



Fisheries
Transparency
Initiative

The FiTI Standard

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The FiTI Standard
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Foreword

[To be inserted prior to finalization]

Prof. Dr. Peter Eigen

(Chair of the FiTI International Advisory Group)

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Introduction

There is now a widely shared understanding for the need to achieve sustainable and responsibly managed marine fisheries. The benefits of doing so span economic, social, environmental and food security concerns. Countries across the world are therefore engaging in national, regional and global initiatives that seek to conserve marine biodiversity and support the fishing sector to continue to provide income and food for millions of people, including for many that could face economic and food insecurity if marine fisheries are poorly governed.



These efforts were recognised and strengthened in 2016 when the United Nations dedicated one of their goals to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development (Sustainable Development Goal #14).

While there are many facets to achieve sustainable fisheries development, there is widespread agreement that the public availability of credible information is essential. Indeed, the need for governments to share information on fisheries is already described in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Seas and the subsequent FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries. Since then the importance of collating and sharing information with all stakeholders has been a message conveyed in other landmark documents on fisheries reforms, such as the 2015 Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries and the 2012 Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests. Intergovernmental bodies, such as the European Union or the African Union have also put forward transparency as an aspect of fisheries reforms that must be strengthened.

These reform efforts and governmental commitments recognise that coastal states and fishing nations face the complex challenge of ensuring that fishing and fish trade provides wealth, employment and food that are distributed fairly, while also ensuring the conservation of marine bio-diversity for future generations. This challenge is unlikely to be met by a single actor or a stakeholder group alone. This challenge can also not be properly addressed if decisions and policies are made through undemocratic processes and where basic knowledge on the state and exploitation of shared marine fisheries remains out of the public view.

Lack of transparency may undermine both the quality and credibility of decision-making, and it diminishes the prospect of effective oversight and accountability. Without such accountability, problems such as illegal fishing and corruption may flourish. Furthermore, incomplete or inaccurate data can lead to marginalisation or undervaluation of certain groups or sectors within fisheries, whereby the entire sector may be given less visibility in national debates than it deserves. But it is not only the availability of information that counts; it is also essential that this is accessible and people have the assurance that the information provided by governments and fishing companies is credible.

Transparency is therefore a prerequisite for informed national debates on fisheries policies and for achieving meaningful participation in fisheries decision-making. Indeed, there is now a greater public interest in the fishing sector. We are therefore witnessing stronger demands for governments to disclose information on a range of issues, such as the status of fish stocks and marine ecosystems, conditions attached to fishing authorisations, the contracts of fishing access agreements signed between fishing nations and coastal states or the amount of fish taken from the ocean. In many places, small-scale fishers have for some time complained that they are too often hidden or obscured in national fisheries data, meaning they are not afforded the support and resources needed to operate effectively. Large-scale commercial fishing companies are also experiencing growing public scrutiny about their environmental and social impacts. In this climate, many governments and members of the fishing industry are aware that improvements in transparency are not only expected of them, but will be beneficial to their interests. Over time, levels of accountability and openness will have a growing impact on the decisions of consumers and investors and it will become an ever-increasing factor for intergovernmental cooperation in trade and regional fisheries management.

The FiTI yields benefits for all stakeholders. By making fisheries management more transparent and inclusive, the FiTI will help tackle other pressing issues which impact all actors in the fisheries sector, including contributing to food security and social stability; enhancing trust for investment; underpinning the sustainability of marine ecosystems; supporting the fight against Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing; and contributing to the fight against corruption.

[About the Fisheries Transparency Initiative \(FiTI\)](#)

In this context, the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) has been developed as a unique effort that complements and supports other national, regional and global efforts for achieving responsible fisheries governance. It provides governments, the fishing industry (both large and small scale), and civil society with a comprehensive and credible way to achieve and maintain high levels of openness on the management of the marine fishing sector and the activities of fishers and fishing companies.

The purpose of the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) is to increase transparency and participation in fisheries governance for the benefit of a more sustainable management of marine fisheries. The FiTI is a global initiative and does not focus on a single country or on a region. Also, the FiTI is not owned or operated by one organisation nor does it represent the work of a single interest group. Instead, the diversity of different stakeholders is a central feature of how the FiTI works, for national implementations as well as international governance. There are key characteristics about the FiTI:

Regular reporting. At the heart of the FiTI is the requirement that countries provide accessible and independently verified information on the fishing sector. This information will be compiled by an independent person and verified through a national multi-stakeholder process. Information will be presented in well-publicised annual reports to stimulate public debate.

Towards transparency in the public domain. The FiTI is not intended to duplicate existing efforts to collate and publish fisheries information by national authorities. Where countries already publish relevant information, the role of the FiTI Report is to describe where this data is available, verify that it is both complete and accessible and provide a summary of information for the wider public debate. Where countries do not publish information, or they publish it in ways that make it difficult for people to access and understand, then this data will be included in the FiTI Reports. The aim of the FiTI is to support national authorities in establishing credible and comprehensive systems for publishing information on the fisheries sector.

Progressive improvement of transparency. The FiTI does not expect that all countries will have complete or reliable data from the beginning. This is not an impediment for countries wanting to engage with the FiTI. The basic requirement is that public authorities and the fishing industry disclose the information they have, and that where important gaps in knowledge exist, there should be effort over time to improve this situation. As such, compiling FiTI Reports 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. In fact, the FiTI may be particularly beneficial in such contexts, as it should help support authorities the fishing industry and civil society in their efforts to organise and present information.

Multi-stakeholder participation and oversight in each country. The FiTI is a global multi-stakeholder initiative (Sustainable Development Goal #17). This multi-stakeholder orientation is paramount for the success of the FiTI. The FiTI is implemented in countries through National Multi-Stakeholder Groups, consisting of representatives from government, business and organised civil society. These groups make decisions on how the FiTI is implemented in their countries. They must also work collectively to assist in the compilation of FiTI Reports and verify that the information is credible.



Voluntary initiative with mandatory requirements. The implementation of the FiTI is voluntary. However, the value of the FiTI would be diminished if implementing countries are under no obligation to report on the same types of information and if some countries can approach the FiTI in ways that are less credible than others. Therefore, this FiTI Standard lays out mandatory requirements for countries that seek to implement the FiTI. Compliance with these requirements will be validated regularly by the FiTI International Board. Validation does not only safeguard the integrity of the FiTI by holding all FiTI implementing countries to the same global standard, it also helps promoting dialogue and learning at the country level.

From intention to candidate to compliant. The intention to join the FiTI must come from a country's government. Afterwards, a country must implement six sign-up steps and submit a Candidate application to the FiTI International Board. If the application is approved, the country is considered a FiTI Candidate country. The next phase involves implementing the FiTI, which requires compiling an annual report that has been produced through effective multi-stakeholder oversight. After producing its first reports and undergoing successfully its first validation, a country is declared a FiTI Compliant country. This status is maintained if the country continues to adhere to the FiTI Standard throughout subsequent validations. The status as an FiTI Compliant country can be lost if the country fails to follow the FiTI Standard, including producing false, incomplete or delayed FiTI Reports or where there is evidence that multi-stakeholder participation is not being achieved effectively.¹

Ultimately, the effectiveness of the FiTI does not lie in the act of compiling annual reports. It relies on how this information is used and on the willingness of decision makers to listen to the ideas and concerns of stakeholders on how marine fisheries should be managed. The FiTI does not directly tell countries how fisheries can be improved, nor does it set out to highlight mistakes or weaknesses in decision-making, or bad fishing practices. It does, however, offer an important 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.

¹ Recent years have seen the emergence of several multi-stakeholder transparency initiatives across various industry sectors, for example the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). The FiTI builds on these experiences by replicating certain process and governance elements for a more comprehensive and consistent spread of multi-stakeholder transparency initiatives across industries. The FiTI also recognizes that the fisheries sector has unique characteristics that require its own, tailor-made transparency standard regarding what kind of information should be published.

About the FiTI Standard

The following global FiTI Standard sets out the requirements that countries must follow to be part of the FiTI. The FiTI Standard is the outcome of extensive discussions, spanning nearly two years, by members of the FiTI International Advisory Group, including representatives from governments, large-scale and small-scale fishing sector organisations, multinational and regional fisheries organisations and prominent civil society groups working on fisheries and marine conservation.

