



Fisheries
Transparency
Initiative

33rd meeting of the FiTI International Board

19 February 2026, Conference Call

Meeting Minutes

ID: BM-33_2026_MM

Provided by: FiTI International Secretariat

Date: 13.04.2026

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Date	19 February 2026
Time	1.00 – 3.00 p.m. Universal Time Coordinated (UTC)
Venue	Conference Call (Zoom)
Supporting document(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 2026 Workplan of the FiTI International Secretariat – draft (date: 6 February 2026) ▪ Annual Financial Statement 2024 of the FiTI, including Audit Report by Pool & Patel Chartered Accountant (date: 25 September 2025)
Language	The language of the FiTI International Board is English. Simultaneous translation between English and Spanish has been provided for this meeting.

Outcomes of meeting

1. Welcome and administration

The newly elected Chair of the FiTI International Board, Dr Audun LEM (herein referred to as 'Chair'), opened the 33rd International Board meeting by welcoming all participating Members and Observers. The Chair voiced his excitement of chairing his first Board meeting, after attending the previous meeting in December 2025 as a guest.

The Chair informed participants that he intends to hold individual conversations with all Board Members and Observers over the coming months to further strengthen cooperation and communication within the Board.

By way of introduction, the Chair highlighted his professional background as an economist with nearly 29 years of experience at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), from which he recently retired. His expertise covers fisheries and agriculture policy, markets and trade, research, certification, and related governance matters. He noted that he has followed the development of the FiTI since its early stages, including prior to its formal establishment, and expressed his appreciation for the progress achieved to date. The Chair emphasised his awareness of the responsibility associated with supporting the Secretariat and the Board in advancing the FiTI's objectives.

After all eligible participants joined, Sven BIERMANN, Executive Director (ED) of the FiTI International Secretariat (herein referred to as 'Secretariat'), determined that a quorum for this meeting was not reached¹:

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

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

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

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



The ED informed the participants that, according to Article 14 (8) of the FiTI constitution, aspects agreed during Board Meetings held *without* a quorum can become binding decisions by soliciting absent members to join in the decisions afterwards. For decisions to become binding the support of at least the same number of members is needed to establish the initial quorum. The Chair requested the Secretariat to reach out to all absent members via email no later than one week after the meeting to confirm the decisions taken during this meeting.

The Secretariat sent an email to the following Board Members on Thursday, 26 February 2026: Rocio Parra CORTÉS, Estelle JONES³, Nestor ROCHE⁴, Daniel SKERRITT⁵, Dawda Foday SAINE⁶, and Carlos (Cadu) VILLACA⁷. After their responses, it was determined that the decisions taken during the 33rd meeting are binding.

Furthermore, the Chair noted that prior to this meeting, Board Member Annie TOURETTE request the addition of a discussion related to the upcoming Our Ocean Conference (OOC) in Kenya, especially related to the so-called “Mombasa declaration”, led by the Coalition for Fisheries Transparency (CFT). The Chair proposed that due to time constraints caused by the interpretation (maximum duration of Board meetings is set to two hours), this item will be discussed under the agenda item for the 2026 workplan, where it is already included, instead of adding a separate agenda item. This proposal was accepted by all participants.

2. 2026 Workplan of the FiTI International Secretariat

The Chair asked the ED to present the key parameters of the 2026 Workplan of the FiTI International Secretariat. As an opening remark, the ED noted that the purpose of this annual workplan is to document the Secretariat’s pursued objectives, core activities, and anticipated financial budget to advance transparency in marine fisheries management globally for the period starting on 01 January and ending on 31 December 2026. The plan is based on the overall resources available and on realistic expectations of what can be accomplished in that time framework.

Furthermore, the workplan has a dual purpose: it serves as a **planning tool** for the Secretariat to ensure the efficient use of resources to achieve its objectives; it also serves

³ All seven decisions were confirmed via email on 26 February 2026.

⁴ The first six decisions were confirmed via email on 2 March 2026. Additional information to approve decision no. 7 was requested by Nestor.

