



Fisheries
Transparency
Initiative

THE FITI STANDARD

VERSION 2.0

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*Sustainable marine fisheries through
transparency and multi-stakeholder collaboration*

The FiTI Standard, version 2.0

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Foreword



I am delighted to present the FiTI Standard 2.0. It reflects the Initiative's growth since the first country joined almost ten years ago, as well as the lessons learned from implementation, including in FiTI Compliant countries. Informed by published FiTI Reports, transparency assessments, and public consultation, the process confirmed the Standard's relevance while acknowledging the need for refinement.

This version includes updated transparency requirements, a streamlined process for joining the FiTI and maintaining compliance status, and an improved structure and clarity. As a result, the Standard remains both ambitious and practical, supporting countries in improving data quality and use and

ensuring meaningful public access, understanding, and participation.

At its core, this Standard reaffirms our purpose: promoting credible, accessible, and usable fisheries information as a foundation for accountable decision-making, inclusive dialogue, and the sustainable management of marine fisheries.

Today, marine fisheries is a significant global activity that sustains communities and businesses worldwide, ensures food security, provides essential protein to millions, and makes a sizable contribution to national economies. Yet the sector faces profound challenges from overfishing, climate change, and habitat loss and degradation, among others. In this context, sustainable and credible fisheries governance and management are impossible without complete, reliable, and publicly accessible data.

Progress on SDG 14, Life Below Water, has been notably slow. Overfishing and ecosystem vulnerability persist, and fishers and communities are often excluded from benefits. The FiTI was created to help change that. Transparency in fisheries is more than publishing information; it encompasses accountability, trust, and inclusion, and it is essential for equity and sustainability. The initial success of the FiTI signals that governments, fishers, industry, and civil society can unite around shared information and shared responsibility for the common good. We invite stakeholders worldwide to rally around this vision and make it a widespread practice.

Valeria Merino

Chair of the FiTI International Board, 2020 - 2025



About the FiTI Standard

It is commonly accepted that the equitable and sustainable management of fisheries relies on public access to information. Without reliable information, the capacity of national authorities to make decisions based on the best available data is diminished; so too is the ability of non-governmental stakeholders to exercise effective oversight, demand accountability and engage in public debates on how fisheries are managed.

The Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) was established in 2015 as a global, multi-stakeholder-driven endeavour to enhance the sustainability of marine fisheries by increasing public access to fisheries management information. At its heart is the FiTI Standard. This establishes the information on fisheries that national authorities should publish online, how it can be verified, and how it can be used more effectively to inform public debate. The first FiTI Standard was released in April 2017, following nearly two years of extensive discussions among governments, industrial fishing companies, small-scale fishing representatives, intergovernmental organisations and civil society groups working on fisheries and marine conservation. Since its inception, the FiTI Standard has demonstrated its effectiveness and has become the global default framework for transparency in national marine fisheries management.

The Cornerstones of the FiTI Standard

Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

The FiTI Standard is implemented at the national level through a Multi-Stakeholder Group (MSG), comprising representatives from government, business and civil society. This group meets regularly to review how national authorities are performing against the requirements of the FiTI Standard and to agree on recommendations for improvements. These recommendations are not limited to the publication of information. They can also include recommendations for national authorities to improve public outreach and participation in decision-making.

Progressive Improvements

Although the FiTI holds all countries to the same high standards, it recognises that national authorities may lack financial resources, technology, expertise or staff to fulfil the transparency requirements of the FiTI Standard. Therefore, FiTI countries are not expected to have complete data for every transparency requirement from the beginning. Instead, national authorities must disclose the information they have, and where important gaps exist, improvements over time must be demonstrated.

Transparency in the Public Domain

The FiTI Standard emphasises the need for national authorities to develop and strengthen their own systems for collecting and publishing information online in a complete, accessible and understandable manner. For this, a country's National MSG reviews and approves annual assessments on the fisheries information in the public domain for all transparency requirements in the FiTI Standard.

Public Awareness and Debate

The FiTI Standard offers an important means to raise awareness and appreciation of a country's fisheries sector and to stimulate debates on how information can be used to advance democratic governance, civic engagement, and accountability in fisheries management at the national, regional and international level.

The FiTI Standard establishes minimum requirements for national authorities to meet. However, there can be information not covered in the FiTI Standard that is particularly important for national policy debates. This includes providing information at a level of detail that exceeds what is required to comply with the FiTI, or it may require national authorities to publish information not covered at all in the Standard. In such cases, National MSGs must agree on recommendations on how these unique information needs can be met. In this way, the FiTI provides a practical framework for achieving transparency, while also being adaptable to national priorities.

Changes to the FiTI Standard

This updated version of the FiTI Standard, version 2.0, is the outcome of collaboration between the FiTI International Secretariat, the FiTI International Board, stakeholders from implementing countries, as well as international fisheries and governance experts from governments, business, and civil society. The FiTI Standard also underwent a public consultation phase in November 2025.

Several factors have influenced the decision to revise the FiTI Standard. After a decade since its launch, the number of people and organisations working with the FiTI has grown substantially. This has brought in new perspectives and ideas. Additionally, the landscape for transparency in fisheries has evolved. New international agreements have raised the bar in terms of what information governments are expected to make public. This includes, for example, enhanced public reporting to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) on the provision of fisheries subsidies, as well as improved reporting by parties of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). There has also been progress in international norms, such as those relating to beneficial ownership transparency, as well as those relating to the labour rights and conditions of people working at sea.

Improving the implementation process

The FiTI Standard 2.0 encourages countries to use existing multi-stakeholder platforms for its implementation. Previously, implementing countries were required to establish a new multi-stakeholder platform dedicated to the FiTI. However, in some countries this is unnecessary and it risks undermining existing participatory processes or duplicating efforts. Still, no matter how the National MSGs are formed, they must adhere to fundamental values: equal representation of stakeholder groups, the ability of each stakeholder group to select its own representatives, adherence to consensus-driven decision-making procedures, and the ability of participants to act without intimidation or censorship.

The FiTI Standard 2.0 also improves the annual reporting process. There is more comprehensive support to National MSGs from the FiTI International Secretariat in assessing the online availability of information, which reduces the time and effort for implementing the FiTI by the National MSGs.

Finally, FiTI implementing countries will undergo only one comprehensive compliance validation to reach the status of being a FiTI Compliant Country. Afterwards, compliance reviews will be conducted every three years to ensure ongoing adherence with this status. In comparison to the first FiTI Standard, this reduces the reporting requirements for countries that have demonstrated high levels of transparency and public participation, while at the same time safeguarding the integrity of the FiTI.

Enhancing the transparency requirements

The FiTI Standard 2.0 includes a revised list of core transparency requirements for national authorities. A careful balancing act has informed the thinking behind this. While the updated version of the Standard increases transparency demands on national authorities to keep pace with international developments, it has been approached with caution to avoid overburdening countries. The result is a revised list of transparency requirements that builds on those contained in the first Standard, but with improvements to ensure the FiTI's relevance and impact are strengthened.

Among the most important enhancements made in the FiTI Standard 2.0 is how it responds to the question of how transparency can be made more meaningful for national policy debates. Marine fisheries are often associated with a wide range of environmental, social, economic, climate and food security goals. However, it is not always clear to the public how national authorities reconcile these objectives and avoid policy incoherence. The FiTI Standard 2.0, therefore, requires national authorities to publish succinct information on their national objectives and explain how achieving these can be measured. This information can inspire national policy debates on what the goals of fisheries management should be and the extent to which fisheries management decisions align with them. It also provides a framework for making much of the other information required by the FiTI Standard relevant for accountability.

The FiTI Standard 2.0 strengthens transparency requirements on the fiscal management of fisheries. This will ensure the public has a comprehensive understanding of how much public revenue is being generated, how it is used, and what public financial resources are allocated to fisheries management and development. Fiscal management has been a neglected area in fisheries, despite its critical importance.

The FiTI Standard 2.0 requires national authorities to publish information on the characteristics and catches of the non-commercial fishing sector, in addition to commercial fishing sectors. This reflects the substantial numbers of people engaged in non-commercial fishing and the resulting impacts on the health of fish populations and other fishing interests. Forms of non-commercial fishing, including recreational fishing, also have substantial economic value in many countries. However, this value can be obscured in public debates on fisheries management, and so too is the inclusion of representatives from these sectors in policy debates and decision-making processes.