The intention has been to produce a comprehensive standard that covers all facets of the FiTI and provides clear direction to countries that want to be part of this initiative. Yet all involved in this process appreciate that the FiTI will evolve and that those who are part of it will learn whether the FiTI Standard is complete or if it needs to be strengthened and modified. The FiTI Standard is therefore expected to evolve over time, and it will be the role of the FiTI International Board to review the Standards with the option of improving it.

The FiTI International Advisory Group decided to set the initial focus on what information should be included in FiTI Reports on the theme of “access to marine fisheries”. Therefore, the main focus of FiTI reporting is on enhancing transparency on how governments allocate rights and what are the conditions they impose for fishing authorisations, what are the revenues paid to the government by the fishing sector and what are the annual catches made by fishers. The FiTI International Advisory Group also recognised that enhancing transparency on the fisheries sector must be achieved for all sectors, including both large-scale and small-scale fisheries, although the level of detail expected on each cannot be the same. Information to be presented through the FiTI on large-scale fisheries is therefore more detailed, while information on small-scale fisheries can be presented in more aggregated form.

The FiTI International Advisory Group further decided to include reporting requirements on various dimensions of the fishing sector, including subsidies, post-harvest sector and trade, stock assessments and development aid. It was recognised that compiling this information is not required on an annual basis, and therefore countries may decide to compile and publish this information biannually. The spirit of the FiTI is to encourage countries to go beyond the minimal reporting requirements and to include other information in their FiTI Reports if there is a demand to do so in their countries.

Overall, the FiTI Standard is divided in two main parts: **Part I** is addressed to countries, **Part II** outlines the provisions for the international governance of the initiative. Each part has dedicated sections, as summarized below:

Part I: FiTI Standard for Countries	
<i>Sections</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
A – Requirements for Countries Intending to Implement the FiTI	Describe the requirements for countries intending to implement the FiTI. These “sign-up steps” require that the government issues a public commitment to the FiTI and that it demonstrates an enabling environment for stakeholder participation. This section further describes how countries need to appoint a FiTI National Lead, establish a National Multi-Stakeholder Group, establish a National Secretariat and provide a first workplan.
B – Requirements for Implementing Countries	Describe the requirements for countries to successfully implement the FiTI. These requirements include maintaining a national implementation framework for the FiTI (including multi-stakeholder participation and oversight), adhering to basic transparency elements, providing regular FiTI Reports, and ensuring that FiTI contributes to the wider public debate. The requirements on providing regular FiTI Reports comprise the major part of this section, outlining reporting procedures as well as the reporting elements that need to be included in the FiTI Report.
C – Other Provisions for Implementing Countries	Describe other provisions applicable to FiTI implementing countries. These provisions include exceptional circumstances, such as national adaptations, extensions or hiatus, as well as the provision to appeal relevant decisions of the FiTI International Board.
Part II: FiTI Standard for International Governance	
<i>Sections</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
D – Validation	Describe the provisions for the FiTI International Board and the FiTI International Secretariat on how to conduct validations of the FiTI Standard, ensuring that FiTI countries apply similar procedures and fulfil the FiTI requirements.
E – Sanctions	Describe the provisions for the FiTI International Board in case of non-adherence to the FiTI Standard, including sanctions and types of violations.

TERMINOLOGY

The term '**must**' indicates that a requirement is mandatory for countries, and that it will be taken into account during validations, where the countries' status of compliance with the FiTI Standard is assessed.

The term '**should**' indicates that countries should consider the requirement but are not obliged to implement it.

The term '**may**' indicates implementation options for the National Multi-Stakeholder Group to consider.

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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 2016.²

- 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, utilizing 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 organizations, financial organizations, 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.

² NOUAKCHOTT DECLARATION ON THE FISHERIES TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE (FiTI), 3 February 2016, Nouakchott, Mauritania; Declaration adopted by the participants of the 1st International Conference of the FiTI.

PART I: FITI STANDARD FOR COUNTRIES

A. Requirements for Countries Intending to Implement the FiTI

This section lists six requirements (sign-up steps) that countries intending to implement the FiTI must adhere to. When a country has completed these requirements and wishes to be recognized as a FiTI Candidate, the government must submit a FiTI Candidature Application to the FiTI International Board.

The FiTI International Secretariat provides the “Guidance Note for countries intending to implement the FiTI – The sign-up steps”, available at www.fisheriestransparency.org.

1. Public Commitment

The government must make a clear public statement that it intends to implement the FiTI. This public statement must be made by the head of state or government, or an appropriately delegated government representative. It must be published in writing.

2. Enabling Environment for Stakeholder Participation

The government must commit to work with civil society and business on the implementation of the FiTI. For this, the government must ensure that there is an enabling environment for business and civil society participation with regard to relevant laws, regulations, and administrative rules as well as actual practice in implementation of the FiTI. Such an enabling environment for stakeholder participation entails that relevant stakeholders, including but not limited to members of the National Multi-Stakeholder Group, must be able to:

- i. engage in the public debate related to the FiTI;
- ii. express their opinions about the FiTI without restraint, coercion or reprisal;
- iii. operate freely in relation to the FiTI;
- iv. communicate and cooperate with each other regarding the FiTI;
- v. engage fully, actively and effectively in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the FiTI; and
- vi. speak freely on fisheries governance issues.

3. FiTI Lead Ministry and FiTI National Lead

The government must designate a ministry to lead the FiTI implementation.

The government must appoint a senior government official from this ministry to lead the implementation of the FiTI in the country. This official, referred to as the FiTI National Lead, should have the confidence of all stakeholders, the authority and freedom to coordinate action on the FiTI implementation across relevant ministries and agencies, and be able to mobilize resources for the FiTI implementation.

The appointment must be publicly announced.

4. FiTI National Multi-Stakeholder Group

The government must establish a FiTI National Multi-Stakeholder Group (hereafter National MSG) to oversee the implementation of the FiTI (Section B).

The FiTI National Lead must coordinate the establishment of the National MSG. In establishing the National MSG, the government must ensure that:

- i. the National MSG comprises of representatives from three stakeholder groups:
 - government (including parliamentarians);
 - business (including large-scale fisheries and small-scale fisheries associations); and
 - organised civil society (including independent civil society groups and other civil society such as the academia, media and unions);
- ii. the invitation to participate in the National MSG is open and made public;
- iii. 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. The nomination process should bear in mind the desirability of pluralistic and diverse representation;
- iv. the three stakeholder groups in the National MSG are represented equally. However, this does not mean that they need to have an equal number of members;
- v. senior government officials are represented on the National MSG.

Representatives from government, business and organised civil society must be appropriately qualified and fully, actively and effectively engaged in the FiTI.

Representatives from organised civil society must be operationally, and in policy terms, independent from government and/or business.

The National MSG must agree on clear, formally documented, public and accessible Terms of Reference (ToR) for its work. The ToR must contain a set of minimum provisions as set out in the Guidance Note for countries intending to implement the FiTI.

The government may consider establishing a legal basis for the National MSG.

5. FiTI National Secretariat

The National MSG must establish a properly authorized and resourced FiTI National Secretariat to provide administrative and operational support to the National MSG. The FiTI National Lead should coordinate the establishment of the FiTI National Secretariat.

The National MSG must agree on clear, formally documented, public and accessible Terms of Reference (ToR) for the FiTI National Secretariat.

The FiTI National Secretariat is accountable to the National MSG.

6. Workplan

The National MSG must provide a public workplan for the country's first reporting period (B.3.3.). The first workplan must:

- i. define *objectives* for the first reporting period. The primary objective must be meeting the requirements set forth in section B of the FiTI Standard. The National MSG may consider other objectives linked to the FiTI Principles.
- ii. identify *constraints* in achieving the agreed objectives, stemming from
 - potential capacity constraints in government agencies, business and civil society;
 - potential legal or regulatory obstacles to FiTI implementation;
 - any other obstacles;
- iii. specify *activities* to achieve the agreed objectives as well as to address the identified constraints. For each activity the following information must be provided:
 - Responsibility;
 - Timeline, taking into account administrative requirements such as procurement processes and funding;
 - Costs;
 - Funding sources, including domestic and external funding sources and technical assistance where appropriate;

- iv. state the *output(s)* for each activity.