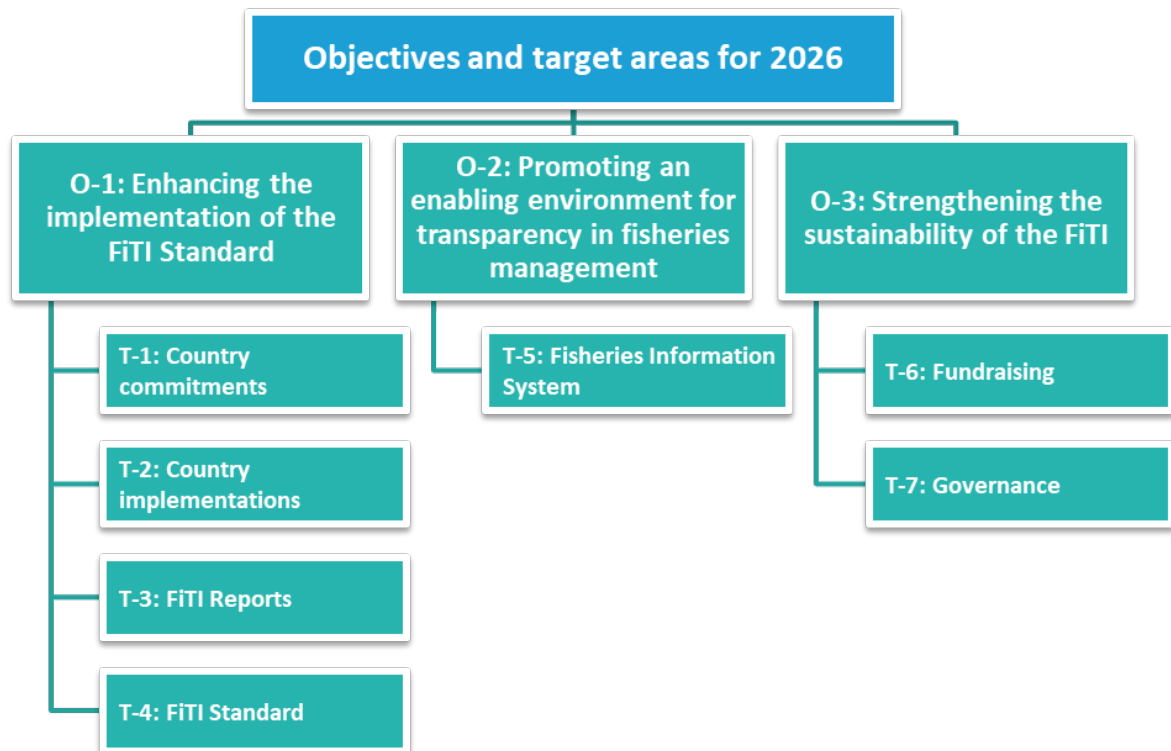
⁵ All seven decisions were confirmed via email on 2 March 2026.

⁶ All seven decisions were confirmed via email on 26 February 2026.

⁷ All seven decisions were confirmed via email on 26 February 2026.

as an **accountability tool** for the Board, through which it can approve the Secretariat's priorities, activities, and budgets, as well as monitor the Secretariat's work and results against performance indicators.

