34th meeting of the FiTI International Board

3 June 2026, Conference Call

Meeting Minutes

ID: BM-34_2026_MM

Provided by: FiTI International Secretariat

Date: 08.08.2026

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Date	3 June 2026
Time	Noon – 2.00 p.m. Universal Time Coordinated (UTC)
Venue	Conference Call (Zoom)
Supporting document(s)	▪ FiTI International Secretariat's evaluation of Seychelles' corrective action implementation (date: 27 May 2026) ▪ FiTI International Secretariat's evaluation of Mauritania's corrective action implementation (date: 27 May 2026)
Language	The language of the FiTI International Board is English. Simultaneous translation between English and Spanish has been provided for this meeting.

Outcomes of meeting

1. Welcome and administration

The Chair of the FiTI International Board, Dr Audun LEM (herein referred to as 'Chair'), opened the 34th International Board meeting by welcoming all participating Members and Observers.

Apologies were noted prior to the meeting from Board Members Annie TOURETTE and Ketakandriana (Ke) RAFITOSON (stakeholder group: Social Sector) as well as Carlos (Cadu) VILLACA (stakeholder group: Business Sector). Annie delegated her decision-making power to Sophie BENBOW; Cadu delegated his decision-making power to Tony LAZAZZARA. Ke delegated her decision-making power to Annie via email on 3 June 2026; however, given that Annie did not participate in this meeting, Ke's proxy delegation was declared void.

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 reached[1]:

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

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.

[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 Secretariat sent an email to the following Board Members on Thursday, 16 July 2026: Roy CLARISSE[3], Dawda Foday SAINE[4], Ketakandriana RAFITOSON[5], and Alfred NKURU[6]. After their responses, it was determined that the decisions taken during the 34th meeting are binding.

Furthermore, the Chair noted that prior to this meeting, Board Members had raised no concerns and did not anticipate contentious issues regarding any of the points on the agenda.

2. Status of corrective actions Seychelles & Mauritania

The Chair recalled that, in early 2025, the International Board granted Seychelles and Mauritania the status of FiTI Compliant Countries, which recognised the progress that both countries have made toward achieving transparency in its fisheries sector. At the same time, the Board identified several opportunities for further improvements to enable both countries maintaining their status during subsequent regular Validation Reviews, in accordance with section H.3 of the FiTI Standard. Therefore, as part of its official Compliance Statement for each country, the Board identified several **corrective actions** and reporting deadlines.

The Chair invited Dorothea GARFF of the Secretariat to present the outcomes of the Secretariat's internal evaluation of the corrective action implementations for both countries. Dorothea provided a brief overview of the number of corrective actions and corresponding reporting deadline for both countries, as outlined below:

Country	Validation timeframe	Compliance Statement	No. of corrective actions	Due dates
Seychelles	January 2022 – July 2024	February 2025[7]	8	31 March 2026
Mauritania	April 2022 – July 2024	May 2025[8]	3	31 October 2025
			4	31 December 2025
			3	31 March 2026

[3] No response received.
[4] No response received.
[5] No response received.
[6] All three decisions were confirmed via email on 16 July 2026.
[7] https://fiti.global/seychelles-is-the-first-country-to-achieve-compliant-status-under-the-fiti-standard
[8] https://fiti.global/mauritania-achieves-compliant-status-under-the-fiti-standard

Furthermore, she noted that the Coordinating Authorities of Seychelles and Mauritania provided written feedback on the implementation status of theses corrective actions to the Chair within the required deadlines.[9]

Dorothea explained further that the corrective actions for both countries could be grouped into the following three areas:

i. Support to the FiTI National Secretariat, including adequate financial and human resources;

ii. Contribution of the published information to sustainable policy-making, effective oversight, and public debate; and

iii. Fulfilment of transparency requirements, covering information not yet disclosed or gaps in available data.

Before providing an overview of the Secretariat's evaluation of these corrective actions, Dorothea emphasised that **progress in addressing these corrective actions will be officially assessed by the Board during the countries' subsequent regular validations**. As determined in the Board's previous meeting in February 2026 both countries' next regular validations (i.e. Compliance Review) will start in August 2027, covering the validation timeframe August 2024 – July 2027.[10] Nevertheless, the Secretariat recommends that the Board provides feedback now on the current status of these corrective actions in order to give both countries opportunities to further adjust or strengthen the implementation of these actions, if needed.