The workplan should reflect input from stakeholders outside of the National MSG. The National MSG may consider an initial baseline survey to inform the design of the national FiTI process and the first workplan.

The workplan must be approved by the National MSG.

The workplan must be made widely available to the public, for example published on a national FiTI website or in places that are easily accessible to the public.

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B. Requirements for Implementing Countries

This section lists the requirements that countries need to adhere to in order to become and remain a FiTI Compliant country.

1. National Implementation Framework

1.1 Enabling Environment for Stakeholder Participation

The government must maintain an enabling environment for business and civil society participation as specified in requirement A.2.

1.2 Governance and Support

The government must maintain a FiTI Lead Ministry and a FiTI National Lead as specified in requirement A.3. Any changes to the FiTI Lead Ministry or the FiTI National Lead must be made public.

The National MSG must maintain a properly authorized and resourced FiTI National Secretariat as specified in requirement A.5.

1.3 Multi-Stakeholder Oversight

The government must maintain a National MSG as specified in requirement A.4. Any changes to the National MSG or to its Terms of Reference must be made public.

1.4 Annual Workplan

The National MSG must provide an updated workplan for each upcoming reporting period. The workplan must:

- i. provide a summary of FiTI activities undertaken in the previous reporting period, including an assessment of the level of progress in achieving the objectives set out in the previous workplan(s);
- ii. outline objectives, constraints, activities and outputs in accordance with requirement A.6. based on
 - uncompleted objectives of previous workplan(s), if applicable;
 - activity planning for the upcoming reporting period;
 - recommendations identified by the National MSG in previous FiTI Report(s), if applicable;
 - recommendations from validations, if applicable;

The workplan should also provide an assessment of progress with meeting and maintaining compliance with each non-reporting related FiTI requirement, and any steps taken to exceed the requirements.

The workplan must be approved by the National MSG two months prior to the upcoming reporting period. In case a period of extension is granted to the country (C.2.2.), the workplan must be published no later than one month before the start of the upcoming reporting period.

In order for the workplan to be useful as a management tool, the National MSG may consider more regular updates and revisions.

1.5 Impact Report

It is envisioned that the enhanced transparency and participation provided by the FiTI will stimulate public debates on how the fisheries sector is managed, enabling relevant stakeholders as well as citizens of FiTI implementing countries to demand reforms towards better governance of their marine fisheries. It is also envisioned that the FiTI will foster trust and collaboration across stakeholder groups over time.

To this end, the National MSG must publish an Impact Report every three years, preferably aligned with upcoming validations.

The Impact Report must provide a narrative account of efforts to strengthen the outcomes and impact of FiTI implementation on fisheries resource governance. This narrative account should provide information on the dissemination efforts of FiTI Reports as well as other activities conducted by the National MSG, such as:

- i. communicating with relevant stakeholders about the FiTI implementation as well as disseminating FiTI Reports;
- ii. reaching out to national and international stakeholders that can provide capacity-building, especially for civil society organizations and small-scale fishing associations, to increase awareness of the FiTI, improve understanding of the information from the FiTI reports, and encourage use of the information by citizens, the media, and others.
- iii. including the lessons learned and recommendations from FiTI Reports into policy dialogues and broader conversations about national reform efforts;
- iv. promoting the availability of information required by the FiTI Standard through government reporting systems, such as databases, websites;
- v. linking information from FiTI Reports to wider international reform efforts, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals;

- vi. connecting with relevant actors across FiTI implementing countries to learn from each other on how to engage more effectively;

The Impact Report should reflect input from stakeholders outside of the National MSG.

2. Basic Transparency Requirements

The FiTI requires countries to ensure that the management of fisheries conforms to basic standards of transparency. Implementing countries must therefore implement the following basic transparency requirements in order to become a FiTI Compliant country.

2.1 Publication of Fisheries Laws, Regulations and Official Policy Documents

Implementing countries must maintain an up-to-date and accessible registry of all national legislation and official policy documents for the marine fishing sector. The National Multi-Stakeholder Group must decide on which areas of fisheries this applies to, however at a minimum copies of national laws, decrees and policy documents that establish rules on fishing rights allocations and authorisations, trade in fish products and investment in fisheries, should be in the public domain.

2.2 Publication of Fisheries Access Agreements

Implementing countries must disclose the texts and amendments of all fisheries access agreements and related protocols. This includes agreements that allow access for foreign vessels to fish in the country's Exclusive Economic Zone as well as agreements that allow nationally-flagged vessels to fish in a third country. Access agreements that are already in force by the time a country reaches an official status of a FiTI Candidate country, and for which there is an agreement or expectation of confidentiality between the parties to this agreement, must be made public within 3 years from becoming a FiTI Candidate country.

2.3 Fish Stock Assessment³

Implementing countries must disclose the most recent reports on stock status, including where possible recommendations on permissible catch volumes and fishing effort. Such information must also clearly state any further information on efforts to update and expand fish stock assessments.

³ NOTE: Based on the recommendations of the FiTI International Advisory Group, the requirement to provide information on fish stock assessments was listed under Contextual information of FiTI Reports (B.4.4.). The FiTI International Secretariat proposes to move this requirement to the basic transparency requirements in order to enable more timely provision of such information. The nature of the requirement itself is not changed.

2.4 Public Registry of Authorized Fishing Vessels in the Large-Scale Sector

Implementing countries must publish a list of large-scale fishing vessels they have provided fishing authorisations to, including nationally flagged vessels authorised to fish in a third country or on the high seas. The National MSG should decide on the threshold for vessels to be included on this registry. At a minimum this registry must provide:

- i. the name of the vessel;
- ii. the legal owner of the vessel, including their address and nationality;
- iii. the vessel characteristics;
- iv. information on what category of fishing authorisation has been granted to the vessel.

This list must be updated in a timely manner.

The National MSG should provide recommendations to the authority responsible for this registry on the acceptable timeframes from the government authorising a vessel to updating the public vessel registry.

3. Reporting Procedures for FiTI Reports

Overview: At the heart of the FiTI is the requirement that countries will provide accessible and credible information on the fishing sector. This information will be compiled by an independent person and verified through a national multi-stakeholder process. The information will be presented in annual FiTI Reports.

This section outlines the procedural requirements that implementing countries must follow when producing FiTI Reports. Recognizing the different abilities and resources across countries, this section starts by setting out overarching principles for FiTI Reporting (B.3.1.), which address cases where information to meet the reporting requirements is partially or fully unavailable because it is not collated/collected by public authorities, as well as cases where information for FiTI Reports is already available in the public domain.

Additionally, the provision of FiTI Reports must adhere to reporting procedures regarding a Reporting Process (B.3.2.), Reporting Deadline and Period (B.3.3.), Reporting Format (B.3.4.) and Report Dissemination (B.3.5.).

3.1 Reporting Principles

Implementing countries must produce FiTI Reports that provide information on all FiTI reporting elements set forth in B.4. These elements are minimum requirements, and FiTI implementing countries should expand the reporting elements if this enables the FiTI to better address national priorities for the fisheries sector.

In case information to meet these reporting requirements is partially or fully unavailable because it is not collated by public authorities, the country is still able to fulfil the FiTI reporting requirements set forth in B.4., as long as:

- i. the National MSG, in consultation with its constituencies, regards the information as representing the best available information;
- ii. the lack of information and the underlying reasons are clearly stated in the FiTI Report; and
- iii. the National MSG agrees on objectives and activities to progressively improve the availability of information. The objectives and activities must be included in the National MSG's annual workplan.

In case information to meet the reporting requirements is already made available by public authorities in the public domain, the Report Compiler must assess whether the information is accessible and complete. The National MSG must approve the Report Compiler's assessment. In such a case, the FiTI Report does not need to replicate this information. Instead, the FiTI Report must:

- i. provide a reference on where this information can be found in the public domain;
- ii. summarize the main findings within the FiTI Report.

In case information in the public domain is perceived by the National MSG as inaccessible or incomplete, the FiTI Report must

- i. provide this information in full (as part of the Technical Report, see below);
- ii. provide recommendations for improvements on how to strengthen the availability of accessible and complete information data in government reporting systems, which ultimately can be reused for FiTI Reports.