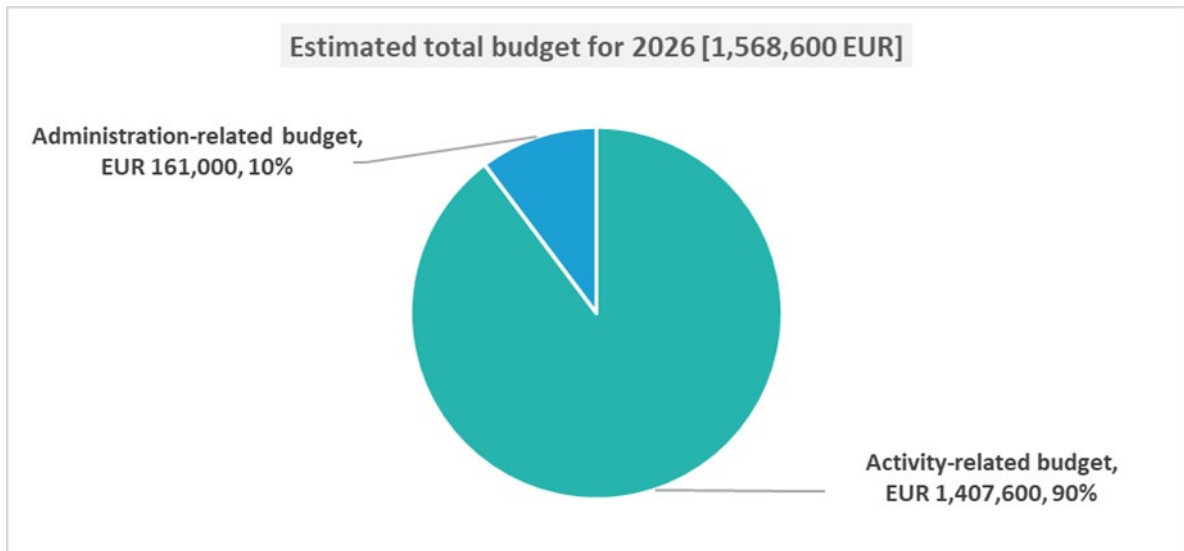
Based on this proposed workplan, the FiTI International Secretariat plans to pursue **three objectives [O]** with a total number of **7 target areas [T]** in 2026:



In pursuing these objectives, the International Secretariat strives to accomplish the following targets for calendar year 2026:

- Five national governments made a commitment to implement the FiTI.
- Five applications from FiTI Committed Countries are submitted to the FiTI International Board to become FiTI Implementing countries.
- Ten FiTI Reports are jointly approved and published by National MSGs and the FiTI International Secretariat.
- Six TAKING STOCK transparency assessments are published and widely disseminated in two regions (i.e. Caribbean, Pacific).
- The Fisheries Information System (FIS) is deployed to five FiTI countries.
- Commitment(s) for up to 500k EUR in new activity-related funding are obtained (i.e. signed by both parties), which includes funding from one new donor.

The ED highlighted that in order to pursue these objectives and target areas, an annual budget of 1,568,600 EUR (activity-related budget as well as administration-related budget) is required⁸. He noted that this anticipated budget is almost identical to the 2025 budget (1,591,000 EUR).



However, the ED stated that approx. 14% of the anticipated budget (229,800 EUR) has not yet been secured. Failure to secure the entire budget will require the Secretariat to reduce the aspired objectives and targets; to utilise unrestricted (institutional) funding, if available,⁹ to utilise retained earnings from previous periods¹⁰; and/or to adjust the Secretariat's internal cost structure.

The ED also provided information on the detailed breakdown of the work plan's objectives and target areas into concrete activities, deliverables, and cost allocations. In particular, the ED emphasised that Objective 1 constitutes the main focus of the 2026 Workplan, with more than three-quarters of the total budget allocated to enhancing the implementation of the FiTI Standard.

The Chair thanked the ED and the Secretariat for preparing the workplan and expressed his expectations that these objectives and target areas will again contribute to the overall growth and sustainability of the initiative. Afterward, the Chair, Members and Observers of the Board provided their feedback on the workplan:

⁸ The administration-related budget covers general and administrative costs, which are not covered by specific activities (e.g. grants). This includes e.g. accounting and auditing costs, insurances, rent, office supplies.

⁹ For example, to cover parts of the underfunded activity-related budget.

¹⁰ According to the 2024 Annual Financial Statement, the FiTI's retained earnings (i.e. equity) amounts to 1,377,678 SCR (approx. 83k EUR).

- Several Board Members inquired about the Secretariat’s approach to close the current funding gap. The ED informed the participants that discussions are ongoing with several existing as well as new donors, including the Moore Foundation, Oak Foundation, UNDP, and others, but stressed the importance of broadening FiTI’s donor base, especially given the current geopolitical uncertainties. He further shared his perception that governmental donors, particularly from Europe, remain more receptive to governance and transparency initiatives.

The Chair emphasised the need for all Board Members and Observers to proactively share funding ideas and opportunities with him and the Secretariat, in order to support the continuous growth of the initiative. Given the ED’s participation at the upcoming 2nd FAO COFI-SC meeting on Fisheries Management in Iceland, Annie TOURETTE stated that she will put the ED in touch with one of their participating donors.

