



Fisheries
Transparency
Initiative

28th meeting of the FiTI International Board

27 February 2025, Conference Call

Meeting Minutes

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Date	27 February 2025
Time	1.00 – 3.00 p.m. Universal Time Coordinated (UTC)
Venue	Conference Call (Zoom)
Supporting document(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>2025 Workplan of the FiTI International Secretariat – draft</i> (date: 20 February 2025), file: ‘FiTI_IS-WorkPlan2025_20250220.pdf
Language	The language of the FiTI International Board is English. Simultaneous translation between English and Spanish has been provided for this meeting.

Outcomes of meeting

1. Welcome and administration

The Chair of the FiTI International Board, Valeria MERINO (herein referred to as 'Chair'), opened the 28th International Board meeting by welcoming all participating Members and Observers.

Apologies were noted prior to the meeting from Board Member Umair SHAHID (stakeholder group: Social Sector). Umair delegated his decision-making power to the Chair, as shown in Appendix I.

After all eligible participants joined, Mr Sven BIERMANN, Executive Director (ED) of the FiTI International Secretariat (herein referred to as '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:
15.8 out of 18 votes	Yes	2 out of 3

The Chair noted that prior to this meeting, Board Members did not have concerns or anticipate contentious issues about any of the points included in this agenda.

Furthermore, the Chair requested all Board Members and Observers to reply to the electronic meeting invitations sent by the International Secretariat (calendar invitations) in order to obtain a better overview about the expected participation.

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.'

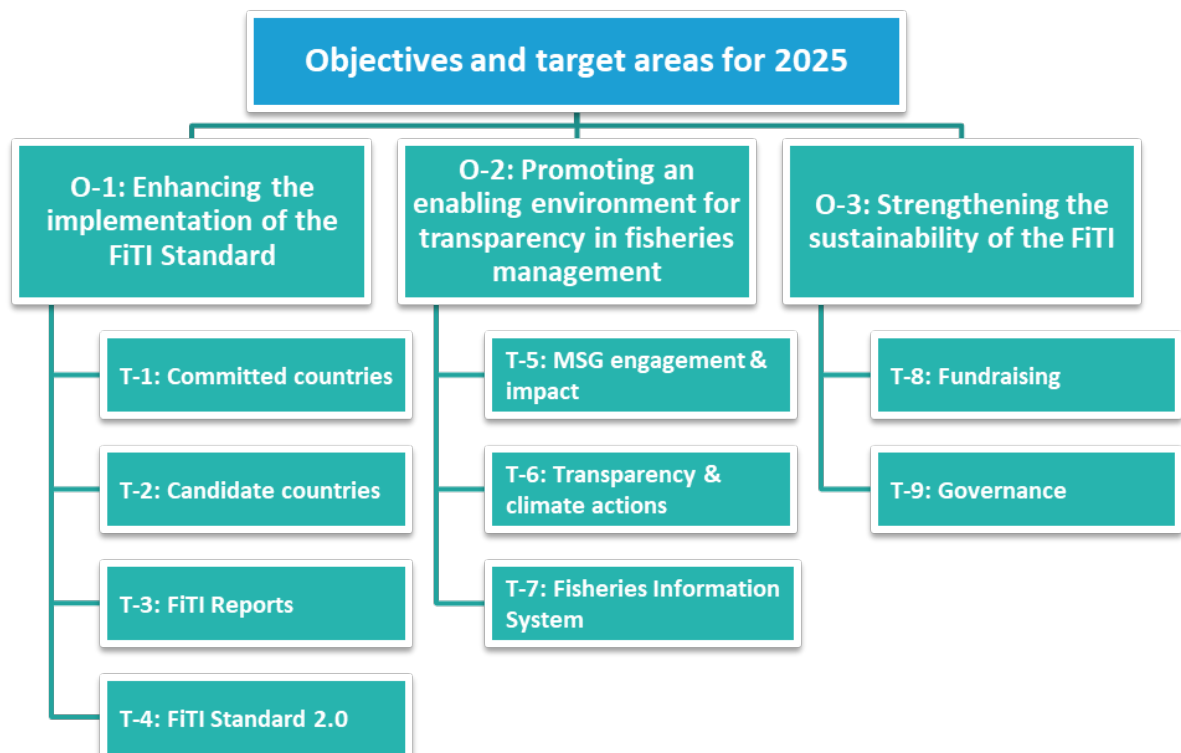
As not all 18 seats have been filled for this Board meeting, pro-rated voting powers for this FiTI International Board meeting were determined, as shown in Appendix I.