FiTI Reports must state the source of information for all reporting elements.

3.2 Reporting Process

The National MSG must oversee the national FiTI reporting process, approve and disseminate the information and set strategic priorities for further improvements.

Process for appointing a Report Compiler

The information set forth in sub-section B.4. must be compiled by a Report Compiler, applying international professional standards.

The Report Compiler must be perceived by the National MSG to be independent, credible, trustworthy and technically competent. The National MSG must endorse the appointment of the Report Compiler.

The National MSG and the Report Compiler must agree on Terms of Reference (ToR) for the FiTI Report. These ToR must be based on standard Terms of Reference and minimum procedures for FiTI Reports, endorsed by the FiTI International Board. The ToR must include, inter alia, strict provisions regarding data confidentiality, as the Report Compiler must have access to details of information which, in such detailed way, might not be made public in the final FiTI Report. Should the National MSG wish to deviate from these agreed upon ToR or minimum procedures for FiTI Reports, approval from the FiTI International Board must be sought in advance.

Process for collecting information for FiTI Report

The National MSG and the Report Compiler must work jointly to ensure that the entire FiTI reporting process is perceived as open and inclusive.

The Report Compiler must consult with the FiTI International Secretariat as well as with other relevant national and international organizations and experts to ensure a broad participation for providing information for FiTI Reports.

The National MSG may define a reporting template for the FiTI Report which captures the necessary reporting requirements, tailored to the country's specific circumstances.

On behalf of the National MSG and in close collaboration with the country's FiTI National Lead, the Report Compiler must request the relevant information from the country's government. All relevant information held by government authorities must be made available to the Report Compiler. Failure to provide information that is available to government authorities will result in sanctions (E.2.).

Afterwards, the Report Compiler must engage with relevant business, including vessel owners, right-holders and small-scale fishing associations, to enable them to confirm or modify the compiled information. In case of non-response during a defined time period, information will be treated as confirmed. Non-responding business must be identified in the FiTI Report.

Process for compiling preliminary FiTI Report

The Report Compiler must review the collected information and compile a preliminary version of the FiTI Report for the National MSG.

In case information to meet the FiTI reporting requirements

- i. is partially or fully *unavailable* because it is not collated by public authorities, but complementary information from other stakeholders is available, the Report Compiler must bring this information to the attention of the National MSG. The National MSG must then review this information and decide whether to include it in the FiTI Report.
- ii. is *available* from public authorities, but information from other stakeholders shows discrepancies, the Report Compiler must seek to resolve the discrepancies. For this, the Report Compiler should request additional assurance that support the quality and credibility of the provided information. In case the discrepancies can be resolved, the Report Compiler must state the underlying cause of the discrepancy and propose adjusted information. Otherwise, the FiTI Report must clearly state discrepancies and the National MSG must provide recommendations for improvements in upcoming reporting periods.

Preliminary versions of the FiTI Report must clearly state that the report is a draft awaiting final approval by the National MSG, and may therefore be modified. Members of the National MSG and the Report Compiler must take necessary measures to ensure that only approved FiTI Reports are placed in the public domain.

Process for approving the FiTI Report

In reviewing the preliminary version of the FiTI Report, the National MSG should consult with its constituencies. The Report Compiler must then adapt the preliminary FiTI Report based on the review comments.

The FiTI Report must only be disseminated (B.3.5.) when the National MSG

- i. reaches a consensus on the substance of the information, and
- ii. approves the FiTI Report.

Prior to publishing its first FiTI Report, the National MSG must consult with the FiTI International Secretariat to ensure formal completeness with the FiTI reporting requirements.

3.3 Reporting Deadlines and Periods

Implementing countries must publish their first FiTI Report within the subsequent year of becoming a FiTI Candidate country. The first FiTI Report must contain information on tenure arrangements (B.4.1.), large-scale fisheries (B.4.2.) as well as small-scale fisheries (B.4.3.) from the complete calendar year when the country becomes a FiTI Candidate country.

Afterwards, implementing countries must publish FiTI Reports on an annual basis, comprising of information from the complete calendar year preceding the current year.

Every second FiTI Report must also include contextual information (B.4.4.). The contextual information must be disaggregated by calendar years.

The National MSG must ensure that there are no gaps between two consecutive FiTI Reports.

3.4 Report Format

The FiTI Report must have two parts:

- i. an Executive Summary, summarising the key information to stimulate the public debate about how fisheries resources can be used effectively. The Summary section must be based on a standardised format, provided by the FiTI International Secretariat; and
- ii. a Technical Report, providing detailed information in accordance with the FiTI reporting elements set forth in B.4., if applicable.

The National MSG must ensure that the FiTI Report is comprehensible, ensuring that it is written in a clear and accessible style.

3.5 Report Dissemination

The National MSG must ensure that the FiTI Report is actively promoted and contributes to wider public debates.

The National MSG must ensure that the Executive Summary:

- i. is widely distributed among key audiences, including government, parliamentarians, civil society, companies, academia, the media, and international stakeholders;
- ii. is translated into appropriate languages.

Due to the amount of detail the National MSG should publish the Technical Report primarily online. The National MSG should make the relevant sections of the Technical Report available in an open data format (e.g.csv, xml) online.

The National MSG must also ensure that the lessons learned and recommendations from FiTI Reports are embedded into policy dialogues and broader conversations about national reform efforts.

The FiTI Report should be published under an open license. The National MSG should make users aware that information can be reused without prior consent.

The National MSG may also encourage outreach events, whether organised by government, civil society or business, to spread awareness of and facilitate dialogue about the FiTI across the entire country.

4. Reporting Elements for FiTI Reports

Overview: This section outlines the reporting elements for which FiTI implementing countries must provide information in their FiTI Reports. There are 15 reporting elements, organised in four reporting categories, as outlined in the table below.

In accordance with the reporting principles set forth in B.3.1., FiTI Reports must indicate if information for the reporting elements exists in the public domain, and whether the information is accessible and complete. If so, the FiTI Report must only reference where this information can be accessed and include a summary of the major findings. If the information is not publicly accessible or it is considered published in ways that make it difficult to understand, then the FiTI Report must provide the information in full.

Furthermore, if information for these reporting elements is unavailable because it is not held by public authorities, the country is still able to fulfil the FiTI reporting requirements, as long as the reasons why this information is not available are stated clearly and are accepted by the National MSG. Where information may be considered unreliable or dated, this can be used as long as the National MSG agrees that it represents the best available information. In the case where information is either absent, unreliable or dated, the National MSG must agree on objectives and activities to improve this.

Reporting Categories	Reporting Elements
<i>Tenure Arrangements</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rules and Procedures on Access Rights and Fishing Authorisations at the National Level 2. Foreign Fisheries Access Agreements 3. Rules and Procedures for Granting Authorisations to Nationally-Flagged Vessels to Fish in a Third Country or in the High Seas
<i>Large-Scale Fisheries</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Authorised Fishing Vessels 5. Actual Payments by Fishing Vessels 6. Actual Catches
<i>Small-Scale Fisheries</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Numbers of Fishers and Vessels 8. Actual Payments for Fishing and Landings 9. Actual Catches
<i>Contextual Information</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. Post-harvest & Trade 11. Fisheries Law Enforcement 12. Labour Standards 13. Fisheries Subsidies 14. Official Development Assistance 15. Beneficial Ownership

4.1 Tenure Arrangements

Reporting Element #1: Rules and Procedures on Access Rights and Fishing Authorisations at the National Level

In accordance with the reporting procedures for FiTI Reports (B.3.), the following information must be provided, covering all categories of fishing, including small-scale or artisanal fisheries, large-scale or industrial fishing, recreational fishing, as well as scientific or exploratory fishing, if applicable.