- Ketakandriana RAFITOSON expressed appreciation for the Secretariat’s achievements in 2025, particularly the official launch of the Fisheries Information System (FIS). She raised the question about the plausibility of obtaining commitments from five national governments to implement the FiTI, considering the current global situation as well as the previous year’s lower-than-anticipated commitments. She further raised concerns regarding donor concentration risks, particularly the reliance on the BMZ and the Moore Foundation, and asked what contingency planning would be applied should the funding gap persist mid-year.

The ED acknowledged that the target of five new commitments is ambitious but realistic, given that the Secretariat remains in ongoing discussions with approximately 19 countries, of which 7–8 show a strong likelihood of joining the FiTI within 2026. This includes several countries that were expected to already join in 2025, but which needed more time and information to make a final decision.

Regarding donor concentration risks, the ED clarified that discussions are ongoing with several potential donors and that efforts are underway to broaden the funding base. He did not foresee immediate risks regarding BMZ funding but acknowledged uncertainties related to the Moore Foundation grant and broader geopolitical dynamics.

Furthermore, he noted that the FiTI is primarily funded through grants related to development aid, which do not foresee engaging developed (e.g. Northern) countries.

Related to this, Hugh GOVAN underlined that one important weakness in the global positioning of the FiTI is the perception that transparency is something primarily demanded of “developing” countries and this attracts criticism from them. He

stressed the need to give higher priority to engaging developed / Northern countries with the FiTI Standard – both to ensure their own transparency and to reduce asymmetries and perceptions of abusive North–South relations – and suggested that this should be reflected in the Workplan’s milestones and strategic focus.

- Annie TOURETTE raised questions regarding the Coalition for Fisheries Transparency (CFT) and the so-called “Mombasa Declaration”, requesting information from the Secretariat regarding the level of collaboration between the FiTI and CFT and whether the Secretariat had been involved in the drafting of this declaration. Furthermore, she suggested exploring opportunities to leverage the momentum surrounding the Our Ocean Conference (OOC) to enhance FiTI’s visibility among governments and donors. Hugh GOVAN supported Annie’s remarks and emphasised the importance of ensuring that fisheries transparency initiatives do not regress to non-measurable pledges. He stressed that the FiTI Standard represents the only measurable global framework for transparency of fisheries management, and emphasised the endorsement of the FiTI by small-scale fisher organisations from six continents, calling on their governments to, inter alia, “Publish, to the minimum standards of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI), all relevant information, including legislation, fishing authorisations, data on performance and the rationale for management regulations”.¹¹ He further noted that, despite the progress of the initiative, “FiTI and transparency in general is no more easy a sell than before”. He urged that the workplan give greater attention to how FiTI can make transparency more desirable for governments, including by demonstrating and communicating more clearly the tangible governance, social and economic benefits associated with implementing the FiTI Standard.

The ED informed the Board that monthly coordination calls are held between him and the ED of the CFT to align outreach and communication activities (e.g. in Fiji and Senegal). While these calls are helpful for broader country coordination, fundamental differences between the CFT and the FiTI remain. The CFT still frames transparency solely as a tool to fight IUU fishing and lacks attention for small-scale fisheries. Furthermore, the CFT is approaching governments directly to obtain their endorsements of the Coalition’s Charter but continues lacking any accountability mechanisms (unlike the validation procedures of the FiTI Standard). Also, while it was agreed in principle that in situations where governments have embraced the CFT Charter but are not yet implementing the FiTI, CFT would support in creating the enabling conditions by which a government may subsequently become a FiTI country, this has not yielded in any concrete discussions or even government commitments.

¹¹ “A Call to Action” from small-scale fisheries (<https://www.ssfcalltoaction.org/>)

This is mainly due to the CFT's approach of allowing governments to pick only certain principles of the Charter, even when publicly communicating a pledge to the overall Charter. It has shown that, in most cases, governments are selecting only those principles directly related to combatting IUU fishing, and not wider fisheries management transparency efforts.

