



PUBLIC SUMMARY OF A MEETING OF THE MSC STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY COUNCIL

Monday 27 – Tuesday 28 November 2023, London

The Stakeholder Advisory Council (STAC) meeting was attended by [members of the STAC](#). Apologies were received from STAC Member Mr Damien Bell.

Dr Werner Kiene (MSC Chair) attended (Day 2) on behalf of the MSC Board of Trustees.

Dr Rebecca Lent (Technical Advisory Board Chair) observed the meeting.

The following MSC staff attended; Dr Rohan Currey (Chief Science and Standards Officer), Mr Nicolas Guichoux (Chief Program Officer), Mr Rupert Howes (Chief Executive Officer), Ms Ishbel Matheson (Chief Communications Officer), Ms Tanya van Niekerk (Governance Secretary), Dr Alene Wilton (Chief Operating Officer)

The STAC was also joined by a number of relevant MSC staff on a project-by-project basis.

This summary contributes to the transparency of MSC's governance. Readers should note that recommendations made by the STAC are reviewed by the MSC Executive and only those recommendations that are formally endorsed by the MSC Board of Trustees and Executive will result in changes to the program or MSC's work. The Executive may not always immediately consider the STAC's recommendations, especially in instances where more research or consultation is required. Project pages on msc.org will be updated to reflect final decisions, including rationales.

MSC's Assurance System

The STAC received a **general overview and update on [MSC's Assurance System](#)**. MSC's assurance system is a series of safeguards that make sure assessments of fisheries and supply chains are fair and accurate. These safeguards include assessments conducted by appropriately qualified independent auditors; oversight by [Assurance Services International](#) of the activities of certification bodies; ensuring certification bodies follow International Standards so assessments are consistent and impartial; and having fisheries assessments peer-reviewed by independent scientists.

The STAC noted and discussed the improvements made to the MSC assurance system and program activities from 2011 to 2023.

The STAC welcomed the MSC Executive's plans to continue to evolve accessibility to and understanding of the MSC's assurance system.

MSC's Supply Chain Standards

In September 2023, MSC launched a review of the [MSC Chain of Custody Standard](#) to make sure MSC's assessment process and certification scheme remain relevant and credible. The Supply Chain Standard assures consumers that seafood sold with the blue MSC ecolabel comes from fisheries that are MSC-certified as sustainable. It also provides assurance that products sold with the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) label have come from ASC-certified farms.

The STAC welcomed the sharing of insights from the **Chain of Custody Review Public Stakeholder Survey**, which ran from 13 September – 15 October 2023. The survey, which aimed to gather

feedback on stakeholders' engagement and implementation of the current Chain of Custody Standard to help shape the review and identify potential improvements for the program, had been well received by stakeholders. The STAC commended the work to date and noted the further workstreams underway within the Chain of Custody Review.

The STAC also received a general update on the MSC's **Traceability Enhancement Program**, which sought to strengthen traceability requirements and digitise data collection throughout the MSC Program and to use this enhanced traceability to strengthen the integrity of the MSC ecolabel further.

In-Transition to the MSC Program

The STAC received a general update on the MSC's **In-Transition to the MSC Program (ITM)**. The ITM program is an important step for fisheries that are improving and still need time to reach a level of ecological performance that would allow them to enter into formal assessment, ensuring both their continued engagement with MSC and that verified progress is made towards the certification. Critically, ITM fisheries are more likely to drive credible and time-bound improvements in the water and hence contribute to the delivery of MSC's vision of healthy and productive oceans.

Fisheries Standard v3.0

The STAC received a general overview and update on the roll out of the new **MSC Fisheries Standard v3.0**.

The STAC welcomed the opportunity to provide advice and insights about how MSC could respond to feedback from its partners about the new Fisheries Standard.

The roll out activities associated with the new Standard encompassed a set of global workshops; several training sessions for assessors, fisheries clients, and NGOs; the translation of the Fisheries Standard to several languages; the publication of a special issue of Marine Policy; and the initiation of several projects to support the implementation of the Fisheries Standard Review.

The STAC noted the availability of the **MSC's Ocean Stewardship Fund's Recertification Fund** which helps MSC-certified fisheries with the cost of Conformity Assessment Body (CAB) fees for recertification audits.

The STAC welcomed the new course (diploma program) for Fisheries Assessors which aims to expand the potential pool of assessors by creating more opportunities for early-career scientists or consultants to get trained and qualified for MSC assessments.

Climate Change

The STAC received a general overview and update on research work that MSC is carrying out to identify fisheries and regions where predicted climate impacts threaten their ability to meet MSC benchmarks for sustainable management.

Fisheries face growing challenges to operate sustainably as our climate becomes more variable and extreme. Changes in water temperatures and seasonality are increasingly disrupting ecosystems, altering the distribution of fish stocks and impacting the growth, development, and survival of many marine species.

These changes highlight weaknesses in existing management measures and monitoring systems. The inability to adapt and respond to climate change can increase the risk of overfishing, biodiversity loss, and conflict between fishing nations. To ensure fisheries become more resilient to climate change MSC needs to understand where issues are likely to arise and the severity of their respective impacts; and to incentivise adoption of best practice management measures.

To achieve this, the MSC is carrying out the **Assessment of Risks posed by Climate Change project (the ARC project)**. The study will evaluate vulnerability to climate change in fisheries currently certified to the MSC Fisheries Standard, fisheries working towards certification and those that have been suspended from the MSC program. This includes over 500 fisheries, representing approximately 19% of global wild catch.

The STAC welcomed the update on the ARC project and supported the MSC's engagement in this strategically important area of work.

Meeting Close

The STAC thanked the MSC Executive for the informative updates on the aforementioned topics.

ENDS