding.
- Beyond the financial impacts, the FiTI – as an organisation promoting good governance – should also heed the ethical considerations of using and potentially misusing contractors. The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Right note clearly that employers who respect human rights should, inter alia, correctly classify workers to ensure labour rights and social protections, and refrain from challenging policies that afford such protections.

In addition to these compliance-related aspects, the ED also stressed the importance of offering attractive employment packages to attract talents to join the Secretariat. Colleagues that are engaged through national employment contracts do qualify for various benefits, such as vacation, sick leave, social security contributions etc., which makes an engagement more interesting than through sub-contracts.

The Chair supported the ED's concerns and proposed solution approach, while at the same time emphasising the difficulties of a globally distributed organisation like the FiTI to balance such legal risks with financial implications. The importance of raising not only sufficient project-related funding but also administrative (unrestricted) financial resources becomes therefore even more important for the future.

Finally, the ED informed the participants that after more than 4 years and solely due to private reasons, he and his family are forced to leave the Seychelles. Such reasons include, inter alia, limited employment opportunities for the ED's wife as well as other needs of his family. It is anticipated that the ED and his family will relocate to the United Arab Emirates (Abu Dhabi) mid of July 2024.

Given the already well-established setup of the Secretariat as a globally-distributed organisation (e.g. via an extensive cloud-based collaboration platform) the impact on the

Seychelles-based FiTI headquarter will be minimal. Also, the ED stressed that this move will not have any impact on the FiTI's legal status in the Seychelles; the FiTI will remain a registered association in the Seychelles, with an office for up to 5 Seychelles-based colleagues. Furthermore, the Seychelles' newly established Associations Act (2022) requires only the person who acts as the Secretary of an association's Executive Committee to be present in the Seychelles, but not the other members of this committee.

Several participants voiced their understanding for the situation and the anticipated change, and expressed no reservations, concerns or even rejections of the ED's plans. The Chair also stated that this upcoming change has been discussed extensively with the ED over the last months and that she supports this relocation given the stated family needs and because it will not disrupt in any way the operations and management of the FiTI Secretariat.

7. Closing

Despite the very recent difficult events in the Seychelles, the Chair concluded this last meeting of 2023 by thanking everyone for their dedication through the year and wished all participants a joyful holiday season.

The 22nd International Board Meeting ended.

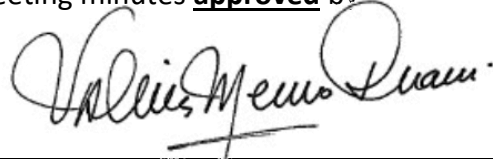
Meeting minutes **provided** by:



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

Andres ARENS [Voting power for this meeting: 1.5 votes]

Joacim JOHANNESON [Voting power for this meeting: 1.5 votes]

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

Not excused:

Roy CLARISSE

Stakeholder group: Business sector

Hugh GOVAN [Voting power for this meeting: 2.4 votes]¹³

Alfredo SFEIR [Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]

Excused:

Keith ANDRE

Tony LAZAZZARA¹⁴

Not excused:

Dawda Foday SAINE

Stakeholder group: Social sector

Maisie PIGEON [Voting power for this meeting: 1.0 vote]

Ketakandriana RAFITOSON [Voting power for this meeting: 1.0 vote]

Umair SHAHID [Voting power for this meeting: 1.0 vote]

¹³ Keith ANDRE assigned his voting power (1.2 votes) to Hugh GOVAN as his proxy in an email to the FiTI Chair on 7 December 2023.

¹⁴ Tony LAZAZZARA sent his decisions prior to the meeting via an email to the Secretariat on 6 December 2023.

Annie TOURETTE

[Voting power for this meeting: 3.0 votes]^{15A}

Excused:

Zacari EDWARDS

Ahmed SENHOURY

Observers

World Bank Group, represented by Julien MILLION

Excused:

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

Open Government Partnership, represented by Joe Powell

FiTI International Secretariat

Sven BIERMANN

Guests

None

¹⁵ Ahmed SENHOURY and Zacari EDWARDS both assigned their voting powers (1.0 vote each) to Annie TOURETTE as their proxy in emails to the FiTI Chair on 7 December 2023.