Finally, updating the Standard has also led to considerable reflection on the topic of small-scale fisheries. A decade ago, when the first Standard was launched, it was assumed that stakeholders at the national level would be able to identify who qualifies as small-scale, which is essential given that multiple international agreements identify this sector for special and preferential treatment. Yet, it is increasingly evident that marginalisation and neglect in fisheries are partly caused by a lack of clarity on how the concept of small-scale fisheries is interpreted. It has therefore been decided that the FiTI Standard requires a dedicated thematic header for this issue, elevating its importance.

In summary, the FiTI Standard 2.0 covers transparency requirements for the following 12 thematic areas of marine fisheries management:

1.	National Objectives
2.	Legal Framework
3.	Small-Scale Fisheries
4.	Vessels and Authorisations
5.	Catches
6.	Health of Fish Populations
7.	Employment and Labour Standards
8.	Law Enforcement
9.	Trade and Consumption
10.	Fiscal Management
11.	Development Finance
12.	Beneficial Ownership

The intention has been to produce an updated FiTI Standard that covers all facets of transparency in fisheries management and that provides clear direction to countries that are either already implementing the Standard or would like to be part of this initiative. All those involved in this process expect that the FiTI will evolve, and the FiTI International Board will periodically review the FiTI Standard to enhance it and keep it relevant.

Structure of the FiTI Standard

The FiTI Standard is divided in three main parts:

- Part I defines the requirements for national authorities.
- Part II describes the key responsibilities of National Multi-Stakeholder Groups.
- Part III outlines the provisions for the international governance of the initiative.

Each part has dedicated sections, as summarised below:

Part I: FiTI Standard for National Authorities

Section A Transparency in Marine Fisheries Management	Objective Describe the minimum transparency requirements, organised into 12 thematic areas of marine fisheries management.
Section B Engagement with the Fisheries Transparency Initiative	Objective Describe the initial provisions for a country intending to implement the FiTI Standard.
Section C Enabling Environment for Stakeholder Participation	Objective Describe the provisions for establishing and maintaining a supportive environment for fisheries transparency.

Part II: FiTI Standard for National Multi-Stakeholder Groups

Section D Reporting	Objective Describe the requirements, procedures and deadlines for the publication of annual FiTI Reports, Fisheries Information Reports (if applicable) and work plans.
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Part II: FiTI Standard for National Multi-Stakeholder Groups

Section E Progressive Improvements	Objective Describe the provisions for recommending and continuously monitoring improvements for fisheries transparency and stakeholder participation.
Section F Outreach & Public Debates	Objective Describe the provisions for contributing to enhanced public awareness, stimulating policy debates, and encouraging inclusive decision-making in the country's fisheries sector.
Section G Other Provisions	Objective Describe the provision for addressing exceptional circumstances during the FiTI implementation process.

Part III: FiTI Standard for International Governance

Section H Validations of National FiTI Implementations	Objective Describe the provisions on how countries can reach validation eligibility and on how the FiTI International Board conducts regular validations of the FiTI Standard, ensuring that all FiTI countries fulfil the requirements of the FiTI Standard.
Section I Non-compliance with the FiTI Standard	Objective Describe the provisions to be applied by the FiTI International Board in case of non-compliance of countries with the FiTI Standard.

The FiTI Principles

The FiTI Principles are the foundation of the initiative and its implementation. They lay down the beliefs, objectives and expectations of the FiTI Stakeholders. The Principles were unanimously adopted by acclamation at the 1st FiTI International Conference in February 2016 in Nouakchott, Mauritania.

Principle 1	Sustainable fisheries contribute significantly to food security, poverty alleviation and sustainable development, and therewith to national and regional political stability and increased resilience to impacts of climate change.
Principle 2	Sovereign governments are responsible for the sustainable management of fisheries, utilising the country's national fisheries wealth for the benefit of its citizens, to promote the national interest, food and nutrition security, and equitable socio-economic development.
Principle 3	All stakeholders have important and relevant contributions to make, including governments and their agencies, large-scale and small-scale fisheries, multilateral organisations, financial organisations, investors, organised civil society, and academia.
Principle 4	Transparency is essential for responsible fisheries, as it can stimulate an active demand for accountability, contributing to improved decision-making in fisheries management.
Principle 5	Transparency is most effective when information is shared and verified through the active, free, effective, meaningful and informed participation of governments, business, civil society, scientists, and other stakeholders as equal partners, thereby allowing all stakeholders to ensure that information is credible and legitimate.
Principle 6	For transparency to be effective relevant information has to be made available in an accessible format and in a timely manner to society.
Principle 7	Increasing transparency and participation must be feasible and introduced progressively in order to ensure the wide acceptance of this initiative.

Part I

FiTI Standard for National Authorities



Section A

Transparency in Marine Fisheries Management



While several normative frameworks and policy documents have advocated for increased public access to fisheries information for years, these texts often provide only generic requests for governments to follow. This has left much open to debate regarding exactly what information should be made public, by whom, why, and how. The FiTI Standard fills this gap, providing precise requirements on what information on fisheries management should be published online by national authorities. These minimum transparency requirements are categorised into 12 thematic areas of marine fisheries management, which apply to all countries committed to the FiTI Standard.

National authorities of FiTI countries must publish their available information on the fisheries sector in a complete and accessible manner on government websites (i.e. information being freely accessible and presented in such a way to make it comprehensible). In case information on the transparency requirements has not yet been collated or produced by national authorities, national authorities must demonstrate progressive improvement in collating and publishing information online, based on the recommendations issued by their National Multi-Stakeholder Group (section E).

A.1 National Objectives

Goals, targets & timeframes

The management of marine fisheries, which includes fish species as well as other marine animals, can encompass multiple objectives, including those related to national economic growth, food production, employment, promoting small-scale fisheries, biodiversity conservation, and addressing the climate crisis. Communicating these objectives or goals, and establishing measurable targets and timeframes for their implementation, is a cornerstone of transparency in fisheries management. This sets the framework for public accountability and participation in decision-making. However, national objectives for fisheries can be contained in multiple communications and policy documents produced by several national authorities, and these may be inconsistent or even contradictory.

National authorities must, therefore, publish the following information:

- I. A succinct summary of national objectives used to inform fisheries management decisions.
- II. Measurable targets and timeframes for the implementation of these national objectives, including information on who is responsible for monitoring their progress.
- III. A consolidated list of active policy documents related to the management and conservation of marine fisheries.

The National Multi-Stakeholder Group is encouraged to review national policy documents for their scope, consistency, and coherence and, where necessary, provide recommendations on how to address these issues.

A.2 Legal Framework

Laws, access agreements & rules for fishing sectors

Marine fisheries management is typically subject to a complex legal regime that is regularly updated. Public understanding of this legal framework is crucial to ensure compliance within the fisheries sector. It is also vital for public oversight of how fisheries are managed, including the rules that apply to different commercial fishing sectors, such as industrial fishing and small-scale fishing, as well as those applicable to non-commercial fishing, including scientific, recreational, and subsistence fishing. However, the accessibility of information on laws governing fisheries can be undermined by a lack of consolidated lists of legislation and regulations, as well as confidentiality practices, such as those related to the disclosure of fisheries access agreements with foreign countries and companies. Furthermore, due to their technical nature, the publication of legal texts can be insufficient to ensure public understanding.

National authorities must, therefore, publish the following information:

- I. A consolidated list of active national laws and regulations for the marine fisheries sector, as well as any relevant international laws and agreements to which the country is a signatory.
- II. The contracts and protocols of foreign fisheries agreements, including those that allow access for foreign vessels to fish in the country's maritime jurisdiction, as well as agreements that allow nationally-flagged vessels to fish in a third country. Contracts and protocols that are already in force by the time a country commits to implementing the FiTI Standard, and for which there is an agreement or expectation of confidentiality between the parties, must be made public within 3 years of the country committing to the FiTI.
- III. A succinct summary of the mandatory procedures for public consultation and parliamentary oversight in the formulation of laws, regulations and foreign fisheries agreements relating to the marine fisheries sector.
- IV. A succinct summary of the rules governing access to fishing in the country's maritime jurisdiction. For each sector of commercial and non-commercial fishing established in national laws and regulations, the following information must be included:
 - The criteria used to define the fishing sector.
 - The fees, duration, transferability and divisibility of rights for fishing, including the official titles of any licenses or permits issued.
 - The official title of the person(s) who are legally entitled to issue these rights.
 - The mandatory administrative procedures required for the issuance of such rights, including any provisions for oversight or public consultation.

- The conditions attached to these rights, such as those relating to areas of operation, fishing effort, ecosystem impact, landings, transshipping, catch reporting, electronic vessel monitoring, the sale of fish, and the circumstances under which these rights may be terminated for non-compliance.
- In the case where tenure decisions are shared or devolved to non-government organisations and communities, their roles and responsibilities.