The ED confirmed that the Secretariat is in advanced discussions with the German BMZ and other partners to submit a side event proposal for the upcoming OOC in Kenya to ensure broad publicity about the FiTI and the updated Standard.

Furthermore, Hugh recalled that the risk identified in previous workplans that "other transparency efforts dilute existing transparency efforts" has, in his view, already materialised, particularly in regions where definitions of transparency are still unclear. He therefore reiterated that the proposed mitigation measure to "increase, strengthen and implement communication campaigns related to the FiTI Standard, our theory of change and to highlight social and economic benefits of increased transparency (e.g. food & nutrition security, economic equality, democratic participation, access to climate finance), including through active outreach to journalists and media outlets" should be treated as a key strategic priority in the Workplan rather than as an optional activity.

- Hugh welcomed the plan to proceed with TAKING STOCK transparency assessments and noted that these can highlight how easy and "safe" for administrations it may be to resolve certain transparency gaps. He nevertheless questioned the rationale for the selection of countries expected to make commitments compared to those selected for TAKING STOCK assessments. He suggested that the workplan should more explicitly articulate the strategy linking TAKING STOCK to future country commitments, including the criteria for selecting countries for each of these tracks.
- Finally, Hugh reiterated previous remarks regarding the importance of demonstrating and communicating tangible governance and economic benefits of transparency to strengthen the case for government engagement. The ED emphasised that the Secretariat's #beneFiTIing campaign is currently being finalised and will be launched prior to the Our Ocean Conference.

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

Decision [BM-33_2026_D01]:

The FiTI International approved the 2026 Workplan of the FiTI International Secretariat, including the overall budget of 1,568,600 EUR and the proposed allocation into an activity-related and administration-related budget.

3. Audited Annual Financial Statement 2024

The ED noted that during the 26th meeting in December 2024, the Board made the following decision [BM-26_2024_D-03]: *'The International Board approved the appointment of the Seychelles-based audit company Pool & Patel Chartered Accountants to conduct an independent audit on FiTI's 2024 annual financial statement, which should be presented to the FiTI International Board by the end of June 2025.'*

The ED provided a brief overview of the 2024 Annual Financial Statement (AFS). He stated that the FiTI's AFS for 2024 has been prepared by the Secretariat and then audited by the engaged auditor Pool & Patel in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs). According to their audit statement *"In our opinion, the accompanying financial statements of the Association are prepared, in all material respects, in accordance with the requirements of the Seychelles Association Act."*

After a brief overview of key financial indicators and trends, the ED also explained the delay in presenting the audited AFS to the Board, which was caused by a request from the auditor to obtain a legal opinion regarding the engagement of the FiTI's Employer-of-Record service provider and potential implications related to Seychelles' Income and Non-Monetary Benefits Tax Act. Following the legal confirmation by Seychelles-based law firm Rivard Nariman, the auditor approved the AFS.

The Chair thanked the ED and noted that, while the organisation's equity has increased incrementally, its reserves remain modest compared to the annual operating budget of approximately 1.5 million EUROS, providing limited flexibility for unplanned expansion or support to new countries not covered by current grant agreements.

Alfred NKURU inquired whether any specific audit concerns or qualifications had been raised that would require Board attention. The ED confirmed that no such concerns were identified, besides the mentioned request for legal opinion, and that the audited statement had been approved without qualifications.

Questions were raised regarding the internal procedures of the Secretariat related to the annual financial closing. The ED emphasised that approx. 10% of the overall budget is used for administrative purposes, demonstrating the operational effectiveness of the Secretariat, given that similar global initiatives often require a much higher operational budget. However, this is also because several key administrative functions, such as Finance & Controlling, Human Resources and IT are performed by existing staff members (mainly the ED) instead of dedicated personnel. As the Secretariat has grown to 18 full-time staff members, several Board Members noted that it should become a priority to engage dedicated personnel for such administrative functions, in particular for Finance & Controlling, to relieve the ED of some of those time-consuming activities. In addition, Tony

LAZAZZARA note that managing payroll, taxation, and financial compliance across multiple jurisdictions significantly increases administration complexity. He emphasised that, should additional funding become available, priority should be given to strengthening the financial management capacity within the Secretariat.