- i. The type of rights that can be issued and the duration of these rights.
- ii. The rules regarding the sharing or transferring of rights.
- iii. The categories of fishing authorisations.
- iv. The persons that are legally entitled to issue access rights and fishing authorisations.
- v. The existence and function of any oversight committee involved in the issuing of access rights and fishing authorisations.
- vi. The rules and procedures that ensure public consultation on the issuing of access rights and fishing authorisations.
- vii. The selection criteria used for the allocation of access rights and fishing authorisations.
- viii. The administrative procedures for the allocation of access rights and fishing authorisations.
- ix. The levies and fees for obtaining and using an access right and fishing authorisation.
- x. The conditions applied to all types of fishing authorisations relating to fishing effort and ecosystem impact.
- xi. The conditions applied to all types of fishing authorisations relating to landings, transshipments and the use of designated ports.
- xii. The conditions applied to all types of fishing authorisations relating to catch reporting and vessel monitoring.
- xiii. The rules for access rights and fishing authorisations to be suspended or revoked.
- xiv. The management plans for specific fisheries or areas.
- xv. The protection of customary or informal rights to fishing areas.

The FiTI Report should further indicate if there are ongoing or planned reform efforts that will result in any changes to this information.

For subsequent reporting periods, FiTI Reports should only include updates in cases of changes the National MSG deems relevant.

Reporting Element #2: Foreign Fisheries Access Agreements

In accordance with the reporting procedures for FiTI Reports (B.3.), the following information must be provided for all current foreign fisheries access agreements and related protocol(s) either granting fishing rights to the country's Exclusive Economic Zone for foreign fishing vessels or access agreements that provide fishing opportunities for nationally flagged vessels in a third country. Information must also cover agreements that are inactive due to the absence of a protocol.

- i. The name of the legal entity with whom the agreement is signed.
- ii. The name and position of the foreign person(s) that are the signatory of the agreement and related protocols, if applicable.
- iii. The national authority that is the signature for the agreement.
- iv. The date on which the agreement and latest protocols came in to force and when it is due to expire or be renewed.
- v. The role of stakeholders in the negotiation and approval of the agreement.
- vi. The types of fishing authorisations that the agreement permits, including the number and types of vessels permitted as well as the permitted catches and discards for these vessels.
- vii. The payment structure, including details of any obligation to invest in fisheries management or infrastructure and tax treaties as well as the evidence that these payments and investments have been provided.
- viii. The conditions applied to fishing vessels, covering fishing effort and impact, landings, catch reporting and the use of national citizens as crew.
- ix. The scientific reports that establish the impact of the fishing activities on the status of fish stocks and marine ecosystems.
- x. The obligation for vessels to take on-board observers and details of the role and payment for these observers.
- xi. Provisions for the agreement or protocol(s) to be suspended or revoked.
- xii. Details of any confidentiality clause relating to the publication of the agreement or protocol(s), or relating to the activity of fishing vessels.

Reporting Element #3: Rules and Procedures for Granting Authorisations to Nationally-Flagged Vessels to Fish in a Third Country or in the High Seas

In accordance with the reporting procedures for FiTI Reports (B.3.), the following information must be provided, even in case where there are no nationally-flagged vessels fishing in a third country or in the High Seas during the reporting period.

- i. The procedure for granting authority to a nationally-flagged vessel fishing in a third country or the High Seas.
- ii. The authority granting fishing authorisations.
- iii. The financial levies and fees paid by vessel owners to gain an authorisation.
- iv. The reporting requirements for vessel owners.
- v. The rules and procedures for the fishing authorisation to be suspended or revoked.

This information only applies to the rules and procedures of the FiTI implementing country, and does not cover rules and procedures that are applied to its nationally-flagged vessels by a third country or a Regional Fisheries Management Organization.

4.2 Large-Scale Fisheries

In advance of each reporting period, the National MSG must define the term large-scale vessels. The demarcation between large-scale and small-scale vessels must be stated in the FiTI Report. In case the National MSG decides to change the definition from previous FiTI Reports, rationales must be stated in the FiTI Report.

The FiTI Report should indicated for all reporting elements whether the information has been confirmed by vessel owners. In the event that vessel owners have disputed, this should be documented, along with details of how this dispute has been resolved.

Reporting Element #4: Authorized Fishing Vessels

In accordance with the reporting procedures for FiTI Reports (B.3.), the following information must be provided for each fishing vessel that is authorised to fish in the country's Exclusive Economic Zone and all nationally-flagged fishing vessels that are authorised to fish in a third country or in the High Seas.

- i. The name of the vessel.
- ii. The legal owner of the vessel, including their address and nationality.
- iii. The registered port of the vessel.

- iv. The flag state of the vessel.
- v. The identification number(s) of the vessel.
- vi. The type of vessel, according to fishing gear or fishing method, following the definition set in the country's legislation.
- vii. The physical characteristics of the vessel, including length, width, tonnage and engine power.
- viii. The name of the vessel's agent, if applicable.
- ix. The access agreement under which the vessel is granted authorisation to fish, if applicable.
- x. The type of fishing authorisation held by the vessel.
- xi. The quantity and names of target species, permissible by-catch and discards that the vessel is authorised to fish, if specified in the vessel's fishing authorisation.
- xii. The duration of the fishing authorisation, indicating start and end date.
- xiii. The rights holder for whom the vessel is fishing, if applicable, including the name and nationality of the rights holder.
- xiv. The country and/or regions of the High Seas where the vessel is authorised to fish (applicable for nationally-flagged vessels operating in third countries or the High Seas).

Where there is evidence of a fishing vessel fishing without authorization, the information on this vessel should be included, clearly indicating that it was unauthorized.

Reporting Element #5: Actual Payments by Fishing Vessels

In accordance with the reporting procedures for FiTI Reports (B.3.), the following information must be provided:

- i. The payments made by vessel owners or others on their behalf for vessels listed under reporting element #4 in relation to obtaining a fishing authorisation and undertaking fishing activities, including, but not limited to, administrative charges for vessel registration, payments for licenses, payments toward the costs of observers and payments related to landed catches. Payments must relate to fishing activities for the reporting period.

The information does not include payments made by vessel owners to port authorities for bunkering or transshipping, unless otherwise agreed to by the National MSG.

- ii. The name of the natural person or legal entity that made the payment.
- iii. The name of the national authority who received the payment.
- iv. The date on which payment was received by the national authority.
- v. The purpose of the payment.

Reporting Element #6: Actual Catches

In accordance with the reporting procedures for FiTI Reports (B.3.), the following information must be provided for vessels listed under reporting element #4. At a minimum FiTI Reports must make available catch data aggregated by all vessels of a particular flag state, broken down by fishing gear and target species. If justified and agreed upon by the National MSG, the National MSG may decide to provide catch data for all or some vessels on a per vessel basis.

The following information must also be provide for nationally-flagged vessels operating in a third country or in the High Seas. The country or region in the High Seas of their catches needs to be included.

- i. The total catches of target species by volume.
- ii. The total catches of by-catch by species and by volume.
- iii. The total discards by species and by volume.
- iv. The total of combined catches and by-catch landed in national ports.
- v. The total of combined catches and by-catch transhipped at sea or landed directly in a foreign port.

Individual vessels which do not comply with catch, landings and transshipment reporting provisions according to the country's rules and procedures on access rights and fishing authorisations at the national level (B.4.1.) must be identified in the FiTI Report.

4.3 Small-Scale Fisheries

In advance of each reporting period, the National MSG must define the term small-scale vessels, which may also include fishing vessels authorized to fish as recreational or sports fishing vessels. The demarcation between large-scale and small-scale vessels must be stated in the FiTI Report. In case the National MSG decides to change the definition from previous FiTI Reports, rationales must be stated in the FiTI Report.

Information for this category is not required on a per vessel basis, unless the National MSG decides this level of data is required for all or some of the small-scale sector. However, all

reporting elements in this category should describe whether the information is available in a more disaggregated form, such as data on geographical regions or communities, or on a per vessel basis.

Reporting Element #7: Numbers of Fishers and Vessels

In accordance with the reporting procedures for FiTI Reports (B.3.), the following information must be provided:

- i. The total numbers of small-scale fishing vessels, disaggregated according to categories of fishing authorisations or gear types.
- ii. The total number of fishing authorisations issued to small-scale fishing vessels; disaggregated according to categories of fishing authorisations.
- iii. The total numbers of fishers engaged in the fishing sector, indicating the gender of fishers and the proportion that are engaged in full-time work, seasonal or part time fishing, occasional fishing or recreational fishing.

