



Fisheries Transparency Initiative

**5th meeting of ACP Ministers
responsible for fisheries and aquaculture**

Side event on Tuesday, 19 September 2017

**“The Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI):
Increasing transparency and participation
for the benefit of a more sustainable
management of marine fisheries”**

Date: 31 August 2017

About the Fisheries Transparency Initiative (FiTI)

There is a widely shared understanding of the need to achieve sustainable and responsibly managed marine fisheries. But coastal states and fishing nations 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 importance to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development has been recognised and strengthened by the United Nations in 2015 as one of its sustainable development goals (SDG #14). This engagement to manage oceans more sustainably was reinforced in June 2017, when countries and non-state stakeholders from all over the world submitted commitments to manage oceans more sustainably. For ACP countries, which committed to eradicate unsustainable fishing practices by 2020, reaching SDG14 is a key part of their strategy to maintain their fishing production at levels which will sustainably benefit their economy.

While there are many aspects to achieve sustainable fisheries, 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 Law of the Sea 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 2012 Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests.

However, even with a greater interest in the fisheries sector, basic information still often remains out of the public domain. Such information includes 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. But without such information, the quality and credibility of decision-making can be undermined, while the prospect of effective oversight and accountability diminishes.

Transparency is therefore a prerequisite for informed public debates on fisheries policies and for achieving meaningful participation in fisheries decision-making. But it is not only the availability of information that counts; it is also essential that it is accessible and that citizens have the assurance that the information provided by governments and fishing companies is credible. This challenge is unlikely to be met by a single actor or a stakeholder group alone. Instead, it needs a collective effort by all relevant stakeholders to incorporate a variety of perspectives and enhance transparency and trust over time.

In this context, the Fisheries Transparency Initiative has been developed as a unique effort that complements and supports other national, regional and global efforts for achieving responsible fisheries governance. The purpose of the FiTI is to increase transparency and participation in fisheries governance for the benefit of a more sustainable management of marine fisheries.

At the heart of the initiative is the FiTI Standard, an agreement on what information on fisheries should be published by public authorities. The FiTI Standard has been designed to ensure that any country can implement it, from small island countries to large fishing nations. The FiTI does not expect all countries to have complete data for every transparency requirement from the beginning. Instead, the FiTI is based on the principle of progressive improvement: public authorities must disclose the information they have, and where important gaps exist, they must demonstrate progressive improvement overtime. As such, engaging with the FiTI is not intended to be a burdensome and costly research activity and is rather meant to support countries in strengthening their information system, therefore enabling all countries to implement it.

About this side event:

The FiTI International Secretariat is holding a side event on Tuesday, 19 September to outline and discuss how the FiTI can support efforts towards achieving effective and sustainable fisheries management in ACP countries and beyond. The objective of the side event is to:

- highlight the importance and benefits of transparency and participation for sustainable fisheries
- outline how the FiTI integrates into the efforts to achieve SDG 14 and SDG 17;
- provide an overview of the recently adopted FiTI Standard;
- share experiences from FiTI pilot countries;
- discuss with participants how the FiTI could support ACP countries' existing efforts to establish effective and sustainable fisheries governance.

14:30 – 14:40 **Opening remarks**

14:40 – 15:15 **Introduction of the FiTI by Mr. Sven BIERMANN,**
Director of the FiTI International Secretariat

15:15 – 16:00 **Panel discussion / Q&A**