2. 2025 Workplan of the FiTI International Secretariat

The Chair asked the ED to present the key parameters of the 2025 Workplan of the FiTI International Secretariat. As an opening remark, 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 starting on 01 January and ending on 31 December 2025. The plan is based on the overall resources available and on realistic expectations of what can be accomplished in that time 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 Board, through which it can approve the Secretariat’s priorities, activities, and budgets, as well as monitor the Secretariat’s work and results against performance indicators.

Based on this proposed workplan, the FiTI International Secretariat plans to pursue **three objectives [O]** with a total number of **9 target areas [T]** in 2025:

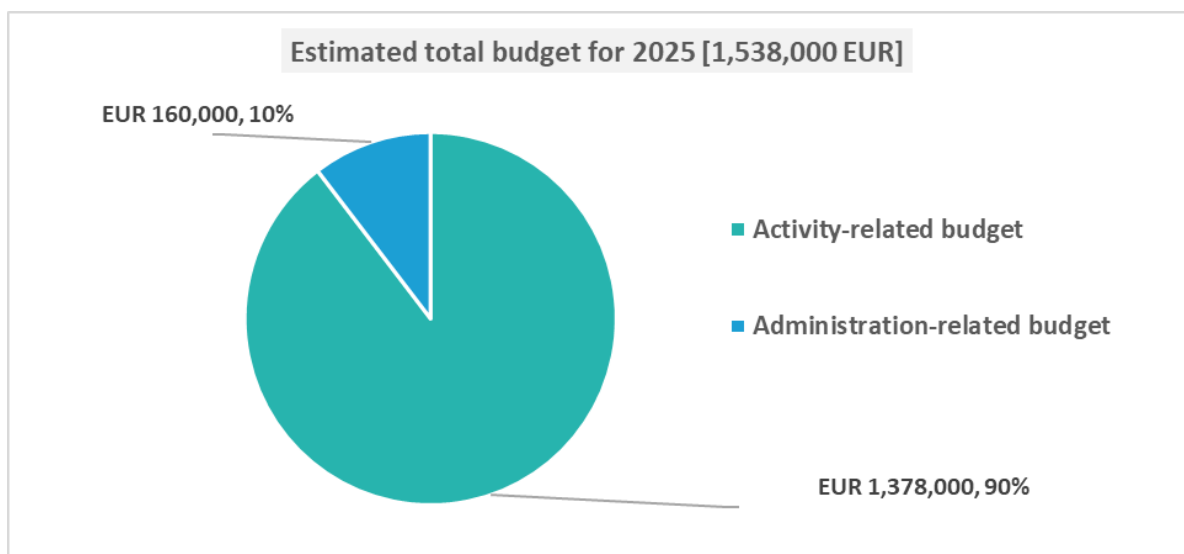


In pursuing these objectives, the International Secretariat strives to accomplish the following highlights within the calendar year 2025:

- Obtain public commitments from 8x governments;

- Obtain FiTI Candidate Country applications from 4x countries;
- Support the release of 8x annual FiTI Reports;
- Engage stakeholders in 1x new region (i.e. Southeast Asia);
- Develop a global FiTI Fisheries Information System (FIS) and pilot it in 2x countries;
- Strengthen the efficiency and impact of National Multi-Stakeholder Groups (MSGs);
- Launch an updated version of the FiTI Standard;
- Raise up to EUR 750k in additional activity-related funding;
- Conduct 1x in-person Board Meeting.

The ED highlighted that in order to pursue these objectives and target areas, an annual budget of 1,538,000 EUR (activity-related budget as well as administration-related budget) is required³.