The National MSG may request ownership details to be provided on a per vessel basis for certain types of fishing authorizations.

The National MSG may consider adding to this reporting element the availability of information on the number of nationally-owned vessels that are operating in other countries, through a formal access agreement, through private fishing authorisations or informally. Such information could further indicate the numbers of vessels that fish in other country's waters on a seasonal basis, and numbers of vessels that are based in foreign countries on a more permanent basis (i.e. form part of settled migrant fishing communities).

Reporting Element #8: Actual Payments for Fishing and Landings

In accordance with the reporting procedures for FiTI Reports (B.3.), the following information must be provided:

- i. The payments made by small-scale fishers or others on their behalf related to fishing authorisations and fishing activities, disaggregated according to categories of fishing authorisations or gear types. These payments include, but are not limited to, financial transfers from fishers to government authorities at the central level as well as financial transfers at a decentralised level, such as to local authorities or community co-management organisations, if applicable.
- ii. The payments made by small-scale fishers or others on their behalf for landing catches.

- iii. The recipient for payments made by small-scale fishers for fishing authorisations, fishing activities and landings.

Reporting Element #9: Actual Catches

In accordance with the reporting procedures for FiTI Reports (B.3.), the following information must be provided:

- i. The volumes of catches, disaggregated according to species, categories of fishing authorisations and gear types.
- ii. The volumes of discards, disaggregated according to species, categories of fishing authorisations and gear types.

4.4 Contextual Information

Reporting Element #10: Post-harvest & Trade

In accordance with the reporting procedures for FiTI Reports (B.3.), the following information must be provided:

- i. The total volume of fish and fish products produced, disaggregated by different species and fish products.
- ii. The total volume of imports of fish and fish products, disaggregated by different species and fish products, indicating the country of their origin.
- iii. The total volume of exports of fish and fish products, disaggregated by different species and fish products, indicating the country of their destination.
- iv. The total number of people employed in commercial and informal fisheries sectors, including the number of men and women working in specific sub-sectors.

The National MSG may provide information on wages in the post-harvest fisheries sector.

Reporting Element #11: Fisheries Law Enforcement

In accordance with the reporting procedures for FiTI Reports (B.3.), the following information must be provided:

- i. The national activities and strategies used for monitoring fishing vessels at sea and in ports and ensuring compliance with fisheries rules and procedures.
- ii. The financial and human resources deployed by the government to ensure compliance with fisheries rules and procedures.
- iii. The total numbers of inspections of fishing vessels at sea and in ports.
- iv. The offences in the large-scale sector that have been resolved by the fishing authorities, either through a court of law or through an out-of-court settlement, on a per vessel basis.
- v. The amount paid by large-scale fishing vessels as fines and penalties for offences, on a per vessel basis.
- vi. The total amount of fines and penalties made by the small-scale sector, including the offences these fines and penalties relate to.

The National MSG should consider providing information on the country's status in complying with reporting requirement of Regional Fisheries Management Organisations of which they are a member regarding activities of authorised vessels.

Reporting Element #12: Labour Standards

In accordance with the reporting procedures for FiTI Reports (B.3.), the following information must be provided:

- i. The national laws on labour standards for national and foreign workers employed in the fisheries sector at sea and in the post-harvest sector.
- ii. The public authorities responsible for monitoring and enforcing the laws on labour standards.
- iii. The national strategy and activities for enforcing the laws on labour standards.
- iv. The government or non-governmental body that receives labour related complaints from workers in the fisheries sector and in the post-harvest sector.
- v. The financial and human resources deployed by the government to enforce the laws on labour standards.
- vi. The total number of offences by employers in the fisheries sector that have been resolved by the authorities.

- vii. The status of the country in ratifying and implementing the International Labour Organization conventions on labour standards in the fisheries sector.

Reporting Element #13: Fisheries Subsidies

In accordance with the reporting procedures for FiTI Reports (B.3.), the following information must be provided:

- i. The definition of fisheries subsidies used by the national government.
- ii. The aggregated value for each type of subsidies as set out in national laws or policies provided to the fisheries and fish production sectors.

The National MSG should relate this information to the types of fisheries subsidies which contribute to overcapacity and overfishing in accordance to the Sustainable Development Goal #14.6.

The National MSG may decide that information on subsidies should be assessed in a disaggregated form, thereby indicating the value of subsidies paid to specific companies or actors within the fishing and fish production sector.

Reporting Element #14: Official Development Assistance

In accordance with the reporting procedures for FiTI Reports (B.3.), the following information must be provided:

- i. The public sector fisheries and marine conservation projects funded by bilateral and private donors, including information on the projects' value, purpose and outputs.
- ii. The references to documentation for each of these projects (including independent evaluations of the impact and outcomes) in the public domain.

Reporting Element #15: Beneficial Ownership

In accordance with the reporting procedures for FiTI Reports (B.3.), the following information must be provided:

- i. The legal basis for beneficial ownership transparency in the country.
- ii. The country's legal definition of beneficial ownership.
- iii. The availability of a public register of beneficial owners.

- iv. The rules and procedures for incorporating beneficial ownership in filings by companies to corporate regulators, stock exchanges or agencies regulating the access to fisheries.
- v. The current status and discussions around beneficial ownership transparency in fisheries.

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C. Other Provisions for Implementing Countries

This section covers other provisions applying to FiTI implementing countries, including procedures available in the FiTI implementation process.

1. Exceptional Circumstances

1.1 Adapted Implementation

In case the National MSG concludes that it faces exceptional circumstances that require a deviation from the FiTI requirements, 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 workplan and be approved by the National MSG.

In considering such requests, the FiTI International Board will place a priority on the need for comparable treatment between countries and ensuring that the FiTI Principles are upheld, including ensuring that the FiTI implementation is sufficiently inclusive, and that the FiTI Report is comprehensive, reliable and will contribute to public debate.

After approval by the FiTI International Board, the adapted implementation must be reflected in the upcoming workplan of the National MSG.

1.2 Extension

Implementing countries may apply for an extension if they are unable to meet the required deadlines of FiTI implementation (i.e. publication of FiTI Report, workplan, Impact Report, as well as undergoing validation) due to exceptional or unforeseen circumstances. The FiTI International Board will assess extension requests by the following criteria:

- i. The request must be made in advance of the deadline and be approved by the National MSG.
- ii. The exceptional and unforeseen circumstance(s) that caused the delay must be explained in the request from the National MSG.
- iii. The National MSG must demonstrate that it has been making continuous progress towards meeting the deadline. In assessing continuous progress the FiTI International Board will consider:
 - The National Implementation Framework (B.1.), in particular a clear, strong commitment from the government and the functioning of the National MSG.

- The status and quality of FiTI Reports, including meaningful progress in meeting the requirements for timely reporting and efforts to address recommendations for improving FiTI reporting.

Extensions are not granted by the FiTI International Board to extend timeframes for suspension and probation in accordance with E.1.

1.3 Hiatus

In cases where political instability, conflict, or natural disaster manifestly prevents a FiTI implementing country from adhering to a significant aspect of the FiTI Principles or requirements, it may be necessary for that country to temporarily pause FiTI implementation.

A country may voluntarily apply for the hiatus, or the FiTI International Board may decide to place the country on hiatus. In the former case, the government must send an application for voluntary hiatus to the FiTI International Board. The government's application must explain the relevant circumstances and note the views of the National MSG.

The government may apply to have the hiatus status lifted at any time. Such a request must document the steps agreed by stakeholders to restart the FiTI implementation and validation process, and the workplan to achieve compliance. 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.

A country on hiatus that is unable to restart FiTI implementation within 12-18 months will be subject to FiTI International Board review for possible delisting.

A country on hiatus that is unable to restart FiTI implementation within 24 months 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.

2. Appeals

With regard to decisions by the FiTI International Board to impose sanctions (E.2.), the country concerned may petition the FiTI International Board to review its decision at the following FiTI International Board meeting.

PART II: FITI STANDARD FOR INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE

D. Validation

Validation is an essential part of the FiTI process. It serves to assess an implementing country's compliance with the FiTI Standard, ensuring that FiTI countries apply similar procedures and fulfil the FiTI requirements. Validation also helps promote dialogue and learning at the country level, and safeguards the integrity of the FiTI by holding all FiTI implementing countries to the same global standard. This section lists provisions that the FiTI International Board applies when conducting validations.