The National Multi-Stakeholder Group is encouraged to request the publication of digital maps showing areas where fishing is restricted and the locations of any preferential or exclusive zones for fishing sectors.

- V. The rules and procedures for authorising nationally-flagged vessels to fish in a third country or on the High Seas, including information on the fees applicable to such rights, the conditions attached to these rights and the provisions for their termination.

A.3 Small-Scale Fisheries

Identification & support

There is an international consensus that special consideration should be afforded to small-scale or artisanal fisheries in fisheries management. This is due to their essential social, economic and food security roles across all parts of the fisheries supply chain, including pre-harvest activities, such as supplying and repairing boats and fishing equipment, and post-harvest activities, such as processing and selling the catch. Nevertheless, these roles are undermined in many countries by forms of marginalisation and neglect, as well as the activities of competing industries.

International agreements, including the FAO's Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (14.b), require governments to support those engaged in small-scale fisheries and to promote their preferential access to fisheries resources and markets. However, progress on policies for securing small-scale fisheries can be undermined by a lack of clarity on which activities, groups and peoples are identified by national authorities as small-scale fisheries, as well as a lack of communication on the specific policies and actions that have been taken or are planned for their support.

National authorities must, therefore, publish the following information:

- I. A statement on which activities, groups or peoples are considered applicable for the implementation of national policies and international agreements on small-scale fisheries.

- II. A succinct summary of any laws and regulations, actions and plans adopted by national authorities to support and advance small-scale fisheries, including those relating to preferential access to fisheries resources, areas of the sea and markets, their role in national and local decision-making processes, gender equity, and the provision of government subsidies or other development programmes.

If national authorities have not yet determined which activities, groups, or peoples are considered small-scale, the National Multi-Stakeholder Group is encouraged to recommend a procedure and timeframe for developing this information, taking into account the importance of including representatives of affected fishers and fish workers in the process.

A.4 Vessels and Authorisations

Vessel record, licenses & quotas

Public access to information about the people and companies involved in fishing, as well as those who have been granted fishing rights, is crucial for ensuring public accountability. It informs national debates on fishing intensity, as well as often contentious decisions on resource allocations between groups and sectors. Additionally, states that are party to the FAO have agreed to the Global Record of Fishing Vessels, Refrigerated Transport Vessels and Supply Vessels as part of their commitment to address Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing. However, reporting practices on vessel information and fishing authorisations are often inadequate. National authorities may face challenges in collecting information on the numbers of vessels and their characteristics, particularly in sectors where formal registration may not be required, such as the artisanal, subsistence and recreational fishing sectors. Vessels and authorisations being underreported or missing from national statistics can contribute to their marginalisation in policy debates. Furthermore, national authorities often fail to maintain public records on who is allocated or obtains fishing quotas and how these quotas may be traded or leased.

National authorities must, therefore, publish the following information:

- I. A consolidated list of registered commercial fishing vessels, including refrigerated transport vessels and supply vessels, including the following information for each vessel:
 - Its name.
 - Its unique identification number(s).
 - Its legal owner, including their nationality and address or contact details.
 - Its physical characteristics, such as, length, beam, weight and engine power.

- Its registration port.
- Its flag state.
- Information on the fishing licenses received, including the official title of the license, the unique license number, the date of issuance and expiration.
- For nationally flagged vessels operating in third countries or the High Seas, the list must include information on where it is authorised to fish.

The list must span the last three years, and be kept up to date, with license information included no later than three months after the licence is issued.

- II. In case where vessels undertaking commercial fishing in national waters are omitted from the list referred to under I. for technical or administrative reasons, the annual number of omitted vessels must be provided, disaggregated by sectors. There must also be an explanation of why such vessels are not included in the list.

In the case where vessels are omitted from the list referred to under I., the National Multi-Stakeholder Group must agree to such exemptions or provide a recommendation on when such vessels should be added to the list.

- III. The annual number of vessels issued a license for non-commercial fishing.
- IV. In cases where vessels are not required to register with authorities or obtain a fishing license, the estimated annual number of such vessels, disaggregated by sectors, including a description of how this information was collated and when.
- V. The estimated annual number of people fishing without a vessel, including those classified as fishing for subsistence or recreational purposes, disaggregated by sectors, including a description of how this information was collated and when.
- VI. In cases where fishing quotas are allocated in the country's maritime jurisdiction to individuals, groups or legal entities (such as companies), a public record of who is issued a quota, including their names, nationality, the size of their quota and the duration of their right to harvest or trade these quotas.

Where fishing quotas are allowed to be traded or leased, and information on the outcomes of these transactions is not publicly available, the National Multi-Stakeholder Group is encouraged to agree on whether and how these transactions should be documented and published by national authorities.

A.5 Catches

Landings, fishing effort & discards

Information on catches and discards of fish species and other marine animals is essential for public accountability regarding the extent to which national authorities are meeting their objectives and targets for conserving fish populations, as well as any policies aimed at promoting resource allocations for specific groups or sectors. The challenges facing countries in accurately reporting on catches also highlight the importance of communicating the methods used for collating catch data, as well as those used for measuring fishing effort and discards in different sectors. However, public access to such information can be restricted, or it has limited opportunities for informing public debates if it is only available in highly technical scientific reports.

National authorities must, therefore, publish the following information:

- I. A succinct summary of how catch, discard and effort data are collated for different sectors in the country's maritime jurisdiction, by whom and at what frequency. This must also explain the measurements used to quantify fish in different sectors including live weight conversion ratios where applicable, as presented in national statistics, as well as the distinction that applies to fisheries statistics between catch and landing data.
- II. The annual quantity of retained catch or landings by commercial fishing in the country's maritime jurisdiction, disaggregated by flag states and sectors, and showing the amount landed domestically and abroad.
- III. The annual quantity of fish caught by nationally-flagged commercial vessels outside of the country's maritime jurisdiction, disaggregated by sectors and species. If possible, this data must further indicate the country or region of the High Seas where these species were caught.
- IV. The annual data or estimates of fishing effort of commercial fishing in the country's maritime jurisdiction, disaggregated by flag states and sectors.
- V. Estimates of the annual quantity of catches from non-commercial fishing in the country's maritime jurisdiction, disaggregated by sectors.

The publication of catch and effort data on an annual basis, and without subnational disaggregation, can be suboptimal for supporting public accountability and oversight in fisheries management. Considering the methods used by authorities at the national and sub-national levels for collating catch and effort data, the National Multi-Stakeholder Group is encouraged to review whether such data for specific sectors should be published more frequently.

The National Multi-Stakeholder Group is also encouraged to consider if landings data should be further disaggregated on a sub-national basis, by domestic ports and landing sites, and if landings outside of the country should specify which ports or countries these landings are made.

- VI. Estimates on the annual quantity of fish species, marine mammals, sea turtles and birds discarded by fishing vessels, disaggregated by sectors.

A.6 Health of Fish Populations

Stock assessments, conservation measures & endangered species

In the context of rising concerns about declines in fish populations due to overfishing, pollution, habitat destruction, and the climate crisis, information on the biological status of key fish populations is critical for informed public debates on fisheries management effectiveness. It is also essential for the legitimacy of any measures that national authorities impose to regulate fishing intensity and demonstrate their adherence to the precautionary principle. However, not only is information on the biological status of fish populations often inadequately communicated by national authorities, but so too are the methods used to make these assessments.

Improving transparency in fisheries management is particularly important for species classified as endangered under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), such as many shark species and sea cucumbers. Parties to CITES are obliged to produce quotas for any endangered species harvested and traded in their national waters and to produce a non-detriment findings report demonstrating that levels of trade are not unsustainable. Despite this, national authorities are often inconsistent in producing and publishing CITES information, and many people are unaware of these reporting requirements.

National authorities must, therefore, publish the following information:

- I. A succinct summary of national strategies for monitoring the biological status of fish populations, including the authorities responsible and the nature of any collaborations with international fisheries organisations, foreign governments, the private sector, academic institutions, non-government organisations, community-based organisations and the recreational fishing sector.
- II. A consolidated list of the biological status of fish populations subject to fishing, indicating whether they are experiencing overfishing, sustainable levels of fishing or if their status is uncertain or unknown. This information should indicate the date on which the status of the fish population was determined.
- III. A consolidated list of scientific studies or stock assessments on fish populations used by national authorities to determine their biological status.

- IV. A consolidated list of management plans or conservation strategies for rebuilding or conserving specific fish populations.
- V. For all fish species and marine animals found in national waters listed by CITES, the national quotas for the harvesting of these species and the corresponding non-detriment findings reports.

