



Fisheries
Transparency
Initiative



Coastal countries:
SUSTAINABLE MARINE FISHERIES

**through transparency and
multi-stakeholder participation**



Sustainable fisheries need transparency!

Coastal countries face a complex challenge: ensuring that fishing and fish trade contribute to income, employment, food and nutrition for millions of people, while also conserving marine biodiversity for future generations.

The world's fish stocks are facing an uncertain future. Poor fisheries governance is part of the problem, causing overexploitation as well as unfair benefit sharing. Various factors contribute to this, including setting catch quotas too high, sub-optimal allocation of subsidies and even corruption. Many states also face considerable difficulties in addressing illegal fishing and ensuring that the fishing sector reports timely and accurate catch data.

While there are many aspects to achieve sustainable fisheries, the public availability of credible information is critical. **Without transparency governments cannot function to their potential.** Transparency of information nurtures knowledge and the sharing of ideas. It also deepens the understanding of the important nature of the fisheries sectors, as well as the challenges that exist.

Yet, in many countries information on the fisheries sector is not available at all, nor is it shared widely. Moreover, the dissemination of information is often not timely, of insufficient quality or objectivity, or presented in ways that make it inaccessible to citizens.

The **Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI)** helps countries to overcome these challenges by providing internationally-recognized procedures in order to achieve and maintain high levels of transparency on the management of the marine fisheries sector and the activities of fishers and fishing companies.



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The FiTI is a unique initiative! It is the only global effort that promotes a level playing field in fisheries through transparency and multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Transparency is achieved when credible information is made available in the public domain on a range of relevant topics, such as: how many vessels are licensed to fish? How reliable is reported catch data? How much is known on the sustainability of marine fish stocks? What is the value added to the economy from different types of fishing and fish processing? How many people are employed in different parts of the sector? What is the scale and implications of national subsidies?

These are all critical considerations when formulating national policies and their implementation. But without such information, the quality and credibility of decision-making can be undermined, while the prospect of effective oversight and accountability diminishes.

Public access to information on how the country's marine fisheries sector is being exploited is fundamental for good governance. Coastal countries, but also local fishing communities, private companies, investors, retailers and partner countries engaged in fishing agreements stand to benefit from good and transparent management, ensuring a long-term contribution of the fisheries sector to the national economy and the fair distribution of revenues.

In Africa and around the world, fisheries play a crucial role in supporting livelihoods, providing employment and driving socio-economic development. However, the future of the world's fisheries is seriously threatened, and this global challenge is far greater than any country can handle on its own.

The Fisheries Transparency Initiative, with transparency and participation as its cornerstones, makes an invaluable contribution to safeguard what is amongst the most vital resources on the planet.



KOFI ANAN
Chair of the Africa Progress Panel, Former Secretary-General of the United Nations and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

The Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) seeks to increase transparency and participation in fisheries governance for the benefit of a more sustainable management of marine fisheries and the well-being of citizens and businesses that depend on the marine environment.

- ▶▶ The FiTI is a **global initiative**, it does not focus on a single country or on a region.
- ▶▶ The FiTI is a **voluntary initiative**. However, once a country has decided to participate, mandatory requirements must be followed.
- ▶▶ The implementation of the FiTI is **country-centred**. The intention to join the FiTI must come from a country's government.
- ▶▶ The FiTI is a **multi-stakeholder initiative**, ensuring equal representation and participation from government, companies and civil society.
- ▶▶ The FiTI complements and supports other **national, regional and global efforts** for achieving responsible fisheries governance and access to information.
- ▶▶ The FiTI does **not highlight mistakes, weaknesses in decision-making, or bad fishing practices**. Instead, it aims to empower effective oversight and accountability.
- ▶▶ The FiTI is stewarded by an **International Board**, comprising of fisheries and governance experts from governments, business and civil society.

Initiated by the government of Mauritania in 2015, and launched in 2017 in Indonesia, the FiTI has enjoyed considerable support from coastal states, fishing companies, small-scale fishing associations, multilateral and non-governmental organisations.

The FiTI at a Glance


The FiTI provides a unique global framework to help coastal countries to increase the credibility and quality of national fisheries information and demonstrate their commitments to improved fisheries governance.