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

Decision [BM-33_2026_D02]:

The International Board approved the FiTI's Annual Financial Statement for 2024 (including the Audit Report, as provided by Pool & Patel Chartered Accountants of Seychelles) with a total equity, deferred grants, and liabilities sum of SCR 6,381,541.

Afterwards, the ED recalled that per article 23 (1) of the constitution of the association of the FiTI (as of 13 May 2021): the *'FiTI International Board shall appoint an external, independent auditor to annually audit the finances of the FiTI and to present a written audit report to the FiTI International Board, subject to funding availability. The Executive Director must substantiate the financial inability to perform an annual audit to the FiTI International Board, and the allocation of funds for the annual audit should be given priority in the budgeting process.'*

The participating Board Members reached the following decision by consensus:

Decision [BM-33_2026_D03]:

The International Board approved the appointment of the Seychelles-based audit company Pool & Patel Chartered Accountants to conduct an independent audit on FiTI's 2025 annual financial statement, which should be presented to the FiTI International Board by the end of July 2026.

4. New milestones for national FiTI implementations

The Chair invited Karine YOUNG from the Secretariat to introduce the agenda item regarding the determination of new milestones under FiTI Standard 2.0.

Karine recalled that the FiTI has launched an updated version of the [FiTI Standard](#) (v2.0), the first major update since the Standard's initial release in April 2017. The updated Standard includes several enhancements, including improvements to the national implementation process. One such improvement is the clear provision of implementation milestones for countries. For example, in the previous FiTI Standard (v1.1) there was no specific timeframe until when a committed country needs to implement the sign-up steps

and reach the status of a FiTI Candidate Country. Therefore, countries may have been associated with the FiTI as a committed country for too long. She noted that with the release of the updated FiTI Standard 2.0, the Board now needs to determine such implementation milestones for countries which have already joined the FiTI. This relates to committed, implementing (previously referred to as Candidate) and compliant countries.

Karine reminded the Board that failing to adhere to these new implementation milestones *“will result in an automatic suspension (section I.2.1), unless otherwise determined by the FiTI International Board”* (section I.1).¹²

FiTI Committed Countries

Karine noted that, as of today, seven countries are listed as FiTI Committed Countries, for which an implementation milestone needs to be determined by when the status of an FiTI Implementing Country must be reached. According to the updated FiTI Standard 2.0 (section B.2) *“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.”*

Karine shared and briefly elaborated the Secretariat’s proposal for those seven countries:

FiTI Committed Country	Commitment date	# of months since commitment ¹³	New milestone [Secretariat’s proposal]
Guinea	November 2022	38	31 August 2026
Chile	April 2024	21	31 December 2026
Comoros	July 2024	18	31 December 2026
Ghana	July 2024	18	31 December 2026
Sierra Leone	September 2024	16	31 December 2026
Panama	October 2024	15	31 December 2026
Liberia	May 2025	8	31 December 2026

¹² According to section I.2.1 of the FiTI Standard *“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”. If a country has been subject to suspension, and the matter has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the FiTI International Board within the given timeframe, the country will be delisted from the initiative.*

¹³ As of January 2026.

Karine noted that Guinea has experienced prolonged delays due to political processes, including ministerial decrees and government transitions required to formalise the National MSG. Given the extended duration of its committed status, the Secretariat proposed an earlier deadline to ensure alignment with the new Standard and to avoid repetition of previous prolonged cases. The ED added that Guinea is strategically important for the FiTI, as its to-be established National Fisheries Council is designated to serve also as the FiTI Multi-Stakeholder Group, demonstrating strong institutional alignment with the FiTI requirements.

Hugh GOVAN welcomed the introduction of structured timelines and emphasised the importance of political timing. He suggested that political cycles, such as changes in government, may affect implementation and questioned whether uniform deadlines were appropriate in all cases.

Alfred NKURU supported the proposal and emphasised that political transitions can also present opportunities, as new administrations may be motivated to demonstrate reform commitments.