A.7 Employment and Labour Standards

Formal and informal sectors & work at sea

Fisheries employ millions of people, although often the extent and nature of employment is poorly captured in national labour surveys. In many countries, the challenge of understanding the number of people dependent on fisheries for their livelihoods is exacerbated by the informal nature of their work. A lack of visibility in national statistics on employment is particularly relevant for those engaged in the pre-harvest and post-harvest sectors, with women's contributions to the preparation and sale of fish often being hidden, for example.

International attention on employment in fisheries has also drawn attention to the unique vulnerabilities experienced by those working on fishing vessels. This is recognised as one of the most hazardous forms of work, with high rates of mortality and accidents. However, specific labour laws for workers on board fishing vessels, and their recourse to grievance mechanisms, can be inadequate or insufficiently publicised, as are records of injuries or deaths at sea.

National authorities must, therefore, publish the following information:

- I. The annual number of men and women working full or part-time in the commercial fishing sector in the country's maritime jurisdiction, disaggregated by flag states and sectors. This information must also include estimates of the numbers classified as engaged in the informal sector.
- II. A succinct summary of the legal obligations for fishing vessel owners that employ people working on their vessels, including information on:
 - Minimum age.
 - Payment of wages.
 - Health, medical care and social security.
 - Food and accommodation on board vessels.
 - Manning and hours of rest.
 - Repatriation of crews overseas.

The summary of legal obligations must describe who is exempt from these legal obligations, such as owners of vessels below a specific size or foreign-flagged vessels. It should further describe the authorities responsible for monitoring and enforcing these obligations and any grievance mechanisms available to the people working on fishing vessels.

- III. The annual number of men and women working full or part-time in the pre-harvest and post-harvest commercial sector, including estimates of the numbers classified as engaged in the informal sector.
- IV. Estimates, reports or studies on wages and incomes for men and women in the commercial fisheries sector.
- V. The annual number of people who have been seriously injured, killed or reported missing at sea while working in the fishing sector in the country's maritime jurisdiction and for national citizens working onboard vessels operating outside of the country's maritime jurisdiction.

In some countries, the number of people working in the recreational marine fishing sector can be substantial, which includes those working on sports fishing charters and those employed in supplying materials and equipment for recreational fishing. In such cases, the National Multi-Stakeholder Group is encouraged to review national statistics on employment in recreational fisheries and to make recommendations for collecting or improving such data, as well as increasing its visibility in national debates on fisheries management.

A.8 Law Enforcement

Strategies, procedures & sanctions

Non-compliance with laws and regulations is widely regarded as a significant challenge to fisheries management, encompassing forms of illegal fishing at sea, as well as various forms of fraud and illicit trade in fish. Consequently, international attention has grown regarding the measures taken by national authorities to enforce laws and regulations, the results of these actions, and the respect for due process. However, a lack of transparency in national responses can undermine public trust in the seriousness with which non-compliance is addressed. It may also raise concerns that law enforcement responses are inconsistent or arbitrary.

National authorities must, therefore, publish the following information:

- I. A succinct summary of the rules and procedures used by authorities for responding to instances of illegal fishing and illegal trade in fish, including the thresholds used for deciding on the use of administrative sanctions as opposed to criminal proceedings, the upper and lower limits of penalties for different types of offences, and which authorities are the recipient of revenues derived from fines, penalties and asset forfeitures. This summary must include rules and procedures applicable to the country's residents and domiciled companies operating outside the country's maritime jurisdiction.
- II. A succinct summary of national strategies and actions for addressing non-compliance with fishing laws and the illegal trade in fish, including the role of different public agencies, regional and international collaborations, private sector contractors or community-based organisations.
- III. The annual number of inspections of fishing vessels at sea and in ports.
- IV. A consolidated list of the outcomes of investigations and prosecutions for significant cases of non-compliance with fishing laws and the illegal trade in fish spanning the previous three years, including the name(s) of the vessel, the legal entity (such as a company) or people involved, the nature of the offence and the sanctions that were imposed. If companies or individuals were brought to trial for offences and such cases have been resolved through an out-of-court settlement, the number of such cases for each year should be published as part of the consolidated list.

A.9 Trade and Consumption

Exports, imports & food availability

Fish are among the most widely traded food commodities globally. For many countries, exports provide an essential source of revenues and employment, while fish imports are significant for maintaining people's healthy diets and ensuring food security. Yet fish trade is often controversial. Exports are blamed in some contexts for depriving people of access to affordable and nutritious food. The need to ensure that fish trade supports national food security objectives has also drawn attention to the proportion of fish destined for direct human consumption as opposed to that used for indirect human consumption, such as fishmeal and fish oil, and other non-food uses. There can be substantial quantities of fish that are lost along the production and supply chain. SDG 12.3 sets the target for countries to reduce such losses by 50%.

The management of the international fish trade is further undermined by inconsistent reporting and documentation, which may facilitate seafood fraud and the illicit or unsustainable trade in endangered species. The International Convention on the Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System (HS Convention) obligates parties to publish trade data on an annual basis and to use the harmonised codes administered by the World Customs Organisation. Parties to CITES must also publish records of trade in endangered species, including those classified as introduced from the sea.

National authorities must, therefore, publish the following information:

- I. The annual quantity and value of wild-caught marine fish and fish products produced for direct human consumption, for indirect human consumption and non-food uses.
- II. The annual per capita consumption of wild-caught marine fish, including estimates of consumption among different demographic groups and subnational regions.
- III. Estimates of the quantities of fish lost or wasted along the production and supply chains for different sectors.
- IV. The annual quantity and value of imports of fish and fish products according to the corresponding Harmonised System Codes, indicating the country of their origin.
- V. The annual quantity and value of exports of fish and fish products according to the corresponding Harmonised System Codes, indicating the country of their destination.
- VI. An annual consolidated list of permits issued by national authorities for fish species and marine animals listed in the CITES to be exported, imported or introduced from the sea, including the names of the persons or legal entities (such as companies) issued such permits and the quantity of species concerned.

A.10 Fiscal Management

Revenues, budgets & subsidies

The administration of revenues and expenditures is a critical dimension of effective fisheries management. In many countries, commercial fisheries can be a significant source of government income and foreign exchange, at both the national and subnational levels. However, there can be a lack of clarity for the public on what these revenues are and how they are used. This can fuel concerns that fishing companies are paying insufficiently, while international experience suggests that revenues from fishing are particularly vulnerable to corruption. Likewise, the amount spent on fisheries management has a significant impact on its effectiveness and outcomes, with many countries reporting underfunding of fisheries management authorities or that expenditures are concentrated on specific sectors, leaving others neglected.

The subject of fiscal management transparency has been elevated by international concerns regarding subsidies in the fisheries sector, including a lack of transparency in their allocations. The World Trade Organisation's Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies is introducing disciplines on their use in the fisheries sector, as well as transparency and notification requirements.

National authorities must, therefore, publish the following information:

- I. The annual total revenues received by national and subnational authorities for granting and administering fishing authorisations, disaggregated by flag states, by sectors, and by types of revenues, such as access fee payments, fishing licenses, quota levies, by-catch levies, fines, penalties and revenues from asset forfeitures.
- II. A succinct summary of how national and subnational authorities use revenues from the fishing sector, including the amounts used for fisheries management expenditures.
- III. The annual budget report for the principal national authority responsible for fisheries management, including information on the amounts to be spent for specific fisheries management responsibilities, including research, monitoring of fishing vessels and law enforcement. If possible, information should be published on the budgets allocated to particular sectors.
- IV. The most recently approved report on the execution of the previous budget for the principal national authority responsible for fisheries management.
- V. A consolidated list of government financial transfers or subsidies for the marine fisheries sector. For each transfer or subsidy, the following information must be provided:
 - The name of the programme.
 - The programme's governing legislation.
 - The authority responsible for granting it.

- Its funding mechanism, such as grants, loans, tax concessions and services.
- The type of subsidy, such as for equipment, safety, fuel, or payments for income support.
- The type or kind of fishing or fishing-related activity for which it is provided.
- A description of its purpose.
- Its intended recipients, beneficiaries, and targeted sectors.
- The subsidy per unit, the annual disbursed amount as well as the total amount.
- Its duration.
- Whether it is intended to rebuild an overfished stock or is intended for disaster relief.

A.11 Development Finance

Purpose, value & outcomes

Fisheries and marine conservation can be heavily dependent and influenced by development finance, including Official Development Aid, loans and grants from development banks and, increasingly, support from philanthropic donors. For decades, countries have recognised the importance of transparency in the effectiveness of these financial flows, and several international databases have been established to promote public access to this information. There is now a strong global commitment to public reporting on development finance for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) using the 'Total Official Support for Sustainable Development' Standard. However, significant discrepancies have been found in the level of public reporting on the terms and conditions of development finance projects and programmes, as well as their outcomes. The priority given to blending aid with private finance, such as through the issuing of bonds and debt conversion schemes, increases the importance and challenges of ensuring public accountability, given the limited public understanding of how such financial instruments work.