Based on the written information provided by the Coordinating Authorities, information available online, as well as observations from the Secretariat through interactions with stakeholders in both countries, Dorothea outlined that both countries made encouraging progress in addressing their corrective actions. Furthermore, the Secretariat concluded – by assigning internal, indicative compliance designations to these corrective actions – that the implementation status of the corrective action does not require the launch of an ad-hoc validation for the countries, and therefore, the implementation of these corrective actions will be officially assessed by the Board during the country's subsequent regular validation (i.e. Validation Review). Nevertheless, the Secretariat's evaluation indicated several areas where further improvements are required prior to the next Validation Review, in particular regarding available information not yet publicly disclosed.

9 Seychelles: Written feedback received on 31 March 2026 (for corrective actions due by 31 March 2026). Mauritania: Written feedback received on 31 October 2025 (for corrective actions due by 31 October 2025); on 30 December 2025 (for corrective actions due by 31 December 2025); and on 31 March 2026 (for corrective actions due by 31 March 2026).

10 https://fiti.global/fiti-international-board [Decision ID: BM-33_2026_D06].

Dorothea concluded by recommending to the Board that the Chair should send an official response letter to both Coordinating Authorities to:

- express the Board's satisfaction with the visible progress in implementing the corrective actions;
- inform the Coordinating Authorities and the National MSGs that the corrective actions will be further monitored and assessed during the next Validation Review, which will commence in August 2027;
- emphasise that by August 2027 all information currently assessed as 'Not disclosed' in the country's latest FiTI Report must be made publicly accessible and all information currently assessed as 'Not available' must be addressed by a recommendation of the National MSG; and
- note the importance of further strengthening activities to engage in wider national fisheries management discussions.

The Chair thanked Dorothea and the Secretariat for the thoroughness of the evaluation and the supporting information. He further noted that the Secretariat's internal evaluation would not be shared with the countries, as formal compliance designations are the responsibility of the Board and can only be determined during an official validation process. Hence, the proposed letter to the authorities would highlight areas requiring further work without using formal compliance designation terminology.

Afterwards, the Chair opened the floor for questions and comments from Board Members and Observers:

- Tony LAZAZZARA sought clarification on whether the Chair's letter would constitute the only formal input from the Board until the start of the next validation in August 2027. The ED confirmed that this was the case. However, he noted that countries also receive indirect feedback through the annual FiTI Report process, which clearly indicates where countries stand regarding the fulfilment of the transparency requirements (section A of the FiTI Standard). This includes a listing of requirements for which national authorities hold information that has yet to be disclosed to the public. To remain compliant with the FiTI Standard, national authorities must disclose all available information online. The ED noted further that the Secretariat's Regional Coordinators for Seychelles and Mauritania will maintain regular contact to the national authorities and the National MSGs to provide feedback and guidance over the following 12 to 15 months.
- Estelle JONES welcomed the quality of the background documentation and sought clarification on the justification for not sharing the Secretariat's internal evaluation findings directly with the countries. The ED clarified that formal compliance

designations are the responsibility of the Board, not the Secretariat, and that the letter would not use official validation terminology, such as "partially compliant", but instead would only indicate areas where further work was needed, conveying the same substantive message without attributing a formal designation.

- Daniel SKERRITT commended the evaluations and inquired whether the Fisheries Information System (FIS) had been discussed with the national authorities in Seychelles and Mauritania as a potential tool to address the corrective actions related to data publishing. The ED noted that Seychelles already has its own Fisheries Information Management System (FIMS), which – once fully operational – can provide the foundation for publishing fisheries information regarding several of the FiTI's transparency requirements in an easy-to-understand and up-to-date format. With regards to Mauritania, the Chair reported that he discussed the opportunity of utilising the FIS during his recent visit to Mauritania with the Minister. He noted that Mauritania was not opposed to the FIS but is currently engaged in several other data management projects, and therefore, is currently lacking the capacity to assess the FIS value proposition for Mauritania in detail. The ED added that the lack of a suitable online infrastructure might become an issue for Mauritania during their next Validation Review, given that Mauritania's current publication mechanism (primarily via the website of Mauritania's MSG[11]) lacks proper front-end reporting functionalities and also requires a significant effort by Mauritania's authorities for updating fisheries data.

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

Decision [BM-34_2026_D01]:

The International Board instructed the FiTI Chair to respond to the corrective action implementations of Seychelles and Mauritania, as recommended in the Secretariat's evaluations of both countries.

