

Responsible Fisheries through Transparency and Participation

February 2016

THE NEED FOR TRANSPARENCY AND PARTICIPATION

Global fisheries are a critical source of jobs, food, and trade for millions of people around the world. Yet, as overfishing is threatening many fish stocks, our fisheries have an uncertain future.

We are now facing the tremendous task to reform global fisheries governance in ways that support the sustainable development and food security.

To meet this challenge, there is increasing agreement that the way forward must address poor governance at all levels. This includes addressing the chronic lack of transparency and participation in fisheries management. In many countries contracts are kept confidential, thus preventing oversight of who has which fishing rights, and at what cost. Participation in key decision-making processes is often limited, especially for civil society.

The need for transparency and participation is central to major fisheries reform efforts, including: the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries (FAO; 2015); the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests (FAO; 2012); and the Guidelines for the Development of National Legislation on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (UNEP; 2010).

Yet, progress has been limited and inconsistent. This is partly because no global consensus exists on which information should be made publicly available. Moreover, important policy agreements and guidelines refer to transparency reforms in general terms, but do not specify the details.

ABOUT THE FISHERIES TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE

The Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) is a global multi-stakeholder initiative, which aims at enhancing responsible and sustainable fisheries through transparency and participation.

- **Transparency:** The FiTI will increase transparency by regularly publishing information regarding 'access to marine fisheries'. This includes, inter alia, *who has the right to fish* (e.g. rights holders, vessels, license agreements), *how much is paid for the right to fish*, and *how much fish is extracted*. The information will cover large-scale fisheries as well as small-scale fisheries.
- **Participation:** The FiTI will enhance the credibility of the provided information through a *deliberative process*, which involves all major stakeholder groups (i.e. government, companies, civil society). Over time, this approach will help establish a trust-based, consensus-oriented multi-stakeholder environment for collective action.

Increased transparency and multi-stakeholder participation provide a credible basis for national debate. They also create positive competition amongst countries and companies to enhance responsible fisheries.

The Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI) was initiated under the leadership of Prof. Dr. Peter Eigen, Founder and Chair of the Advisory Council of Transparency International.

The HUMBOLDT-VIADRINA Governance Platform is acting as the International Secretariat of the initiative.



KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- The FiTI is a **global initiative**. The initiative does not focus on a single country or a region. It seeks to establish a global level playing field among fisheries countries. The more countries participate, the more powerful this initiative will get!
- The **implementation of the FiTI is country-centered**. The intention to join the FiTI and the initiation of the official process must come from a country's government. For this, a country's government must demonstrate active support for the implementation of the FiTI. This includes – inter alia – the commitment to an enabling environment, the establishment of a National Multi-Stakeholder Group and the publication of timely information.
- The FiTI is a **voluntary initiative with mandatory requirements**. The implementation of the FiTI is voluntary; however, once a country has decided to participate, mandatory requirements must be followed.
- The FiTI is built on **multi-stakeholder governance**, ensuring that stakeholders from government, companies and civil society are equally represented.
- This multi-stakeholder governance will be applied at the **international** level through an International Multi-Stakeholder Board as well as in all participating countries through **National Multi-Stakeholder Groups**.
- The FiTI will provide clear procedural guidelines for gathering, verifying and disclosing relevant information on fisheries. A key deliverable of this process is the timely publication of a **FiTI Country Report**.

DEVELOPING THE FiTI

The FiTI is in its conceptual phase until early 2017.

Cornerstones of this initiative are the **FiTI Principles**, which have been adopted at the 1st International Conference of the FiTI (3 February 2016, Nouakchott/Mauritania). These Principles reflect the beliefs and aims of all FiTI Stakeholders.

A detailed framework (the so-called **FiTI Standard**) is being developed by the FiTI International Secretariat. The Secretariat is supported by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

This framework will build on and support existing efforts that seek to strengthen transparency and participation in fisheries. It will define:

- what information should be made public;
- how transparency can be achieved; and
- how the initiative will be governed.

The FiTI Standard is being developed in close consultation with an **International FiTI Advisory Group**. This high-level multi-stakeholder group consists of renowned fisheries and governance experts from governments, companies and civil society. The group advises the FiTI Secretariat on strategic directions regarding the overall framework.

The process is supported by **expert working groups** (e.g. large-scale fisheries, small-scale fisheries), which provide recommendations to the International FiTI Advisory Group.

For more information, please visit our website or contact us at info@fisheriestransparency.org.