National authorities must, therefore, publish the following information:

- I. A consolidated list of active projects or funds related to national fisheries and marine conservation, mobilised by national authorities from bilateral, multilateral and philanthropic donors as well as the private sector. This list must include a description of the purpose and expected outcomes, copies of any signed contracts or agreements, the amounts raised and the terms of repayments if applicable, such as those relating to loans or bonds.

- II. A consolidated list of active projects or funds related to fisheries and marine conservation, mobilised by national authorities for a third country, or for a regional or international initiative. This list must include a description of the purpose and expected outcomes, copies of any signed contracts or agreements, the amounts raised and the terms of repayments, such as those relating to loans or bonds.
- III. For all fisheries and marine conservation projects or funds mobilised by national authorities that have been completed in the past three years, the end-of-project evaluation reports, or equivalent.

A.12 **Beneficial Ownership**

Collection, verification & use of information

National fishing authorities are under increasing pressure to identify the beneficial owners of legal entities operating in the fishing sector, including those holding licenses and quotas, as well as those owning vessels used for fishing, transshipment, or transportation. Typically, beneficial owners are understood as the individuals who ultimately own, have control over, or benefit from a legal entity, such as a company, a trust, a foundation, or other similar legal arrangements. This may differ from the information otherwise provided on legal owners. Obtaining such information has become a key component in the global effort to respond to cases of illegal and unsustainable fishing. It can also be necessary to enforce other laws in the fisheries sector, such as those related to foreign ownership, economic concentration and the commercial interests of politically exposed persons, including their role as fishing agents.

Concerns about data privacy may prohibit governments from providing unrestricted public access to beneficial ownership information. Additionally, what is often not made transparent are the rules and procedures for collating, verifying and using beneficial ownership information in the management of the fishing sector, which could extend to cases where vessels or quotas are leased or where legal entities operating in the country's maritime jurisdiction are not registered in the country. A lack of transparency prevents public debate on whether such rules and procedures are adequate and likely to be effective.

National authorities must, therefore, publish the following information:

- I. A succinct summary provided by the principal national fishing authority on the rules and procedures for collecting, verifying and using beneficial ownership information, including:
 - The legal definition of beneficial ownership used for the fishing sector, including an explanation of any divergence from other definitions used in the national legal framework.

- The occasions on which legal entities operating in the domestic and foreign fishing sector are required to provide beneficial ownership information, such as when registering a vessel or obtaining a license or quota. This must include how and by whom beneficial ownership information is gathered and stored, and whether any legal entities are exempt from these requirements.
- The measures used to identify beneficial owners operating in the fishing sector as politically exposed persons.
- The access fishing authorities have to any other government registries on beneficial ownership information, how they use these registries, and how they align ownership information across different sources for consistency.
- The methods used by fishing authorities or authorities relevant to the fisheries sector to verify the accuracy of beneficial ownership information.
- The use of beneficial ownership information to inform decisions on the allocation of vessel registrations, licenses, or quotas in the fishing sector, as well as for their removal.
- The laws or regulations that govern access to beneficial ownership information relevant to the fishing sector beyond government users, including businesses, civil society organisations, the media and the public.

Section B

Engagement with the Fisheries Transparency Initiative



The implementation of the FiTI Standard is voluntary. The intention to do so must come from a country's national government, recognising that by making fisheries management more transparent and inclusive, the FiTI appeals to all stakeholders that appreciate the significant value of marine fisheries, in terms of food & nutrition security, employment, the value to national economies, as well as the cultural significance of fishing. Promoting these positive features of fisheries lies at the heart of the FiTI.

However, while such a commitment demonstrates a sincere intention of the country's government to increase transparency in fisheries management, it should not be misinterpreted as formally implementing the initiative. Only when such a commitment is followed by concrete activities and the subsequent approval of the country's application by the FiTI International Board will the country formally be recognised as a FiTI Implementing country.

B.1 Public Commitment

- I. The government must designate a national authority to sign a written partnership agreement with the FiTI to establish a mutually beneficial collaboration framework between both parties related to enhancing the transparency of marine fisheries management through the implementation of the FiTI Standard. Such an agreement must explicitly state the government's commitment:
 - to work with civil society and business, including industrial fisheries and small-scale fisheries associations, on the implementation of the FiTI; and
 - to ensure that relevant stakeholders, including but not limited to members of the National Multi-Stakeholder Group (section C.4) are able to:
 - Engage actively and effectively in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the FiTI.
 - Operate freely in relation to the FiTI.
 - Express their reasoned opinions about the FiTI as well as broader fisheries governance issues without restraint, coercion or reprisal.
- II. The signed agreement must be publicly announced and widely disseminated by both parties.

After the country's public commitment, it will be referred to as a FiTI Committed Country.

B.2 Preparatory Activities

- I. Within 18 months of declaring its commitment to implement the FiTI the government must:
 - Establish an enabling environment for stakeholder participation (section C).
 - Submit a standardised application to the FiTI International Board.

After the FiTI International Board approves the country's application, it will be referred to as a FiTI Implementing Country.

Section C

Enabling Environment for Stakeholder Participation



Sustainable fisheries management is a complex process that requires balancing economic, environmental, and social needs. No stakeholder can do it alone. Instead, a collaborative approach is needed. That is why each country that implements the FiTI Standard requires an enabling environment for stakeholder participation, consisting of, inter alia, a National Multi-Stakeholder Group that involves the full, active and effective engagement of government, business and civil society, as well as high-level political leadership and operational support.

C.1 **Coordinating Authority**

- I. The government must designate a national authority as the principal and continuous contact to coordinate and facilitate the implementation of the FiTI in the country. This authority must ensure that the government is actively and effectively engaged in the national FiTI implementation process.
- II. The designation and any subsequent changes must be publicly announced.

C.2 **National Focal Point**

- I. The Coordinating Authority must appoint a senior government official to initiate and oversee the FiTI implementation process and act as the government's permanent focal point. This official must have the confidence of all stakeholders, the authority and freedom to coordinate actions on the FiTI implementation across relevant ministries and agencies, and be able to mobilise resources for the FiTI implementation.
- II. The appointment and any subsequent changes must be publicly announced.

C.3 **National Secretariat**

- I. The National Focal Point must ensure the ongoing provision of a properly authorised and resourced National Secretariat to provide administrative and operational support to the National MSG, to which the National Secretariat is accountable.

In case similar secretariats or organisations that support other multi-stakeholder initiatives are already established in the country, the National Focal Point is encouraged to explore operational synergies.

- II. The main contact point(s) of the National Secretariat and any subsequent changes must be publicly announced.

C.4 **National Multi-Stakeholder Group**

- I. The National Focal Point must coordinate the designation of a National Multi-Stakeholder Group (hereafter National MSG) to oversee the implementation of the FiTI (sections D to G). In establishing and maintaining the National MSG, the National Focal Point must ensure that:

- The National MSG comprises of senior representatives from three stakeholder groups:
 - Government, which may also include parliamentarians.
 - Business, including industrial fisheries and small-scale fisheries associations.
 - Civil society, including non-profit organisations, academia, media.
- The invitation to participate in the National MSG is open and made public.
- Each stakeholder group has the right to identify and nominate its own representatives through a process that is independent and free from any suggestion of coercion. It is encouraged that the nomination process considers the desirability of pluralistic and diverse representation.
- The three stakeholder groups in the National MSG are represented equally.

In case a similar and applicable multi-stakeholder platform is already established in the country, the National Focal Point is encouraged to designate it as the National MSG to avoid duplication.

- II. Representatives of the National MSG must be appropriately qualified and actively and effectively engaged in the FiTI.
- III. Representatives of the National MSG must abide to the FiTI Code of Conduct within the scope of their FiTI-related activities.
- IV. The National MSG must agree on clear, and formally documented Terms of Reference for its work, following a set of minimum provisions as provided by the FiTI International Secretariat.
- V. The National MSG must appoint a senior representative as its Chair to steer the work of the National MSG and facilitate the group's decision-making.
- VI. The members of the National MSG, the Chair, the group's approved Terms of Reference, as well as any subsequent changes must be publicly announced.

Part II

FiTI Standard for National Multi-Stakeholder Groups



Section D

Reporting

The FiTI Standard emphasises the need for national authorities to develop and strengthen their own systems for collating and publishing information online in a complete and accessible manner.