3. 2026 membership election for the FiTI association

The Chair asked the ED to provide a brief introduction into this agenda item. The ED recalled that with Board Circular No. 10, the Board approved the adoption of the procedure for the 2021 membership election to the FiTI association as the general procedure for future elections of members until the Board deems it appropriate to amend such procedures. Only

11 https://www.fiti-mauritanie.mr/

time-bound parameters, such as the number of vacant membership seats or milestones of the election process, will be adjusted.

As of today, only a limited number of Board membership seats are vacant and for one Board member, her first term is ending during 2026, as shown below:

Stakeholder group	Vacant membership seats
Government sector	▪ 2 membership seats vacant.
Business sector	▪ 1 membership seat [LSF] vacant.
Social sector	▪ No membership seat vacant, but one current member whose 1st term ends during 2026: ○ Ketakandriana RAFITOSON: 31 July 2026, eligible for re-election.

The ED emphasised that, given the limited number of vacant seats vacant for election, the Board needs to determine whether it seeks to conduct a public process for electing new Board Members in 2026, or whether it wants to recruit new Board Members opportunistically. The ED noted that, in determining this decision, the Board is requested to consider the following aspects:

- The stakeholder group 'Government Sector' includes currently only one FiTI implementing country (i.e. Seychelles);
- Interests from several government representatives of FiTI implementing countries have been noted, including non-English and non-Spanish speaking countries.

The Chair noted that with regards to the two vacant seats in the 'Government Sector' stakeholder group, emphasis should be given to representatives from FiTI countries (i.e. Committed, Implementing, Compliant) to strike a balance between countries supporting and countries implementing the FiTI Standard. Afterwards, he opened the floor for questions and comments from Board Members and Observers:

- Tony LAZAZZARA expressed a preference for an opportunistic approach, arguing that the Chair should engage prospective candidates individually given the limited number of seats and the strategic nature of the candidates.
- Joacim JOHANNESSON enquired about historical precedent. The ED confirmed that while a public process had been the norm, there had been one occasion where elections were conducted without a formal public call due to limited vacancies.

- Daniel SKERRITT expressed a preference for maintaining the established public election process, noting that the constitution of the FiTI Association requires under Article 11 that *"a call for nominations […] shall be widely announced among the FiTI's implementing countries, partner organisations, on the FiTI website as well as on social media."* Besides this formal requirement, Daniel stated that departing from this principle could raise concerns about transparency and fairness. He also questioned whether a public process would indeed generate an unmanageable number of applications.
- Annika MACKENSEN concurred with Daniel, emphasising that adherence to established processes was both good practice and consistent with the FiTI's values. She noted that a robust public process would make any difficult decisions on candidate selection more defensible and explicable. Estelle agreed, noting that established processes and constitutional provisions exist precisely to guide difficult decisions, and that the key was to manage stakeholder expectations clearly from the outset.

  The ED acknowledged these positions as well as the requirement for an open election call under the FiTI's constitution, but also cautioned that the psychological impact of rejecting applications from government candidates should not be underestimated, in particular given that those candidates are often directly involved in the national FiTI implementation process. Annika acknowledged this aspect, but reemphasised that a transparent public process would in fact be more equitable and explicable rather than a selective approach.

The Chair indicated a broad majority in favour of proceeding with a public election process. Tony confirmed his support for the majority view, whilst noting his personal concern about the risk of alienating government officials should their application to the Board be unsuccessful.

Following the discussion, the participating Board Members reached the following decision:

Decision [BM-34_2026_D02]:

The International Board tasked the FiTI Chair to:

a) form and facilitate a multi-stakeholder Board Election Committee for the 2026 election process; and

b) conduct a public election process for 2026, starting 15 July 2026, to elect two new Board Members for the government stakeholder group and one new Board Member for the business stakeholder group (large-scale/industrial).

4. Funding situation of the FiTI

The Chair invited the ED to provide the Board with an update on the FiTI's current funding situation, noting in particular the recently announced decision of the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation (GBMF) to no longer financially support the FiTI.

The ED recalled that the 2026 Workplan of the FiTI International Secretariat, as approved by the Board in March 2026, already included a funding gap of approximately 14%. The ED stated that failure to secure additional funding to address this gap would require the Secretariat to, inter alia, reduce the aspired objectives and targets, or to utilise retained earnings from previous periods, and/or to adjust the Secretariat's internal cost structure.

Based on recent funding-related developments, including the anticipated phasing out of the GBMF funding, the Secretariat had to put several cost reduction measures now into place. These measures were explained to the Board in detail, including adjustments to the Secretariat's staff, a reduction of FiTI Reports from ten to eight for 2026, as well as reductions in travel and meeting costs for the remainder of the year.