The FiTI does not intend to replace or duplicate existing government websites, but rather supports the further development and maintenance of these public resources.

The FiTI defines for the first time what information on fisheries should be published online by public authorities!

At the heart of the initiative lies the FiTI Standard, a global agreement that sets clear requirements on what is expected from countries regarding transparency and multi-stakeholder participation in fisheries. Accordingly, coastal countries must establish a multi-stakeholder group, tasked with publishing annual FiTI Reports that deliver three key results:

 A thorough **assessment of public information on 12 transparency requirements** to highlight whether information is collated, accessible, complete and represents the 'best available'.



Public Registry of National Fisheries Laws, Regulations and Official Policy Documents



Post-Harvest Sector and Fish Trade



Fisheries Tenure Arrangements



Fisheries Law Enforcement



Foreign Fishing Access Agreements



Labour Standards



The State of the Fisheries Resources



Fisheries Subsidies



Large-Scale Fisheries (Vessel Registry, Payments for fishing, Recorded catch data)




Official Development Assistance




Small-Scale Fisheries



Beneficial Ownership

 A **summary of published information** for each transparency requirement to support public understanding and debate.

 **Recommendations** on what steps can be taken by national authorities to improve public information on the fisheries sector over time.

Key principles for increasing transparency and participation under the FiTI:

Multi-Stakeholder participation

The FiTI is implemented in countries through National Multi-Stakeholder Groups, consisting of representatives from government, business and organised civil society. These groups work collectively to assess the information in the public domain, make recommendations on how to improve information published by national authorities and jointly approve the publication of FiTI Reports.



Progressive improvements

Countries are not expected to have complete data for every transparency requirement from the beginning. Instead, public authorities must disclose the information they have, and where important gaps exist, improvements over time must be demonstrated. As such, engaging with the FiTI is not intended to be a burdensome and costly research activity.



Transparency in the public domain

The FiTI emphasises the need for national authorities to develop and strengthen their own systems for collecting and publishing information online in a complete and accessible manner. The FiTI Report is therefore not intended to replace or duplicate existing government information systems.



Public debate

The FiTI offers 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.



Major benefits for coastal countries implementing the FiTI

Engaging in the FiTI appeals to all stakeholders that appreciate the enormous value of marine fisheries, in terms of food & nutrition security, employment, the value to national economies, as well as the cultural significance of fishing. Promoting these positive features of fisheries lies at the heart of the FiTI.

The FiTI provides a number of tangible benefits for coastal countries at the national and international level. While these will vary depending on the national context, the primary benefits for national authorities will derive from **enhanced trust** by

- ▶▶ Increasing the quality and accessibility of public information;
- ▶▶ Ensuring that information published by public authorities is considered as credible (through the FiTI's embedded multi-stakeholder verification process);
- ▶▶ Expanding the body of information on the fisheries sector that meets international benchmarks and supports emerging national interests;
- ▶▶ Stimulating greater public awareness of both the valuable nature of the fisheries sector, and the challenges that exist;
- ▶▶ Building on unbiased recommendations on how to improve transparency over time; and
- ▶▶ Institutionalising multi-stakeholder collaboration.



Increasingly, foreign investors, suppliers and international donors base their investment decisions on an assessment of the quality of a country's governance as well as political risks. Empirical evidence shows that when countries improve transparency and meaningful participation between governments, the private sector and civil society, this can **boost economic growth and foreign investment**. For coastal states this may become increasingly important given the attention for new investment and financial support for achieving and developing sustainable 'blue economies'.

Furthermore, consumers and retailers are also wanting to know that the fish they are buying has been sourced from well managed resources. Fish coming from countries where management lacks transparency will come under increasing scrutiny. Where information is openly shared with the public, the sector is **shielded against misinformation and unfair adverse publicity**.