For this, the country's National Multi-Stakeholder Group (MSG) – in collaboration with the FiTI International Secretariat – will produce regular FiTI Reports that provide an assessment of the information in the public domain for all transparency requirements set forth in section A of the FiTI Standard.

FiTI Reports also include recommendations from the National MSG to further enhance transparency and participation.

Where existing information is not published by national authorities in the public domain or the information is assessed as inaccessible or inaccurate, the National MSG must collate this information and present it in a temporary Fisheries Information Report.

FiTI Reports will be produced until a country reaches the status of a FiTI Compliant Country. Afterwards, the FiTI will regularly review whether national authorities continue publishing information in accordance with section A of the FiTI Standard, and whether National MSGs continue to issue and monitor recommendations.



D.1 FiTI Report

- I. The National MSG and the FiTI International Secretariat must jointly publish a FiTI Report that:
 - Assesses the status of transparency requirements (section A).
 - Describes the recommendations of the National MSG for the year in which the assessment is undertaken as well as the implementation progress of recommendations from previous years (section E).

The assessment of the transparency requirements is conducted under the responsibility of the FiTI International Secretariat. The FiTI International Secretariat must consult with the National MSG as well as relevant national and international organisations and experts to ensure that the assessment of the transparency requirements is credible and trustworthy.

For each requirement under section A, the assessment will indicate whether information is:

- Published by national authorities.
- Published by national authorities, but is assessed as inaccurate, contradictory or unreliable.
- Not published, despite being available to national authorities.
- Not published because it is not collated or produced by national authorities.
- Not published because the transparency requirement does not apply to the country.

- II. Upon receiving the preliminary assessment report from the FiTI International Secretariat, the National MSG must review these findings and provide comments. The FiTI Report must only be made publicly available when approved by both the National MSG and the FiTI International Secretariat.

The National MSG is encouraged to consult with others outside of the National MSG in undertaking the review of FiTI Reports.

- III. The first FiTI Report must be published within 12 months of the country becoming a FiTI Implementing country, including an assessment of transparency requirements from the previous calendar year, unless otherwise approved by both parties.
- IV. Subsequent FiTI Reports must be published on an annual basis, ensuring that there are no gaps between two consecutive FiTI Reports. FiTI Report must only be published until a country has reached the status of a FiTI Compliant Country.

D.2 Fisheries Information Report

- I. Only in case where national authorities are unable to publish existing information regarding the country's fisheries sector (section A) on government websites, the National MSG must collate and publish this information in an annual Fisheries Information Report, following the same timelines as FiTI Reports. However, such a report must be used only as an interim measure until a FiTI Implementing Country reaches validation eligibility (section H.1).

The FiTI International Secretariat supports National MSGs in producing such temporary Fisheries Information Report, if requested.

D.3 Work Plan

- I. The National MSG must provide regular work plans covering a maximum of 24 months without gaps between each one. The work plan must:
 - Define *objectives* for the reporting period. The primary objective must be to meet the requirements in sections D to F of the FiTI Standard. The National MSG may consider other objectives linked to the FiTI Principles.
 - Identify *constraints* in achieving the agreed objectives, such as a lack of capacity in government agencies, business and civil society or potential legal or regulatory obstacles to FiTI implementation.
 - Specify *activities* to achieve the agreed objectives as well as to address the identified constraints, including who is responsible, the timeframes, costs and funding sources, if applicable.
 - State the *output(s)* for each activity.
- II. The National MSG must approve each work plan and make these accessible online for the public.

The National MSG is encouraged to obtain input from stakeholders outside of the National MSG for its work plan.

Furthermore, the National MSG is encouraged to include regular evaluations of its work plan regarding adherence to the requirements of an 'Enabling Environment for Stakeholder Participation' (section C), 'Progressive Improvements' (section E) and 'Outreach & Public Debates' (section F).

Section E

Progressive Improvements



The FiTI does not expect all countries to have complete data for every transparency requirement set forth in section A from the beginning. Instead, national authorities must disclose the information they have, and where important gaps exist, they must demonstrate improvements over time. As such, engaging with the FiTI is not intended to be a burdensome and costly research activity. It has been designed to ensure that any country can implement it, including those where resources for collating information are limited.

It is the responsibility of a country's National Multi-Stakeholder Group (MSG) to agree jointly on recommendations for addressing such gaps, and for the country's national authorities to act on these recommendations.

E.1 Recommendations

- I. The National MSG must provide recommendations to its national authorities on the following minimum categories:
 - Recommendations to publish information that is available to national authorities but not yet made accessible online.
 - Recommendations to rectify information that has been assessed as inaccurate, contradictory or unreliable.
 - Recommendations to collate or produce information not yet available to national authorities.

The National MSG is encouraged to provide additional recommendations to its national authorities on the following aspects:

- Recommendations to make the published fisheries management information more easily understandable and usable by a non-expert audience.
- Recommendations on measures national authorities can take to improve participatory processes in national fisheries decision-making.
- Recommendations on the provision of additional thematic areas or transparency requirements relevant to fisheries management that exceeds the minimum requirements of the FiTI Standard and that would enable the FiTI implementation process to better address national priorities for the fisheries sector.

- II. Each recommendation must have a clear description, identify the national authority responsible for addressing it, the recommendation's implementation priority and an anticipated due date by which it should be addressed. Recommendations must either be stated in the annual FiTI Report, or, in case a country has reached the status of a FiTI Compliant Country, in the National MSG's work plan.

E.2 Monitoring of Implementation Progress

- I. The National MSG must review the implementation status of prior recommendations annually. This review must either be stated in the annual FiTI Report, or, in case a country has reached the status of a FiTI Compliant Country, in the National MSG's work plan.
- II. The National MSG must publish, on an annual basis, new recommendations, if applicable, as well as information on the implementation progress of recommendations from previous years.

Section F

Outreach & Public Debates



Transparency is a prerequisite for informed public debates on and participation in fisheries policies and for achieving meaningful participation in fisheries decision-making. Therefore, the impact of national FiTI implementations relies on how this information is used to increase an understanding and appreciation of the country's marine fisheries sector and to stimulate public debates on how it is managed and overseen. It also relies on the willingness of decision makers to listen to the ideas and concerns of stakeholders. Through this, the FiTI offers a necessary means to raise levels of openness and public access to information, which can support countries in maintaining or achieving robust democratic governance and accountability in their fisheries sector.

F.1 Information Dissemination

- I. The National MSG must undertake effective outreach activities with national authorities, civil society groups and businesses to inform them of the government's commitment to implement the FiTI, their opportunities to participate in and contribute to the national FiTI implementation process, and how they can exercise active and meaningful oversight of the process.
- II. The National MSG must ensure that each FiTI Report is published online under an open license and widely distributed among key audiences, including government, parliamentarians, businesses, civil society groups, academia, the media, and international stakeholders.

F.2 Public Debate and Participatory Policy Making

- I. The National MSG must ensure that the main findings of each reporting cycle contribute to public debates on how the fisheries sector is managed, enabling fisheries stakeholders as well as the general public to demand reforms towards better governance of their marine fisheries.
- II. The National MSG must ensure that its recommendations contribute to inclusive policy dialogues and broader conversations about national reform efforts.

The National MSG is encouraged to support outreach events, whether organised by government, civil society or business, to spread awareness on and facilitate dialogue on fisheries transparency and stakeholder participation across the entire country.

Furthermore, the National MSG is encouraged to undertake capacity-building efforts, especially with civil society and small-scale fisheries, to improve understanding of fisheries data and information published in FiTI Reports, and to encourage use of such information by fisheries advisory bodies, citizens, the media and others.

Section G

Other Provisions



Countries may face exceptional circumstances that necessitate a deviation from the requirements of the FiTI Standard. In such cases, the National Multi-Stakeholder Group must seek approval from the FiTI International Board for an adapted implementation.

National Multi-Stakeholder Groups may also petition decisions from the FiTI International Board, such as a decision regarding a country's suspension.

G.1 Exceptional Circumstances

G.1.1 Adapted Implementation

- I. In case the National MSG concludes that it faces exceptional circumstances that require a deviation from the FiTI requirements outlined in sections D to F, it must seek approval from the FiTI International Board prior to an adapted implementation. Any such request must explain the rationale for the adapted implementation, indicate implications for the current work plan and be approved by the National Focal Point.
- II. In considering such requests, the FiTI International Board will prioritise the need for consistent treatment between countries and ensure that the FiTI Principles are upheld. This includes ensuring that the country's FiTI implementation is sufficiently inclusive and that the FiTI Report is comprehensive, reliable, and contributes to public debates.
- III. Upon approval by the FiTI International Board, the adapted implementation must be reflected in the upcoming work plan of the National MSG.