Furthermore, the ED noted that the FiTI's funding portfolio is currently too concentrated on a few donors, and broadening the donor base remains a strategic priority.

The Chair thanked the ED for this candid overview, and for providing a clear and credible plan to close the current funding gap while maintaining the substance of the agreed 2026 Workplan. He also informed the Board that he has initiated discussions with several new donor prospects and that the Secretariat is currently following up with those to build long-term relations.

Sophie BENBOW welcomed the decisions taken and emphasised that Fauna & Flora is currently collaborating with the Secretariat regarding support for awareness raising activities in The Gambia. Furthermore, she noted that fisheries transparency remains high on the agenda of US-based philanthropic donors, and suggested reaching out to explore possibilities. The ED noted that previous conversations with such donors have been challenging due to their limited scope of utilising transparency primarily as a tool to combat IUU fishing, instead of the FiTI's wider and more stakeholder-inclusive objective towards participatory governance. The ED highlighted that while those donors may be reluctant to financially support the FiTI directly, the Secretariat played a fundamental role in securing a USD 50,000 grant from Oceans 5 for the national FiTI implementation process in São Tomé and Príncipe for FiTI-related work.

Sophie noted further that based on her discussions with several donors, there seems to be increasing interest in the practical application and even operationalisation of transparency, moving beyond commitments to tangible, measurable outcomes on the ground. She suggested that FiTI's work and impact, and the FIS in particular, represents a compelling practical demonstration of these donor objectives. The ED agreed, noting also that the FiTI Standard 2.0 focus on linking fisheries data with national objectives could further strengthen the FiTI's position. Daniel SKERRITT expressed his support for this view.

The Chair thanked the ED and Board Members for this discussion and requested the Secretariat to provide updates throughout the year in case of further material changes to the funding situation.

5. Approach for strategic discussions in the Board

The Chair recalled that during several recent Board meetings, Members and Observers had expressed an interest in engaging in more substantive discussions on topics of strategic priority to the FiTI, such as how to engage *developed* countries in the FiTI process and the implications for the Secretariat's service model, and how to strengthen communication around the FiTI Standard and the tangible benefits of increased transparency. Given the complexity of these topics and the typically tight agendas of Board meetings, he invited the Board to consider several options for the Board to consider, such as:

- Embedding strategic discussions within regular Board meetings by either increasing
    - the number of annual meetings (but maintaining the current meeting duration of 2 hours), or by increasing
    - the duration of Board meetings from two to three hours (but keeping the number of meetings to around four or five per year).
- Pursuing strategic discussions outside of regular Board meetings, either through
    - additional meetings with voluntary participation from Members and Observers, or through
    - the establishment of a dedicated (temporary) Working Group.

The Chair expressed a personal preference for maintaining the current two-hour Board meeting format, noting that extending meetings to three hours could exacerbate quorum and translation challenges. He indicated he would be comfortable with an increased frequency of Board meetings, or alternatively with holding strategic discussions in a separate forum outside of formal meetings.

The ED noted the usual time constraints during Board meetings, and also mentioned that, based on past experiences, voluntary, additional meetings tend to attract limited participation, and proposed a (somewhat) hybrid format in which the second hour of each alternating Board meeting could be reserved for strategic discussions.

Tony LAZAZZARA suggested a format consisting of an informal meeting separate from the regular Board meeting, which would not require a quorum and would allow for open strategic discussions. Any outcomes would then be brought to the Board for approval. He added that within regular Board meetings, efficiency gains through the use of Board Circulars could free up time for specific strategic matters as needed.

Hugh GOVAN agreed with Tony's suggestion, emphasising that the conclusions of any informal discussions must be brought back to the Board for information and endorsement. He expressed cautious optimism about participation levels, noting that past experience with voluntary external processes had generally yielded sufficient engagement when the right people were involved, and suggested that external ad hoc experts could be included as well, where relevant.

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

Decision [BM-34_2026_D03]:

The International Board agreed to pursue strategic discussions through voluntary informal meetings outside of the regular Board meeting structure, without quorum requirements, and with any substantial conclusions and recommendations to be brought back to the International Board for endorsement.

The Secretariat was requested to present a concrete proposal on the operationalisation of this approach, including suggested topics and format, at one of the next International Board meetings.

