

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION
INFORMAL CONSULTATIVE MEETING BETWEEN THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP
FOR THE FINANCIAL STRENGTHENING OF THE AIDCP AND THE IATTC
COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE (CAF)

1ST MEETING

(by videoconference)
27-28 January 2026

REPORT OF THE 1ST CONSULTATIVE MEETING BETWEEN THE AD HOC WORKING
GROUP FOR THE FINANCIAL STRENGTHENING OF THE AIDCP AND THE IATTC'S
CAF

AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Information to discuss the 2027 costs to the AIDCP and IATTC for the onboard observer program for the Onboard Observer.
 - a. Overview of AIDCP meetings (50, 51, 51st, 52) and the joint AIDCP-IATTC meeting.
 - b. Overview of outcomes of the meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group for the financial strengthening of the AIDCP held from 21 to 23 January 2026.
 - c. Comparison of rules and requirements (Resolutions etc.) on data collections for AIDCP vs. IATTC
4. Other matters
5. Conclusions and requests
6. Adjournment

ANNEXES

1. Requests for information
2. Attendance list

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

The informal consultative meeting between the Ad Hoc Working Group for the Financial Strengthening of the AIDCP and the IATTC Committee on Administration and Finance (CAF) was held virtually on 27 and 28 January 2026. On January 27, the meeting began at 1:05 PM (San Diego) and was adjourned at 5:00 PM (San Diego). On January 28, the meeting resumed at 1:30 PM (San Diego).

The meeting began with a welcome from the Director of the IATTC and the Co-Chairs of the meeting, the Chair of the IATTC Committee on Administration and Finance, Ms. Rachael Wadsworth (USA), and the Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group for the Financial Strengthening of the AIDCP, Ms. Yarkelia Vergara (Panama). Quorum was confirmed during the meeting, and participants introduced: Belize, Bolivia, Canada, Chinese Taipei, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, European Union, Guatemala, Japan, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, USA and Venezuela.

The CAF Chair explained that part of the intent of including the CAF in this meeting is to ensure members not participating in the AIDCP meetings could hear AIDCP meeting outcomes and to begin discussing any additional information needed to make decisions on the financial split between the IATTC and AIDCP in 2027. The CAF Chair reminded the participants that the meeting is explicitly defined as an informal consultation between the CAF and the AIDCP Working Group, not for making binding decisions, but to inform future decisions.

2. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA.

The agenda was adopted without modifications. As requested by the United States, the Secretariat announced that it would provide an overall explanation on the cyberattack and its consequences under "other business".

3. INFORMATION TO DISCUSS THE 2027 COSTS TO THE AIDCP AND IATTC FOR THE ONBOARD OBSERVER PROGRAM FOR THE ONBOARD OBSERVER.

The Chair of the Ad Hoc Group on the Financial Strengthening of the AIDCP explained the sequence of presentations under agenda item 3 and how the order of interventions for the presentations would be handled.

One of the delegations requested that a distinction be made between the specific situation of observers on board and the broader structural issue of IATTC finances in order to organize the debate. The change in the order of presentations was approved, with items 3(a) and 3(c) coming first, due to their thematic correlation, and item 3(b) being presented last.

In the historical and technical presentation on financial coordination (Item 3(a)), the chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group for the Financial Strengthening of the AIDCP summarized developments since the 50th meeting of the AIDCP. The Chair recalled that, at the resumed meeting in October, the 2026 budget was approved using the surplus from the AIDCP, and Resolution A-25-02 was adopted to coordinate long-term solutions. She mentioned that a workload analysis conducted by the Secretariat showed 56% of tasks linked to the IATTC and 44% to the AIDCP, supporting the proposal for a 50/50 scheme.

The Director explained that the AIDCP has currently a structural deficit and if no changes are made, funds will be exhausted after 2026.

The Secretariat (Enrique Ureña, Director) presented analyses showing that, between 2010 and 2024, 58% of sets were made on Fish Aggregating Devices (FADs), generating 100% of the data for the IATTC, and that almost two-thirds of an observer's time is spent filling out forms essential to the IATTC's mandate (science and compliance). The Secretariat noted that the historic 30/70 split (IATTC/AIDCP) may not reflect the contribution of observers' work, as analyses showed observers spend an estimated 56% of their time on IATTC tasks. The presentation concluded based on the analysis presented, that a 50/50 split may be appropriate for consideration by the Commission.

After the presentations, the Co-Chairs opened the floor for discussion on the information presented by the Chair of the Ad Hoc Working Group and the Secretary. The discussion focused on analyzing and resolving the cost sharing of the Onboard Observer Program between the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) and the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP).