G.1.2 Extension

- I. The National MSG may apply for an extension if it is unable to meet the required deadlines of FiTI implementation (i.e. publication of FiTI Report, work plan, as well as undergoing validation) due to exceptional or unforeseen circumstances. The FiTI International Board will assess extension requests by the following criteria:
 - The request must be made in advance of the deadline and be approved by the National Focal Point.
 - The exceptional and unforeseen circumstance(s) that caused the delay must be explained in the request from the National MSG.
 - The National MSG must demonstrate that it has been making continuous progress towards meeting the deadline. The FiTI International Board will consider:
 - The Enabling Environment for Stakeholder Participation (section C), in particular a clear, strong commitment from the government and the functioning of the National MSG.
 - The status and quality of information in the public domain, including demonstrating progressive improvement in collating and publishing information online.
 - The status and quality of FiTI Reports, including meaningful progress in meeting the requirements for timely reporting.
- II. Extensions are not granted by the FiTI International Board to extend timeframes for suspension (section I.2.1).

G.1.3 Hiatus

- I. The National MSG may apply for hiatus in cases where political instability, conflict, a pandemic or natural disaster manifestly prevent the country from adhering to a significant aspect of the FiTI Principles or requirements. To request a hiatus and temporarily pause the country's FiTI implementation, the National Focal Point must send an application for hiatus to the FiTI International Board on behalf of the National MSG, explaining the relevant circumstances.
- II. The National MSG may apply to the FiTI International Board to have the hiatus status lifted at any time. Such a request must document the steps agreed by the national authorities to restart the FiTI implementation process. The FiTI International Board will lift the hiatus status if it is satisfied that the reasons for the hiatus have been addressed. Upon lifting the status, the FiTI International Board will consider setting new reporting and validation deadlines as appropriate and may choose to postpone the country's next scheduled validation in accordance with the amount of time the country spent on hiatus.
- III. A country on hiatus that is unable to restart its FiTI implementation process within 12 – 18 months will be subject to a FiTI International Board review for possible delisting.
- IV. A country on hiatus that is unable to restart its FiTI implementation process by the 24th month will be delisted. A country delisted due to prolonged hiatus can reapply when circumstances improve and it once again has the capacity to implement the FiTI.

G.2 Appeal

- I. With regard to decisions by the FiTI International Board to impose consequences of non-compliance (section I.2), the National MSG may petition the FiTI International Board to review its decision at an upcoming FiTI International Board meeting.

Part III

FiTI Standard for International Governance



Section H

Validations of National FiTI Implementations



Parts I and II of the FiTI Standard lay out minimum requirements for national authorities and National Multi-Stakeholder Groups to implement the FiTI Standard. To hold all FiTI countries to the same global standard and further promote dialogue and learning at the country level, compliance with these requirements is regularly validated by the FiTI International Board.

Countries that seek to obtain the status of a FiTI Compliant Country must first reach validation eligibility by demonstrating adherence to the FiTI Standard's transparency requirements. If deemed as eligible by the FiTI International Board, an independent validation assessment will be conducted on the country. After successfully undergoing its validation assessment, a country is declared a FiTI Compliant country. This status is maintained if the country continues to adhere to the FiTI Standard throughout subsequent validation reviews.

H.1 Validation Eligibility

- I. As part of the annual FiTI Report (section D.1) the FiTI International Secretariat assesses the country's level of transparency for the transparency requirements under section A of the FiTI Standard. A country can only reach validation eligibility if:
 - Information that is assessed in the country's most recent FiTI Report as being collated or produced by national authorities is published on government websites. Countries cannot reach validation eligibility if such available information:
 - is withheld by national authorities;
 - is assessed as inaccurate, contradictory or unreliable; and/or
 - is published primarily via temporary reports of the National MSG, such as Fisheries Information Reports (section D.2), instead of by national authorities (e.g. on government websites).
 - Information that is assessed in the country's most recent FiTI Report as not yet collated or produced by national authorities is addressed by a recommendation of the National MSG (section E).
 - FiTI Reports have been published on an annual basis with no gaps between consecutive reports.
- II. A country that fulfils the requirements referred to under I., as determined by the FiTI International Secretariat, and wishes to undergo a Validation Assessment in order to be recognised as a FiTI Compliant Country must submit a written request to the FiTI International Board. The request must be submitted by the National Focal Point with the approval of the National MSG.
- III. The FiTI International Board will review the request and make the final decision whether the Validation Assessment process will be initiated. The decision of the FiTI International Board cannot be appealed.
- IV. A country must reach validation eligibility within five annual reporting periods (section D.1). Otherwise, the country will be suspended (section I.2.1).

H.2 Validation Assessment

The assessment of a country's compliance with the FiTI Standard is spread across two phases of validation.

H.2.1 Independent Validation

- I. The FiTI International Board must appoint an Independent Validator, who reports to the Board.
- II. The Independent Validator must conduct an assessment of each requirement for the following sections of the FiTI Standard:
 - Enabling Environment for Stakeholder Participation (section C).
 - Progressive Improvements (section E).
 - Outreach & Public Debates (section F).

The assessment must be based on reviewing the country's relevant information, discussions with the FiTI International Secretariat as well as consulting with stakeholders. This will include meetings with the country's National MSG and other key stakeholders, including those that are not directly participating in the National MSG.

- III. The level of compliance for each individual requirement of sections C, E and F must be stated by applying one of the following designations:
 - *Fully compliant*: Validation demonstrates that all required aspects have been implemented and that the broader objective of the requirement has been fulfilled.
 - *Largely compliant*: Validation demonstrates that significant aspects have been implemented and that the broader objective of the requirement has been fulfilled.
 - *Partially compliant*: Validation demonstrates that significant aspects have not been implemented and that the broader objective of the requirement is not fulfilled.
 - *Not compliant*: Validation demonstrates that all or nearly all required aspects have not been implemented, and that the broader objective of the requirement is far from being fulfilled.
 - *Not applicable*: Validation demonstrates that the requirement is not applicable in the country.

IV. The Independent Validator must prepare a draft report, including an initial assessment against the individual requirements outlined in sections C, E and F. Furthermore, the draft report must document:

- Any indications for breaches of the FiTI Principles and the spirit of the initiative (section I.1.2).
- Efforts that exceed the requirements or go beyond the scope of the FiTI Standard, such as actions or activities of the National MSG that are ‘encouraged’ throughout the FiTI Standard or situations where the National MSG decided to include information outside of the minimum requirements (as outlined in section A) to further address national priorities for the country’s fisheries sector.
- The Independent Validator’s recommendations to further strengthen the impact of the FiTI in the country.

The National MSG, the Chair of the FiTI International Board as well as the FiTI International Secretariat will be invited to comment on the draft report. Furthermore, the Independent Validator, the FiTI International Secretariat, as well as the Chair of the FiTI International Board, have the right to share copies of the draft report on an embargoed basis with other experts who can further enhance the quality and reliability of the draft report.

V. The Independent Validator must take into account relevant feedback before finalising the Validation Report for submission to the FiTI International Board. The Validation Report must not include a recommendation for the overall compliance designation of the country.

H.2.2 Compliance Determination

- I. Based on the submitted Validation Report, the FiTI International Board determines a country’s overall compliance with the FiTI Standard. In doing so, the FiTI International Board will take into account the following factors:
- The country’s current economic, cultural, and political landscape, as well as the magnitude and complexity of the fisheries sector of the country.
 - The nature of the outstanding requirements and how close the requirements are to being met.
 - Other barriers to meeting requirements, such as but not limited to state fragility and recent or ongoing political change, and the extent to which the National MSG has undertaken actions to resolve barriers encountered.
 - The good faith efforts undertaken by the national authorities and the National MSG to comply with the requirements.

- The reasons and justifications for not complying with the requirements.
- Any plans agreed by between the national authorities and the National MSG to address the requirements in the future.

In assessing a FiTI Implementing Country's overall compliance, the FiTI International Board will apply the same designations as used for the assessment of individual requirements (section H.2.1.III). The decision of the FiTI International Board cannot be appealed.

H.3 Validation Reviews

- I. FiTI Compliant Countries must undergo a validation review every three years. The FiTI International Secretariat initiates the validation review process upon request by the FiTI International Board. A National MSG may request an extension of this timeframe from the FiTI International Board (section G.1.2).
- II. The FiTI International Secretariat must conduct a review of each requirement for the following sections of the FiTI Standard:
 - Transparency in Marine Fisheries Management (section A).
 - Enabling Environment for Stakeholder Participation (section C).
 - Progressive Improvements (section E).
 - Outreach & Public Debates (section F).