The ED stated that the total required activity-related budget and administration-related budget for 2025 has already been secured. The ED also provided some brief information on the recently received 1-year grant from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation for “Enhancing information accessibility and stakeholder impact of transparency in fisheries management in Latin America”, with a total grant volume of USD 438,779. The Board congratulated the ED and the Secretariat for this achievement.

³ 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.

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

The Chair thanked the ED and the 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, the Chair, Members and Observers of the Board provided their feedback on the workplan:

- The Chair reiterated that the administrative budget of 10% demonstrates the operational effectiveness of the Secretariat, given that similar global initiatives often require a much higher operational budget. It was emphasised, however, that there are still several key administrative functions, such as Finance & Controlling, Human Resources and IT that are performed by existing staff members (mainly the ED) instead of dedicated personnel.
- A key area for discussions focused on the changing donor landscape, mainly driven by the impacts of new U.S. government policies (see also below). Several Board Members, including Annie TOURETTE and Estelle JONES, briefly shared their current experiences regarding to donor support, providing a diverse picture (ranging from examples where activities had to already been shut down due to the lack of funding, such as a MCS Center, while other activities have not been impacted at all). It was also mentioned that there seems to be a trend among large-scale civil society organisations currently not to engage in new campaigns but instead to use campaigns to defend previous achievements (e.g. in conservation). Several participants further noted that there seems to be a worrying trend of other governments (including Europeans) to follow US policies and reduce their development aid contributions as well or start to align them much more closely to the government's political agenda.
- In this regard, Board Member Tony LAZAZARA requested additional clarification from the ED regarding the current funding situation and the long-term security of personnel. The ED explained that currently, due to long-term funding commitments (such as from the German BMZ) almost all of the personnel costs for the next 24 months are covered. At the same time, the FiTI's current equity reserve does not allow the continuation of the initiative for more than 2 months in the worst-case (and highly unplausible) scenario where all of FiTI's funding would stop immediately and unexpectedly. While all participants agreed that this is indeed a highly unlikely scenario, the need to further extend and broaden the FiTI's donor base was emphasised. The Chair stated that she will reach out to several Board Members to start engaging in discussions regarding new donors and funding mechanisms, such as

the pursuit of engaging high-net-worth individuals, the stronger engagement of the private sector, or the establishment of an endowment fund.

- Board Member Hugh GOVAN emphasised again the importance of conducting focussed communication campaigns to strengthen the desirability of countries wanting to join the FiTI. The ED responded that while last year's activities focussed on the consolidation and professionalisation of FiTI's outreach efforts across its various media channels, one key communication activity for this year is indeed a campaign related to the broad range of benefits of fisheries transparency (#beneFiTIng). While such a global campaign will be rather generic, it is seen as very valuable to position the FiTI better – also with regards to other organisations who portray the benefits of transparency primarily in the case against IUU fishing.

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

Decision [BM-28_2025_D-01]:

The FiTI International approved the 2025 Workplan of the FiTI International Secretariat, including the overall budget of 1,538,000 EUR and the proposed allocation into an activity-related and administration-related budget.

3. Potential impact of new U.S. government policies

The Chair emphasised that since the inauguration of the current US government, there has been an overall and swift shift in policy. Recent decisions and actions by the new administration have resulted in the most significant reduction in U.S. foreign assistance by the country in many decades. This development, coupled with a profound change in U.S. foreign policy discourse and actions, especially about the war in Ukraine, the NATO alliance, the conflict in Gaza, and immigration, signals a global impact on government assistance and overall philanthropy. In addition, the current U.S. administration has communicated and acted toward reducing human capabilities and hindering governance, accountability, transparency, and anti-corruption regulations. Also, there has been an unprecedented move to empower individuals whose designations and legal capabilities to act on behalf of the government have been contested and which have given access to some of the country's most sensitive governmental data systems. Further, the government has also indicated less interest in protecting the environment, ecosystems, and species and reducing emissions that provoke climate change.

The Chair shared some concrete examples, including the steps taken to close USAID, which included the enforcement of a 90-day Stop Work Order on its funding, which brought international aid and development work financed by the U.S. government almost entirely

to a halt. In addition, the administration has fired thousands of public employees, including the Inspector Generals of some of the most significant public entities, and has communicated that it plans to fire or reduce by other means thousands of government positions across the entire government and, in particular at the Justice Department, the FBI and the CIA.