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

Decision [BM-33_2026_D04]:

The International Board approved the following new implementation milestones for *FiTI Committed Countries* to submit a standardised application to the FiTI International Board:

- **Guinea: 31 August 2026**
- **Chile: 31 December 2026**
- **Comoros: 31 December 2026**
- **Ghana: 31 December 2026**
- **Sierra Leone: 31 December 2026**
- **Panama: 31 December 2026**
- **Liberia: 31 December 2026**

FiTI Implementing Countries

Karine note that, as of today, four countries are listed as FiTI Implementing Countries, for which an implementation milestone needs to be determined by when validation eligibility must be reached. According to the updated FiTI Standard 2.0 (section H.1) “*A country must reach validation eligibility within **five annual reporting periods** (section D.1)*”.

FiTI Implementing Country	# of annual reporting periods ¹⁴	New milestone [Secretariat's proposal]
Madagascar	3	5 (by 31 December 2027)
Cabo Verde	3	5 (by 31 December 2027)
Ecuador	2	5 (by 31 December 2028)
São Tomé and Príncipe	2	5 (by 31 December 2028)

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

Decision [BM-33_2026_D05]:

The International Board approved the following new implementation milestones for *FiTI Implementing Countries* to reach validation eligibility:

- **Madagascar: 31 August 2027**
- **Cabo Verde: 31 December 2027**
- **Ecuador: 31 December 2028**
- **São Tomé and Príncipe: 31 December 2028**

FiTI Compliant Countries

Karine stated that, as of today, two countries have reached the status of a FiTI Compliant country, for which an implementation milestone needs to be determined by when they must undergo a compliance review. According to the updated FiTI Standard 2.0 (section H.1) "*FiTI Compliant countries must undergo a validation review every **three years.***"

FiTI Compliant Country	Date of last validation	New milestone [Secretariat's proposal]
Seychelles	March 2025 (January 2022 – July 2024)	Start of validation review: August 2027 (validation timeframe August 2024 – July 2027)
Mauritania	May 2025 (April 2022 – July 2024)	Start of validation review: August 2027 (validation timeframe August 2024 – July 2027)

¹⁴ As of January 2026.

Tony LAZAZZARA supported the introduction of clear deadlines and noted that transitional alignment with the updated Standard requires consistency. He suggested that countries seeking extensions should formally communicate such requests sufficiently in advance of the deadline, rather than at the final stage.

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

Decision [BM-33_2026_D06]:

The International Board approved the following new implementation milestones for *FiTI Compliant Countries* to undergo a validation review:

- **Seychelles: August 2027 (start of validation review; validation timeframe August 2024 – July 2027)**
- **Mauritania: August 2027 (start of validation review; validation timeframe August 2024 – July 2027)**

5. Working Group/Committee re. enabling environment

The Chair recalled that, in addition to a commitment to publish available information on the fisheries sector in a complete and accessible manner on government websites, national authorities that engage with the FiTI must also establish an enabling environment for stakeholder participation. This includes, inter alia, a commitment to work with civil society and business on the implementation of the FiTI and to ensure that relevant stakeholders, including but not limited to the members of the National Multi-Stakeholder Group, are able to engage actively and effectively in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the FiTI; operate freely in relation to the Initiative; and express their reasoned opinions about the FiTI and broader fisheries governance issues without restraint, coercion, or reprisal.

The ED added that experience across several countries, and in particular recent developments in Mauritania¹⁵ and Madagascar¹⁶, has shown that the FiTI is facing challenges in addressing these situations comprehensively and swiftly. As of today, there is no agreed articulation of what the FiTI needs to do to determine whether a government maintains an enabling environment for participation in the fisheries sector, or what to do

¹⁵ A civil society representative/blogger was detained after public comments on potential position falsification of a vessel fishing in Mauritanian waters. Although not directly linked to the FiTI process, the case did relate to the enabling environment clause protecting stakeholder participation and freedom of expression.

¹⁶ Madagascar, a FiTI Implementing country, experienced a military-led coup d'état against the acting President in late 2025, following weeks of youth-led protests over corruption, high living costs, and power outages.

if infringements become apparent. Clear guidance on acceptable and unacceptable practices can help prevent crises, reduce misunderstandings, and support governments in meeting their commitments under the Standard.