6. Closing

Prior to the closing, Observer Shirlene Anthonysamy informed the Board that the FAO was organising a webinar on aquatic food fraud on 18 June 2026. The webinar will examine the main forms of fraud affecting fisheries and aquaculture products, with particular attention to mislabelling and species substitution, and will explore how market demand, price incentives and supply-chain complexity can create conditions conducive to fraudulent practices. Confirmed panellists include, inter alia, the Seafood Consumers Association Ltd (ACNC), the Asociación Española de Distribuidores, Autoservicios y Supermercados (ASEDAS), the National Fisheries Institute of the United States, and the Vietnamese Association of Seafood Producers (VASEP). Ms Shirlene extended an invitation to the FiTI to join as a panellist, noting the alignment with FiTI's work on fisheries transparency. The Chair thanked Shirlene and confirmed that the Secretariat will revert on the matter.

The ED noted that the Our Ocean Conference will take place in Mombasa in June, with Karine YOUNG and Nicolás ROVEGNO from the Secretariat representing the FiTI. A side event on fisheries transparency focused on the new WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies will be co-organised with the German government, the Ministries of Fisheries of Ghana and Madagascar, the World Bank, the WTO FishFund, Blue Ventures, Fauna & Flora, and CAOPA. Board Members Annika MACKENSEN and Sophie BENBOW confirmed their attendance at the conference.

Furthermore, the Chair noted that the 37th Session of the FAO Committee on Fisheries (COFI) is scheduled to convene from 7 to 11 September 2026 in Rome, with the FiTI planning various activities and bilateral meetings during that week.

Finally, the Chair noted that the next Board meeting will most likely be held at the end of July or beginning of August, and briefly outlined the following anticipated agenda items for the 35th FiTI International Board meeting:

- Approval of FiTI implementing country applications, e.g. from Ghana and Liberia;
- Approval of the audited Annual Financial Statement 2025, already submitted to the auditor ahead of schedule;
- Approval of the Terms of Reference for a new permanent Board Committee on ‘Enabling Environment for Stakeholder Participation’;
- Discussion of opportunities to engage additional intergovernmental organisations as permanent Observers to the International Board.

The Chair thanked all participants for their constructive and concise engagement. He confirmed that the Board would follow the same procedure as the previous meeting with regard to the quorum situation, contacting absent members to seek confirmation of decisions taken. The Chair formally closed the 34th FiTI International Board meeting.

The 34th International Board Meeting ended.

Meeting minutes **provided** by:	Meeting minutes **approved** by:
Mr Sven Biermann	Mr Audun Lem, PhD
Secretary of the meeting; Executive Director of the FiTI International Secretariat	Chair of the FiTI International Board

APPENDIX I: **List of Participants**

Chair

Audun LEM

Stakeholder group: Government sector

Joacim JOHANNESON	[Voting power for this meeting: 1.5 votes]
Estelle JONES	[Voting power for this meeting: 1.5 votes]
Annika MACKENSEN	[Voting power for this meeting: 1.5 votes]

Not excused:

Roy CLARISSE

Stakeholder group: Business sector

Hugh GOVAN	[Voting power for this meeting: 2.4 votes]
Tony LAZAZZARA	[Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]
Nestor ROCHE	[Voting power for this meeting: 1.2 votes]

Excused:

Carlos (Cadu) VILLACA[12]

Not excused:

Dawda Foday SAINE

Stakeholder group: Social sector

Sophie BENBOW	[Voting power for this meeting: 2.0 vote]
Tymon KIEPE	[Voting power for this meeting: 1.0 vote]
Daniel SKERRITT	[Voting power for this meeting: 1.0 vote]

[12] Cadu VILLAÇA delegated his decision-making power to Board Member Tony LAZAZZARA via email on June 1st, 2026.

Excused:

Annie TOURETTE[13]

Ketakandriana RAFITOSON[14]

Not excused:

Alfred NKURU

Observers

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), represented by Shirlene M Anthonysamy

Open Government Partnership, represented by Adna KARAMEHIC-OATES

Excused

World Bank Group, represented by Kristin Gunnarsdottir VON KISTOWSKI

FiTI International Secretariat

Sven BIERMANN

Dorothea GARFF

Stephanie VOLCERE

Karine YOUNG

Guests

Mayra PARRA, Interpreter

[13] Annie TOURETTE delegated her decision-making power to Board Member Sophie BENBOW via email on June 1st, 2026.

[14] Ketakandriana RAFITOSON delegated her decision-making power to Board Member Annie TOURETTE via email on June 3rd, 2026. However, due to Annie's absence from the meeting, this proxy delegation could not be counted towards the quorum.