The level of compliance for each individual requirement must be stated by applying the same designations as outlined in section H.2.1.III.

The review must be based on reviewing the country's relevant information as well as consulting with stakeholders. This will include meetings with the country's National MSG and other key stakeholders, including those that are not directly participating in the National MSG.

Particular attention must be given to any indications for breaches of the FiTI Principles and the spirit of the initiative (section I.1.2).

Additional efforts that go beyond the requirements of the FiTI Standard, including efforts by the National MSG to address national priorities for the fisheries sector, must be documented.

- III. The FiTI International Secretariat must prepare a draft report, including an initial assessment against the individual requirements outlined in sections A, C, E and F.

Furthermore, the draft report must document:

- Any indications for breaches of the FiTI Principles and the spirit of the initiative (section I.1.2).
- Efforts that exceed the requirements or go beyond the scope of the FiTI Standard, such as actions or activities of the National MSG that are 'encouraged' throughout the FiTI Standard or situations where the National MSG decided to include information outside of the minimum requirements (as outlined in section A) to further address national priorities for the country's fisheries sector.
- The FiTI International Secretariat's recommendations to further strengthen the impact of the FiTI in the country.

The National MSG, the Chair of the FiTI International Board, and, if deemed necessary, external experts will be invited to comment on the draft report.

- IV. The FiTI International Secretariat must take into account relevant feedback before finalising the Review Report for submission to the FiTI International Board. The Review Report must not include a recommendation for the overall compliance designation of the country.
- V. Based on the submitted Review Report, the FiTI International Board determines a country's overall compliance with the FiTI Standard, following the provisions set forth in section H.2.1.III. The decision of the FiTI International Board cannot be appealed.

Section I

Non-Compliance with the FiTI Standard



The status as a FiTI Implementing Country or a FiTI Compliant Country can be lost if the country fails to adhere to the FiTI Standard, including a failure to publish existing information for the transparency requirements, insufficient actions by national authorities regarding the recommendations from its National Multi-Stakeholder Group, or where there is evidence that multi-stakeholder participation is not being achieved effectively.

I.1 Types of Non-Compliance

I.1.1 Non-Adherence to Deadlines

FiTI countries must adhere to the following deadlines as stipulated throughout the FiTI Standard:

- Reaching FiTI Implementing Country status within the timeframe set forth in section B.2.
- Publishing annual FiTI Reports within the timeframe and frequency set forth in section D.1.
- Publishing work plans within the timeframe and frequency set forth in section D.3.
- Reaching validation eligibility within the timeframe set forth in section H.1.

Non-adherence to these deadlines will result in an automatic suspension (section I.2.1), unless otherwise determined by the FiTI International Board. If a country has submitted an extension request prior to a missed deadline (section G.1.2), the suspension will not take effect until the FiTI International Board has addressed the extension request.

I.1.2 Breach of Principles and Spirit of the Initiative

FiTI countries must adhere to the FiTI Principles and the overall spirit of the initiative. Given the importance of stakeholder participation in the national FiTI implementation process, as well as the publication of credible fisheries information by national authorities, the following two aspects constitute a breach of the Principles and the spirit of the FiTI:

- I. *Restriction on the participation of a stakeholder group or its representatives.* In accordance with the FiTI Principles 3 and 5, and as set out in section C, the ability of all stakeholder representatives to participate fully, freely and actively in the FiTI implementation process is key to ensuring that transparency leads to greater civic engagement and accountability. Therefore, any restriction(s) imposed that hinder their participation in activities related, but not limited to, the country's National MSG composition and meetings; stakeholder side-meetings on the FiTI, including interactions with National MSG representatives; the production of FiTI Reports; producing materials or conducting analysis on FiTI Reports; expressing views related to FiTI activities; and expressing good-faith views related to the governance of marine fisheries, are considered to constitute a fundamental breach of the initiative's Principles and requirements.

For purposes of this section, references to “stakeholders” include representatives from the three stakeholder groups (government, business and civil society) and in particular civil society and small-scale fisheries representatives who are substantively involved in the FiTI implementation process, including, but not limited to, members of the National MSG.

- ii. *Wilfully providing misinformation and / or wilfully withholding information required for FiTI implementation:* In accordance with the FiTI Principles 4 and 6, and as set out in section A, national authorities of FiTI countries must publish their available information on the fisheries sector in a complete and accessible manner on government websites. Accessible and credible information is important to ensure that the information provided in the FiTI can lead to better fisheries management and governance. Therefore, deliberately withheld information, information wilfully being destroyed and / or information provided with the intent to mislead, that was not the result of an honest mistake, are considered to constitute a fundamental breach of the initiative’s Principles and requirements.

Concerns, allegations or reports of potential or actual breaches of Principles and the spirit of the initiative, such as, but not limited to, identified through validation assessments, validation reviews or raised through the FiTI Compliance Channel, are subject to FiTI International Board investigation. Such concerns, allegations or reports should first be discussed with the country’s National Focal Point as well as the National MSG, subject to any safety concerns that an impacted party may have regarding directly raising such issues domestically. In cases where the FiTI International Board has insufficient information to make a decision or where the FiTI International Board is not comfortable addressing such matter directly with national counterparts, the FiTI International Board may task the FiTI International Secretariat with gathering information about the situation and submitting a report to the FiTI International Board.

If the outcome of an investigation by the FiTI International Board demonstrates conclusively that a country has breached one or more aspects of the Principles or the spirit of the FiTI the country will be delisted.

1.1.3 Less than “Fully Compliant” Validation Outcome

When the overall outcome of a Validation Assessment of a FiTI Implementing Country is:

- *Largely compliant*, the country will be requested to undertake corrective actions within the timeframe set forth by the FiTI International Board. If the country fails to implement the corrective actions in a satisfactory manner, as determined by the FiTI International Board, the country will be suspended.

- *Partially compliant*, the country will be suspended and requested to undertake corrective actions within the timeframe set forth by the FiTI International Board. If the country fails to implement the corrective actions in a satisfactory manner, as determined by the FiTI International Board, the country will be delisted.
- *Not compliant*, the country will be delisted.

When the overall outcome of a Validation Review of a FiTI Compliant Country is:

- *Largely compliant*, the country will be suspended and requested to undertake corrective actions within the timeframe set forth by the FiTI International Board. If the country fails to implement the corrective actions in a satisfactory manner, as determined by the FiTI International Board, the country will be delisted.
- *Partially compliant or Not compliant*, the country will be delisted.

1.2 Consequences of Non-Compliance

1.2.1 Suspension

- I. Suspension of a country is a temporary mechanism. The country will have up to 12 months to address the reasons for suspension, as determined by the FiTI International Board. During the period of suspension, a country will have the status “Suspended”.
- II. If the matter is resolved within the given timeframe, the country’s previous status will be re-instated. If the matter has not been resolved within the given timeframe, the country will be delisted.

1.2.2 Delisting

- I. The FiTI International Board will delist a country from the initiative if:
 - The country has been subject to suspension (section 1.2.1), and the matter has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the FiTI International Board within the given timeframe.
 - The country has been on prolonged hiatus (section G.1.3) and is still unable to re-commence the FiTI implementation process.
 - The overall compliance determination of a country’s Validation Assessment is:
 - *Partially compliant*, and the country failed to implement corrective actions to the satisfaction of the FiTI International Board within the given timeframe.
 - *Not compliant*.

- The overall compliance determination of a country's Validation Review is:
 - *Largely compliant*, and the country failed to implement corrective actions to the satisfaction of the FiTI International Board within the given timeframe.
 - *Partially compliant or Not compliant*.

Additionally, where it is manifestly clear that a significant aspect of the FiTI Principles or requirements is not adhered to by a country, particularly if the offence is severe or reoccurring, the FiTI International Board reserves the right to delist the country directly.

- II. A delisted country may reapply for admission as a FiTI Implementing Country at any time, after implementing the requirements set forth in sections B and C. With respect to assessing applications of previously delisted countries, the FiTI International Board will also assess previous experiences, including previous barriers to effective implementation, and the implementation of corrective actions.

1.3 Responding to Appeal Request

- I. In accordance with provision G.2, a National MSG may petition the FiTI International Board to review its decision regarding the application of consequences of non-compliance.
- II. In responding to such a request, the FiTI International Board will consider the facts of the case, the need to preserve the integrity of the FiTI and balance the principle of consistent treatment between countries against the country's current economic, cultural, and political landscape. The FiTI International Board makes the final decision.



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