



# 35<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Marine Stewardship Council's Technical Advisory Board

## Public Summary

Meeting Dates: 25-26 May 2021

Virtual meeting

*This summary contributes to the transparency of MSC's governance. Readers should note that recommendations made by the MSC Technical Advisory Board are reviewed by the MSC Board of Trustees and only those recommendations that are formally endorsed by the MSC Board of Trustees will result in changes to the program or MSC's work. The Board may not always immediately endorse the TAB'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.*

In view of the ongoing challenges and widespread travel restrictions in place due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the MSC's Technical Advisory Board (TAB) convened for its 35<sup>th</sup> meeting as a virtual meeting, focusing on a small number of important topics where the TAB's engagement and input to MSC's policy development and provision of advice to the MSC Board was required.

The TAB meeting was attended by most members of the TAB. Mr José Augusto Pinto de Abreu and Mr Victor Restrepo gave their apologies for part of day 1 of the meeting.

The following observers were present for the meetings: Dr Antonio Hervas (Accreditation Services International), Dr Andrew Hough (assessor/consultant), Mr John Wigglesworth, Aquaculture Stewardship Council (day 1), Ms Wendy Banta, Aquaculture Stewardship Council (day 2).

Ms Stefanie Moreland and Ms Amanda Nickson represented the MSC's Stakeholder Advisory Council (STAC) and Dr Werner Kiene (MSC Chair) attended on behalf of the MSC Board of Trustees. External observers were not present for internal governance discussions and were asked to leave where potential for conflict of interest was identified.

## TAB Working Groups

The TAB was provided with a summary of the work of the TAB active working groups and other intersessional activity undertaken by TAB since its meeting in March 2021. The TAB was presented with an overview of the output from the May meeting of the MSC's Stakeholder Advisory Council (STAC) on projects covered through TAB working groups.

## TAB Climate Change Working Group

The TAB considered the **proposed establishment of a TAB Climate Change Working Group**. Climate change was a high-profile issue with broad implications for the MSC and its partners. It was a new area of interest for MSC and a complex matter that was still actively researched and for which solutions and mitigation options were still unclear. MSC required expert technical advice in setting up an effective research strategy. Accordingly, the MSC Executive proposed the TAB establish a Climate

Change Working Group to advise the MSC Board and the MSC Executive on climate change research and its application for standard development.

The STAC had considered the establishment of the Working Group at its meeting on 18-20 May 2021, and had supported both the establishment of the Group and having STAC member(s) serve alongside TAB members on the Group.

The TAB welcomed MSC engaging with this important issue and undertook a broad discussion about the proposed scope of MSC's climate change work. The TAB considered that it may be sensible to fold this work into the already established TAB Ecosystems Working Group, thereby providing opportunity to **adopt a broader ecosystem-based approach** that covered other aspects of climate change risk management.

### MSC Labour Policy

With continued concern about **labour abuses in the seafood sector** and a growing move within the sustainable seafood community to include worker welfare explicitly within the definition of sustainable seafood, MSC was reviewing and exploring the next direction for the MSC on labour issues within the MSC program. At the same time there was a recognition of the complexities, cost and capability constraints associated with providing assurance for labour issues, including a complexity that is compounded by the differences between issues of a social nature and those of a fishery sustainability or a traceability nature. Navigating these contending factors would require innovative solutions, which in turn required a dedicated review process that was specific to labour.

The TAB undertook a broad discussion about the proposed framework for **MSC's future work on labour policy**, providing its views and advice on the elements proposed for framing MSC's next steps on labour specifically with respect to: MSC labour policy development; MSC position on labour; and mechanisms to support MSC position on labour; and make recommendations to the MSC Board on MSC's future work on labour.

This important area of work would be supported by the STAC Labour Working Group and the TAB would continue to engage with this project through this Working Group, of which TAB Member Ms Michèle Stark was a member.

### MSC Assurance Review

The TAB received a progress update on the **MSC Assurance Review**, which was supported by the TAB in 2018. The Assurance Review had included both fishery assessment-specific topics and ones relating to the wider assurance system. Activities already completed included research, public consultation, targeted workshops, revision of website content and release of improvements in the Fisheries Certification Process (FCP) v2.2.

The TAB welcomed the update and noted the progress made on the priority work areas through 2019-2020; and how the Assurance Review had contributed to the **strategy on assurance** over the past two years, including accreditation and relevant policy development by the MSC Fisheries and Supply Chain teams.

The TAB noted the closure of the "review" phase of the MSC's assurance work and the planned continuing work on assurance, with a focus on the potential **MSC Dispute Process revision**, as endorsed by the MSC Board at its meeting in January 2021.

## MSC Disputes Process

The MSC had worked closely with the STAC Assurance Working Group over the past year to review the disputes processes in place for the assessment process of fisheries. This had culminated in a recommendation to revise the **MSC Dispute Process**, which included the MSC Objection Procedure.

The TAB undertook a broad discussion about the proposed revisions to the MSC Disputes Process and supported the draft Disputes Process **moving to a testing phase**. The TAB **agreed that** a detailed review of the technical components of the process would be needed.

## What happens next?

The next TAB meeting will be held in December 2021.

Requests to observe future TAB meetings should be sent to [tanya.van.niekerk@msc.org](mailto:tanya.van.niekerk@msc.org) and need to be received at least one full month before the meeting.