1. Validation Assessments

1.1 Assessment of Individual FiTI Requirements

First, the validation process assesses the country's level of compliance for each individual FiTI requirement (Section B).

Detailed guidance on the types of evidence that are required in order to make an assessment on individual requirements is set out in the FiTI Validation.

A country's level of compliance with each FiTI requirement will be indicated by applying one of the following designations:

- i. *Compliant*: Validation demonstrates that all aspects of the requirement have been implemented and that the broader objective of the requirement has been fulfilled.
- ii. *Meaningful progress*: Validation demonstrates that significant aspects of the requirement have been implemented and that the broader objective of the requirement is being fulfilled.
- iii. *Inadequate progress*: Validation demonstrates that significant aspects of the requirement have not been implemented and that the broader objective of the requirement is not fulfilled.
- iv. *No progress*: Validation demonstrates that all or nearly all aspects of the requirement have not been implemented, and that the broader objective of the requirement is far from being fulfilled.

1.2 Assessment of Overall Compliance

Second, based on the assessment of individual FiTI requirements, the FiTI International Board assesses the overall compliance with the FiTI Standard. The FiTI International Board will also take into account provision E.2.2., as well as the following factors:

- i. the advice and recommendations of Validators;
- ii. the nature of the outstanding requirements and how close the requirements are to being met;
- iii. the magnitude and complexity of the fisheries sector of the country;
- iv. 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;
- v. the good faith efforts undertaken by the National MSG to comply with the requirements;
- vi. the reasons and justifications for not complying with the requirements; and
- vii. any plans agreed by the National MSG to address the requirements in the future.

In assessing a country's overall compliance, the FiTI International Board will apply the same designations as used for the assessment of individual requirements outlined in provision D.1.1.

2. Validation Procedures

2.1 Initial Data Collection and Stakeholder Consultation

First, the FiTI International Secretariat initiates a validation process, as requested by the FiTI International Board, by reviewing a country's relevant information, visiting the country and consulting with stakeholders. This will include meetings with the country's National MSG, the Report Compiler and other key stakeholders, including stakeholders that are represented on, but not directly participating in, the National MSG.

The FiTI International Secretariat will prepare a report making an initial evaluation of progress against requirements in accordance with the Validation Guide. The report will not include an overall assessment of compliance. The National MSG will be invited to comment on the report. The report will then be submitted to the Independent Validator.

2.2 Independent Validation

Second, the FiTI International Board will appoint an Independent Validator, who reports to the FiTI International Board.

Based on the report of the FiTI International Secretariat, the Independent Validator will conduct an assessment of each individual requirement and provide a recommendation for the overall compliance designation.

Additionally, the Independent Validator will document:

- i. Efforts that go beyond FiTI requirements, including efforts by the National MSG to address optional aspects of the FiTI Standard. It will also include efforts by the National MSG to successfully achieve any workplan objectives that fall outside the scope of the FiTI Standard, but that have been identified by the National MSG to be necessary objectives for the FiTI to address national priorities for the fisheries sector.
- ii. The direction of progress towards meeting each FiTI requirement as compared to the country's previous validation(s), indicating whether implementation is improving or deteriorating.

These efforts and directions of progress will be documented in the validation but will not be taken into account in assessing compliance with the FiTI Standard.

The Independent Validator will provide a final report to the FiTI International Board, documenting the assessments, presenting the evidence, stakeholder views, references and conclusions.

2.3 Determination of Validation Outcome

Third, the FiTI International Board, or a committee of Board members designated by the Board, reviews the Validator's assessments and recommendations, and any feedback from the National MSG. Finally, the FiTI International Board makes the final determination whether the individual requirements are met or not, and regarding the country's overall level of compliance in accordance with provision D.1.2.

3. Validation Outcomes

Where the FiTI International Board determines that a country has achieved a compliant designation on the assessment of:

- i. the individual requirements regarding enabling environment for stakeholder participation and multi-stakeholder oversight (B.1.1. and B.1.3.), and

- ii. the overall compliance,

the FiTI International Board will assign the status of “FiTI Compliant” to a country.

Where the FiTI International Board determines that a country’s level of overall compliance is not high enough to assign the country Compliant status, the provisions of E.2.3. apply.

4. Validation Deadlines and Periods

FiTI Candidate countries must undergo the first validation prior to publishing their second FiTI Report⁴. If a Candidate country does not achieve compliant status at its first validation, subsequent validation schedules will be established by the FiTI International Board in accordance with the procedures set out in E.2.3.

FiTI Compliant countries must be re-validated every three years. A country may request an extension of this timeframe from the FiTI International Board.

The FiTI International Board reserves the right to require a country to undergo a validation outside of the regular validation timeframe.

National stakeholders may also petition the FiTI International Board if they consider that the country’s Compliant status should be reviewed. This request must be mediated through a stakeholder’s constituency representative(s) on the FiTI International Board. The FiTI International Board will review the situation and exercise its discretion as to whether to require an extraordinary validation.

⁴ This requirement was adapted from the recommendation made by the FiTI International Advisory Group at the 5th International Advisory Group meeting of the FiTI in order to give countries more flexibility in their initial FiTI Reports.

E. Sanctions

This section outlines the consequences for FiTI implementing countries in case of non-adherence to the requirements set forth in the FiTI Standard (Section B).

1. Types of Sanctions

1.1 Suspension

Where it is manifestly clear that one or more aspects of the FiTI requirements, particularly reporting deadlines and other technical requirements (E.2.1.), are not adhered to by a FiTI implementing country, the country will be suspended.

Suspension of a FiTI implementing country is a temporary mechanism. The implementing country will have up to 9 months to address the reasons for suspension. During the period of suspension, a country will have the status “Suspended”.

If the matter is resolved within the given timeframe, the country’s previous Candidate or Compliant status is re-instated. If the matter has not been resolved within the given timeframe, the country will be delisted, or in certain validation scenarios, given another suspension (see provision E.2.3.).

1.2 Probation

Where it is manifestly clear that a FiTI implementing country has breached one or more aspects of the FiTI Principles or the spirit of the initiative (E.2.2.), the FiTI International Board will put the country on probation.

Probation of a FiTI implementing country is a temporary mechanism. The FiTI International Board will set a time limit up to 12 months for the FiTI implementing country to address the reasons for probation. During the period of probation, the country will have the status “On probation”.

If the matter is resolved to the satisfaction of the FiTI International Board within the given timeframe, the country’s previous candidate or compliant status is re-instated. If the matter has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the FiTI International Board within the given timeframe, the FiTI International Board will delist the country.

Where the FiTI International Board is concerned that adherence to the FiTI Principles or the spirit of the initiative is compromised, it may task the FiTI International Secretariat with gathering information about the situation and submitting a report to the FiTI International Board.

1.3 Delisting

The FiTI International Board will revoke a country's status as a FiTI implementing country by delisting the country from the initiative, if:

- i. a FiTI implementing country has been subject to suspension (E.1.1.), and the matter has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the FiTI International Board within the given timeframe;
- ii. a FiTI implementing country has been subject to probation (E.1.2.), and the matter has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the FiTI International Board within the given timeframe;
- iii. the outcome of a validation regarding the assessment of overall compliance (E.2.3.) demonstrates that a country has not made the required progress in implementing the FiTI within the established timeframes;
- iv. a FiTI implementing country has been on prolonged hiatus (C.2.3.), and is still unable to re-commence the FiTI implementation process.

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

A delisted country may reapply for admission as a FiTI Candidate at any time, after implementing the requirements set forth in section A. With respect to assessing FiTI Candidate applications of previously delisted countries, the FiTI International Board will also assess previous experience in FiTI implementation, including previous barriers to effective implementation, and the implementation of corrective measures.

2. Types of Violations

2.1 Non-adherence to Deadlines or Other Technical Requirements

Implementing countries must adhere to the deadlines for annual FiTI Reports (B.3.3.), annual workplans (B.1.4.) and Impact Reports (B.1.5.). Non-adherence to deadlines will result in an automatic suspension for a period of 3 months for a late workplan, 6 months for a late Impact Report and 9 months for a late FiTI Report. If a country has submitted an extension request prior to the missed deadline (C.2.2.), the suspension will not take effect until the FiTI International Board has addressed the extension request.

