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San Salvador, El Salvador - The countries and regional economic integration organizations participating in the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP), meeting here for the 5th Meeting of the Parties to the AIDCP, today announced the creation of a unique and far-reaching program to certify and label tuna caught in the eastern Pacific Ocean consistent with the AIDCP and without mortality or serious injury to dolphins.

The new *AIDCP Dolphin Safe* Tuna Certification is the only one in the world supported by a comprehensive and transparent multilateral tracking and verification system administered by member governments and the treaty organization that will ensure full consumer confidence in the *AIDCP Dolphin Safe* label and the certification behind it.

In a joint statement released by the Parties to the AIDCP, they said, "For the first time, consumers will be able to purchase 'Dolphin Safe' tuna with absolute confidence in what the label means and that it means what it says. Consumers will know that the *AIDCP Dolphin Safe* tuna they are buying has been tracked and verified from the moment it comes out of the sea to the moment the label goes on the can."

The *AIDCP Dolphin Safe* Tuna Certification program was originally proposed last year by Colombia as a means by which to inform consumers about the full scope of the International Dolphin Conservation Program (IDCP) in the eastern Pacific Ocean tuna fishery. In their joint statement, the Parties to the AIDCP recognized the need to institute a comprehensive national and international education effort to improve public understanding of the objectives and successes of the IDCP, and to correct misinformation about the program that has been or may be propagated by others.

In addition to approving the new government administered tracking, verification, certification and labelling regimes, the Parties took additional substantive actions to further support consumer confidence in the *AIDCP Dolphin Safe* Tuna Certification, including continuous enhancements to the tracking and verification system and the adoption of clear measures to promote compliance with all aspects of the IDCP program generally.

In the joint statement, the Parties said, "We are all understandably proud of the recognized success of the International Dolphin Conservation Program, a program unparalleled in the world. We have taken the initiative to create this certification program as a means by which to herald our program to the world and to support our industries and the responsible NGOs that have helped to build this program into what it is today. After all, none of the successes of the program would have been possible without the tremendous dedication and commitment of the tuna industries operating in the eastern Pacific Ocean, and the cooperative support of such prominent conservation organizations as The Ocean Conservancy, World Wildlife Fund, National Wildlife Federation, Greenpeace and the Environmental Defense Fund, among others."

Countries and regional economic integration organizations participating in the AIDCP include Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, the European Union, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, the United States, Vanuatu and Venezuela