The Chair recommended therefore to establish a temporary Working Group (or permanent Board Committee, to be determined) to examine how the FiTI can communicate and monitor enabling environments for stakeholder participation under the Standard, and how to act when concerns arise.

Tony LAZAZZARA noted the political sensitivity of such matters and suggested that, in due course, the mechanism may require external expertise. He proposed that the Working Group considers defining clear triggers for activation and procedures for advance communication in sensitive political situations. He cautioned that improper handling could create political complications.

Annie TOURETTE expressed support for the creation of the Working Group and volunteered to participate. She emphasised the importance of clarifying how the FiTI should respond when core principles of stakeholder participation are undermined.

Hugh GOVAN supported the proposal and also volunteered to participate. He noted that the Working Group's role at this stage is not to respond to specific country cases but to define the framework and criteria under which responses would be triggered.

Alfred NKURU also supported the establishment of the Working Group and emphasised the importance of clearly defining the scope of potential reactions, distinguishing between political processes and broader governance principles. He also volunteered to be part of the initial group.

The ED added that participation should also be open to Observers. He suggested that the engagement of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) could be particularly valuable, given its experience across 75 countries in managing enabling environments.

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

Decision [BM-33_2026_D07]:

The International Board gave the mandate to the Chair to establish a temporary Working Group to examine how the FiTI can communicate and monitor enabling environments for stakeholder participation under the Standard, and how to act when concerns arise. The group is tasked with presenting the group's Terms of Reference for approval by the Board no later than June 2026.

The Chair invited additional volunteers to join the Working Group and noted that participation remains open.

6. Closing

The ED note that implementation progress in Ghana and Liberia is advancing positively, and that applications from both countries are expected in the second quarter of 2026.

Regarding the Fisheries Information System (FIS), the ED noted that no formal presentation to the Board was scheduled due to time constraints but invited interested Members and Observers to request a dedicated demonstration. He informed the Board that Ghana's Minister is actively engaged in the process and has integrated the FIS into the Ministry's own annual workplan, with plans to invite the Minister to the launch event at the upcoming Our Ocean Conference.

The ED informed the Board briefly of upcoming engagement opportunities, such as the FAO COFI Sub-Committee on Fisheries Management in Iceland, the LDAC meeting in Brussels in April, the PRCM Regional Marine and Coastal Forum (FOMACO) in Mauritania end of April, and the Our Ocean Conference in Kenya mid of June.

Regarding the next Board meeting, the Chair noted that April 2026 will be a busy month, with several Board Members expected to attend the seafood expo in Barcelona, as well as the 11th PRCM Regional Marine and Coastal Forum (FOMACO) in Mauritania.

He thanked participants for their constructive engagement and formally closed the 33rd International Board Meeting.

The 33rd International Board Meeting ended.

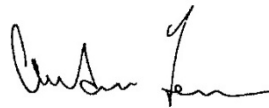
Meeting minutes **provided** by:



Mr Sven Biermann

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

Meeting minutes **approved** by:



Mr Audun Lem

Chair of the FiTI International Board

APPENDIX I: List of Participants

Chair

Audun LEM

Stakeholder group: Government sector

Roy CLARISSE [Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]

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

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

Excused:

Estelle JONES

Not excused:

Rocío Parra CORTÉS

Stakeholder group: Business sector

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

Tony LAZZARA [Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]

Not excused:

Nestor ROCHE

Dawda Foday SAINÉ

Carlos VILLACA

Stakeholder group: Social sector

Sophie BENBOW [Voting power for this meeting: 1.0 vote]

Tymon KIEPE [Voting power for this meeting: 1.0 vote]

Alfred NKURU [Voting power for this meeting: 1.0 vote]

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

Annie TOURETTE [Voting power for this meeting: 1.0 vote]

Not excused:

Daniel SKERRITT

Observers

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), represented by Marcio Castro De Souza

Excused

World Bank Group, represented by Kristin Gunnarsdottir VON KISTOWSKI

Not excused:

Open Government Partnership, represented by Adna KARAMEHIC-OATES

FiTI International Secretariat

Sven BIERMANN

Stephanie VOLCERE

Karine YOUNG

Guests

Luz MONTALVAN, Interpreter