

Proposal LDAC advice regarding the Fisheries Transparency Initiative

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The LDAC is following with interest the developments regarding the Fisheries Transparency Initiative. Several of the LDAC members, both industry and NGOs have been contributing to the development of this initiative since 2014. We welcome the fact that the European Commission attended the latest meeting of the FiTI Advisory Group, and we hope it will continue to engage positively in the initiative in the future.

In that context, the LDAC would like to make the following observations, which we hope will inform the EU's approach regarding the development of the FiTi initiative.

We welcome the agreement that has been reached by the groups participating to the FiTI Advisory Group on the fact that key information should be made public, including:

- Detailed information on access arrangements, in particular the contents of access agreements, with terms and conditions of access for the various fisheries and gear types;
- The list of licensed fishing vessels (foreign and nationally flagged), with key characteristics (similar to what is on the EU fishing fleet register);
- Information on the payments received by the coastal state for licensing fishing vessels;
- Contextual information, including the latest legislations and policies, trade, stock assessments, subsidies and information on resolved cases of IUU fishing;

Members of LDAC are aware that aspects of the proposed FiTI have generated concern among the EU fishing industry. In particular there are differing views on the proposal that coastal states engaging with the FiTI must publish annual catch data on a per vessel basis. The benefits and potential negative implications of this have been discussed by LDAC. While the members of LDAC have not reached a compromise on this, members are positive about the prospect of coastal states increasing transparency and accountability of catch data. This would support responsible fishing.

We want to emphasize that, unlike most other fleets of foreign origin active in third countries, the EU is already fulfilling most of the transparency requirements proposed by the FiTI. We therefore consider the FiTI as a way to promote EU standards on transparency at an international level, thereby contributing to a level playing field. Increased transparency for European fishing firms in foreign waters could be unfair if other fishing fleets are not subject to the same levels of openness and accountability.

It is therefore important that coastal states engaging with the FiTI are serious in their commitment to raise levels of transparency themselves and for all fishing companies without exceptions. The EC has the potential to play a positive role in supporting this commitment to transparency by coastal states, including through its new SFPAs.