“Other technical requirements” refers to observable and evident violations of the FiTI requirements, particularly, but not limited to, omissions of reporting elements or non-

adherence to reporting periods. In between validations, such violations of the FiTI requirements may be reported to the FiTI International Board or the FiTI International Secretariat, and cases of non-adherence will be assessed and sanctioned, as appropriate, by the FiTI International Board.

2.2 Breach of Principles and Spirit of the Initiative

Ad-hoc restrictions on the participation of a FiTI stakeholder group or its representatives

For purposes of this section, references to “stakeholders” include representatives from the three FiTI 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, including but not limited to members of the National MSG. References to the “FiTI implementation” include activities related to preparing for the FiTI sign-up; National MSG meetings; stakeholder side-meetings on FiTI, including interactions with National MSG representatives; producing FiTI Reports; producing materials or conducting analysis on FiTI Reports; expressing views related to FiTI activities; and expressing views related to the governance of marine fisheries.

In accordance with Principles 3 and 5, and as set out in requirements A.2, A.4, B.1.1. and B.1.3., the meaningful participation of representatives from each of FiTI’s three stakeholder groups is fundamental to achieving the objectives of FiTI.

The ability of FiTI stakeholder representatives to participate freely and fully in the FiTI process is key to ensuring that the transparency created by the FiTI leads to greater accountability. Therefore, any restriction(s) imposed that hinder their participation are considered to constitute a fundamental breach of the initiative’s Principles and requirements. Allegations of such restrictions are subject to FiTI International Board investigation and response.

- **Investigating allegations:** In the case of allegations of restrictions on representatives of a particular stakeholder group in a FiTI implementing country due to the stakeholder’s involvement in the FiTI process, the issue should first be discussed and addressed by the implementing country’s National MSG, subject to any safety concerns that an impacted party may have regarding directly raising such issues domestically. If this is not sufficient to resolve the issue, the FiTI International Board may be called on to investigate the allegations. The FiTI International Board will consider such requests with regard to the facts of the case, the need to uphold the Principles of the FiTI as well as the principle of consistent treatment between countries. In cases where the FiTI International Board has insufficient information to make a decision, 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.

In considering allegations of restrictions on a particular stakeholder group or its representatives regarding the FiTI implementation, the FiTI International Board will, as appropriate, strive to establish whether there is a direct link to the FiTI process, including by (i) documenting the facts of the case; (ii) gathering stakeholders' views; and (iii) applying the assessment criteria set out in the "Guidance Note for countries intending to implement the FiTI: The Sign-up Steps" or the Validation Guide for determining whether the requirements for stakeholder engagement are being met.

- Responding to allegations: Depending on the circumstances of the case, including the extent to which it can be established that there is a direct link between the concerns raised and the FiTI implementation, the FiTI International Board will consider an appropriate response. This could, for example, include a letter from the Chair or the FiTI International Board to the government concerned; FiTI International Board or FiTI International Secretariat missions to the country; commissioning independent assessments; issuing FiTI International Board declarations; agreeing to remedial actions including monitoring of implementation; or calling for a validation of a country's adherence to the provisions concerned. In accordance with provision E.1.2. and E.1.3, the FiTI International Board may also put the country on probation or delist the country. In cases where the FiTI International Board concludes that the concerns observed do not breach a provision or are not sufficiently linked to the FiTI process, it will exercise its discretion as to whether to take any further actions.

Wilfully providing misinformation and/or wilfully withholding of information required for FiTI implementation

In accordance with Principles 4 and 6, and as set out in requirement B.3.1., implementing countries must report on all FiTI reporting elements. Credible information is important to ensure that the information provided in the FiTI can lead to better fisheries management. Therefore, wilful use of misinformation and/or wilful withholding of information required for FiTI implementation will be considered to constitute a fundamental breach of the initiative's Principles and requirements. Allegations of such behaviour are subject to FiTI International Board investigation and response.

- Investigating allegations: The FiTI International Board may be called on to investigate the allegations, and apply sanctions, as appropriate. The FiTI International Board will consider such requests with regard to the facts of the case, the need to uphold the Principles of the FiTI as well as the principle of consistent treatment between countries. In cases where the FiTI International Board has insufficient information to make a decision, 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. In considering such allegations, the FiTI International Board will strive to establish (i) whether there is indeed missing information or

misinformation present; and (ii) whether the missing information was deliberately withheld, and/or whether the misinformation was the result of an honest mistake or was used with the intent to mislead.

- **Responding to allegations:** Depending on the circumstances of the case, including the extent to which it can be established that the omission or error was wilful, the FiTI International Board will consider an appropriate response. In the case of accidental omissions or errors, the FiTI International Board may choose to issue a warning or suspend a country in accordance with provision E.1.1. Where the FiTI International Board concludes wilful misconduct occurred, in accordance with provisions E.1.2. and E.1.3., the FiTI International Board will either put the country on probation or immediately delist the country. The FiTI International Board will exercise its discretion in applying any sanction(s), placing priority on the need to uphold the Principles of the FiTI and to ensure consistent treatment between countries.

2.3 Less than “Compliant” Validation Outcomes

Non-compliant finding due to breach of Principles or spirit of the initiative: If the overall outcomes of a validation indicate that a FiTI Candidate country or a FiTI Compliant country has breached the Principles or spirit of the initiative (E.2.2.) the country will be put on probation or will be delisted.

For a FiTI Candidate country undergoing its initial validation: When the overall outcome of a FiTI Candidate country’s first validation is less than “Compliant”, but it has not been found to have breached the Principles or spirit of the initiative (E.2.2.), the FiTI International Board will apply the following sanctions:

- i. *No progress:* The country will be delisted.
- ii. *Inadequate progress:* The country will be suspended and requested to undertake corrective actions until the second validation within the timeframe set forth by the FiTI International Board (E.1.1.). If the country achieves:
 - meaningful progress in the assessment of overall compliance in the second validation, the country remains suspended and requested to undertake corrective actions until the third validation within the timeframe set forth by the FiTI International Board (E.1.1.). When the overall outcome of the country’s third validation is less than “Compliant”, the country will be delisted.
 - inadequate progress or no progress in the second validation, the country will be delisted.

- iii. *Meaningful progress*: The country will remain a FiTI Candidate country and be requested to undertake corrective actions until the second validation within the timeframe set forth by the International Board. If the country achieves:
- meaningful progress in the assessment of overall compliance in the second validation, the country will be suspended and requested to undertake corrective actions until the third validation within the timeframe set forth by the FiTI International Board (E.1.1.). When the overall outcome of the country’s third validation is less than “Compliant”, the country will be delisted.
 - inadequate progress or no progress in the second validation, the country will be delisted.

Outcome of first validation		Outcome of second validation		Outcome of third validation
Compliant				
MP = Country remains Candidate	→	Compliant	→	Compliant
		MP = Country is suspended		MP = Country is delisted
IP = Country is suspended	IP = Country is delisted	IP = Country is delisted		
No Progress = Country is delisted	No Progress = Country is delisted	No Progress = Country is delisted		

MP = Meaningful Progress; IP = Insufficient Progress

For a FiTI Compliant country undergoing a validation: When the overall outcome of a country’s validation is less than “Compliant”, but it has not been found to have breached the Principles or spirit of the initiative (E.2.2.), the FiTI International Board will apply the following sanctions:

- No progress*: The country will be delisted.
- Inadequate progress*: The country will be be delisted.
- Meaningful progress*: The country will be suspended and requested to undertake corrective actions until the subsequent validation within the timeframe set forth by the FiTI International Board. When the overall outcome

of the subsequent validation is less than “Compliant”, the country will be delisted.

3. Responding to Appeals Requests

In accordance with provision C.3., a FiTI implementing country may petition the FiTI International Board to review its decision regarding use of sanctions.

In responding to such petitions, the FiTI International Board will consider the facts of the case, the need to preserve the integrity of the FiTI and the principle of consistent treatment between countries. The FiTI International Board’s decision is final.

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