Other **benefits** for coastal countries implementing the FiTI include:

- Demonstrate the country's commitment to implementing several international guidelines and agreements on responsible fisheries management and public access to information¹
- Contribute to greater transnational cooperation by actively demonstrating information sharing and openness
- Support other transparency efforts in fisheries, such as product traceability and vessel movement monitoring
- Identify gaps in knowledge that stimulate new research and pinpoint where additional resources are needed
- Help tackle other pressing issues that impact the fisheries sector, including Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated Fishing (IUU) and corruption
- Foster the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals #14 and #17



The Government of the Republic of Seychelles is whole heartily committed to ensuring that the Fisheries Transparency Initiative help us advance our efforts in shifting to a sustainable fisheries and to implementing our Blue Economy. I am convinced that FiTI will be of great value to governments all around the world, as well as to the fishing industry, artisanal fishers, civil society and investors.

Together we can make a real difference and have a lasting impact for future generations.



VINCENT MERITON
Vice-President of the Republic of Seychelles

¹ For example: FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries; the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests; the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries in the Context of Food Security and Poverty Eradication; Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration.

Robust assurance procedures ensure the integrity of the FiTI

Its reputation as an initiative promoting good governance in fisheries, in particular transparency, participation and accountability, is one of the FiTI's greatest assets. It is also a major driver for countries joining the FiTI and benefiting from its international standing.

At the **national level**, the country's Multi-Stakeholder Group ensures that decisions and discussions are not dominated by a single actor. Instead, this group makes joint decisions on how the FiTI is implemented in their country. They work collectively to assess whether information in the public domain is considered accessible and complete. This group also makes recommendations on how to improve information published by national authorities.

At the **international level**, the FiTI International Board undertakes regular independent valuations. These verify compliance of all participating countries against the FiTI Standard. This covers the transparency aspect (i.e. FiTI Reports), procedural requirements, including the meaningful involvement of stakeholders, as well as the impact of the FiTI in the country.



PROF. DR. PETER EIGEN
Founder of FiTI and Chair
of the International Board,
Founder of Transparency
International

“ We can only address the tremendous challenges that global fisheries are facing in a collective effort, by bringing governments, business, civil society, academia and media together on this important quest.

The Fisheries Transparency Initiative makes a unique contribution to the sustainable development of fisheries by setting clear requirements on what is expected from countries regarding transparency and multi-stakeholder participation in fisheries.

I hope that many coastal countries join the FiTI and contribute to a global level playing field of transparency in marine fisheries.

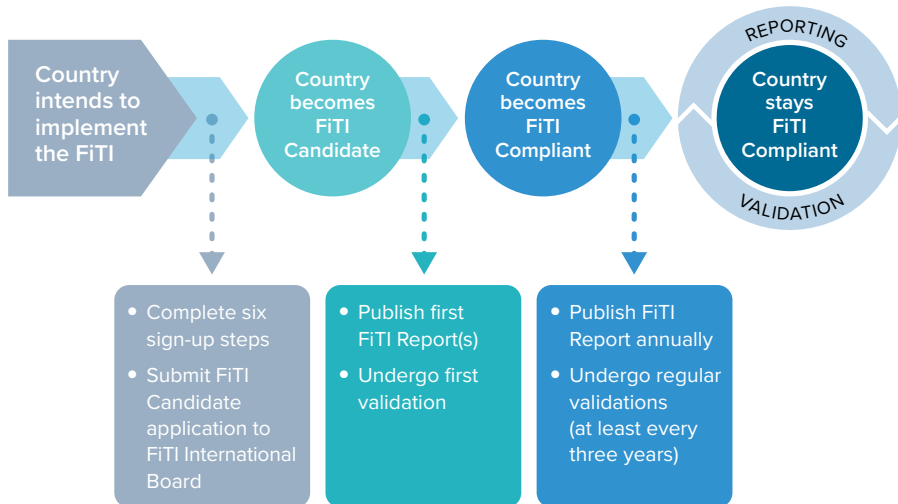
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Join the FiTI!

The intention to join the FiTI must come from a country's head of state or government, or an appropriately delegated government representative.

As a starting point, a country implements six sign-up steps and submits a Candidate application to the FiTI International Board.

After 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.



Healthy and productive oceans are vital for our future.

The FiTI supports public authorities, businesses and the public to collaborate towards the sustainable management of fisheries.



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Improving transparency and participation in fisheries governance for the benefit of a more sustainable management of marine fisheries

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