The government has also moved to eliminate all government actions and efforts related to addressing human “diversity, equity, and inclusion” (DEI), which included policies and funding that sought to root out bias in hiring, promote fairness in the workplace and open career pathways for people of colour and women. The White House has labelled such efforts as illegal and immoral discrimination programs, as stated on its website.

Most specifically related to the FiTI’s work, the administration has ordered the removal of climate references and scientific data from several government web pages (e.g. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)), has proposed to privatise many of NOAA’s areas of responsibility (i.e. U.S. fisheries are managed under NOAA), withdrew from the Paris Climate Accord, and has halted all investigations or enforcement actions related to the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), a global flagship legal framework for preventing and punishing corrupt business practices around the world.

While many Executive Orders are currently [being challenged in court](#), their impact has already been felt within the U.S. and international NGO community (and to a certain degree, also within the FiTI’s own partner environment, such as in Latin America).

It was agreed by all participants to closely monitor this situation which, given its unpredictability and scope of changes, might need to be dealt with in a case-by-case situation. Also, the ED mentioned that the current situation might not only negatively impact the availability of development aid, but could also challenge or question the overall need for transparency among certain stakeholders. The ED stated that if this trend, as described by the Chair, should prevail (or even spread to other Western countries), it could indeed make the engagement of new countries in the FiTI much more challenging. At the same time, the ED also stated that this could be an opportunity for the FiTI by clearly positioning itself as a beacon of good governance and clearly demonstrating and communicating its commitment to open transparency in fisheries and wider open government and inclusive governance efforts.

4. Updates regarding the following Board meetings

The Chair informed the participants regarding a change in the date for the next (29th) Board meeting, which will no longer take place on the 19th of March 2025 but now on the 3rd of April 2025. This is mainly due to the need to collect additional information and hold

discussions by the Validation Committee for the determination of Mauritania's compliance status.

The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

Decision [BM-28_2025_D-02]:

The International Board agreed on the date of 3rd of April 2025 to conduct the 29th FiTI International Board meeting as a 2-hour online meeting.

Furthermore, the ED stated that the International Secretariat is still in discussions with the German government about the planned Board meeting / celebratory event in Berlin. The ED conducted an in-person meeting with representatives from BMZ and GIZ in Bonn/Germany in early February, where the intention of the German government to host and support these two events were further confirmed. However, no agreement was reached on the exact dates, given that there are still certain considerations to conduct these events prior to the UN Conference in Nice in order to engage local (German) stakeholders, such as parliamentarians, during the celebratory event. The Chair requested and update on this situation from the ED at the next Board meeting in early April

5. Closing & Outlook for next Board meeting(s)

The Chair concluded the meeting with a brief outlook on the next (29th) International Board meeting, scheduled for Thursday, 3 April 2025.

The 28th 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

Rocío Parra CORTÉS [Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]

Joacim JOHANNESON [Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]

Estelle JONES [Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]

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

Not excused:

Roy CLARISSE

Stakeholder group: Business sector

Hugh GOVAN [Voting power for this meeting: 1.0 vote]

Tony LAZZARA [Voting power for this meeting: 1.0 vote]

Alfredo SFEIR [Voting power for this meeting: 1.0 vote]

Nestor ROCHE [Voting power for this meeting: 1.0 vote]

Carlos (Cadu) VILLAÇA [Voting power for this meeting: 1.0 vote]

Not excused:

Dawda Foday SAINE

Stakeholder group: Social sector

Ketakandriana RAFITOSON [Voting power for this meeting: 1.5 vote]

Daniel SKERRITT [Voting power for this meeting: 1.5 vote]

Annie TOURETTE [Voting power for this meeting: 1.5 vote]

Excused:

Umair SHAHID⁴

⁴ Umair SHAHID delegated his decision-making power to the Chair.

Observers

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

World Bank Group, represented by Kristin Gunnarsdottir VON KISTOWSKI

Not excused:

Open Government Partnership

FiTI International Secretariat

Sven BIERMANN

Karine YOUNG

Guests

Luz MONTALVAN, Interpreter