Some participants recalled the transitional approval for the 2026 budget using the AIDCP surplus, but the urgency of finding a structural and sustainable solution for 2027 and beyond was highlighted. Delegations presented divergent positions: some (US, Japan, EU, Chinese Taipei) argued that the AIDCP, with its mandate of 100% coverage of purse seine vessels, is the main driver of costs; others (Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua) maintained that the IATTC should pay for the essential data it uses. El Salvador proposed that any percentage that would be agreed by the Commission should be flexible, and that a periodic review mechanism be implemented to ensure that the formula remains fair. Finally, it was agreed to request additional cost analyses from the Secretariat to inform future discussions.

During the discussion on the financial sustainability of the Observer Program and the distribution of costs between the IATTC and the AIDCP, there was extensive debate on the structural causes of the deficit, the principles of financial equity, and the need to adjust the financing model to the evolution of the program's mandate.

It was noted that the institutional restructuring adopted in 2022 shifted costs originally associated with the IATTC to the AIDCP, contributing to the current deficit. In this context, Venezuela highlighted that a significant portion of the information generated by the Observer Program responds primarily to the

scientific and management needs of the IATTC. Venezuela argued that the deficit was not due to poor financial management, but rather to structural changes in the program, which evolved from a focus on dolphin protection to a system that provides increasing scientific services to the IATTC, without this being accompanied by a proportional budget adjustment. Consequently, Venezuela, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala argued that these costs should be budgeted as the responsibility of the IATTC and not as an additional expense attributable to the AIDCP.

Regarding cost-sharing criteria, approaches based on both the benefits derived from the use of the information and the so-called "cost generators" were discussed. On the one hand, a pay-per-service model was suggested by El Salvador, under the principle that each organization should cover the costs based on the percentage of information it uses. In this regard, El Salvador proposed that if the IATTC uses a majority of the data, it should assume an equivalent percentage of the costs. El Salvador and Nicaragua suggested that the allocation schemes should not be fixed, but rather reviewed periodically, every three to five years, based on the actual technical usefulness of the information.

On the other hand, some delegations argued that the main cost driver of the Observer Program is the 100% coverage mandate, which is unique to the AIDCP. From this perspective, USA, Japan, Chinese Taipei, and the EU asserted that the IATTC benefits from an existing program and that its current contributions already operate as an indirect subsidy, noting further that IATTC members that do not belong to the AIDCP should not finance costs derived from mandates that do not apply to them. The USA also argued that IATTC forms do not increase the cost of the observer program; they merely take advantage of a program established by the AIDCP mandate. In this context, greater transparency was requested through a detailed breakdown of financial and operational data.

However, Guatemala emphasized the legal and operational interdependence between the IATTC and the AIDCP, arguing that the legal instruments in force oblige the IATTC to pay for the services it provides to the AIDCP, and that a complete separation of the two programs would lead to unnecessary duplication of structures and costs. It was also noted that the data generated under a 100% coverage scheme are essential for the effective functioning of the Commission, as they feed into stock assessments, strengthen compliance, and reduce violations.

During the analysis of the information presented by the Secretariat, Guatemala questioned some of the percentages reflected in the documents, as it considered them to be inconsistent with the technical analyses previously discussed. The Secretariat indicated that the proportion of benefits corresponding to the IATTC was higher than initially reflected and close to 60%, and that a 50/50 distribution scheme was reasonable based on the benefit-sharing forms. The Secretariat subsequently clarified that these inconsistencies were due to drafting errors in the text presented.

The disparity between fleets was also addressed by Japan, noting that while the purse seine fleet operates under a 100% coverage regime and fully assumes the costs of observers, the longline fleet maintains very low coverage levels, which generates a disproportionate financial burden and asymmetry in the quality and robustness of the data. Japan noted that it is not methodologically appropriate to compare the two programs on equal terms, and it was suggested that any eventual assumption of costs by the IATTC for large longliners should be conditional on coverage schemes equivalent to those applicable to the purse seine fleet.

Finally, concern was expressed by Nicaragua and Panama about medium-term financial sustainability, noting that the current surplus is a temporary solution and that there is a real risk of a critical deficit by 2027 if timely measures are not taken. In this regard, Guatemala proposed to establish an intersessional work process to break down costs, evaluate alternative scenarios, and define in advance a clear and equitable financing model. Guatemala proposed a 50-50 shared financing scheme between the IATTC and the AIDCP, expressing the opinion that if a balanced distribution were not adopted, it would be inconsistent for the Commission to maintain unrestricted access to data financed mainly by the AIDCP.

The delegations present made various requests for information from the Secretariat, which the Co-Chairs took due note of and undertook to submit the relevant information for further review the following day. In this context, it was suggested that such requests should have a clearly defined purpose in order to avoid inaccurate comparisons between observer programs that have different natures, mandates, and obligations. This suggestion was not objected to.

After the interventions on items 3(a) and 3(c), AIDCP Vice-Chair Ms. Amanda Munro (USA) presented the recommendations and preamble resulting from the meeting held on January 21-23 by the Ad Hoc Working Group for the financial strengthening of the AIDCP, corresponding to item 3(b) of the agenda, which includes the preparation of an action plan to separate accounting systems, restructure finances, automate reporting, conduct a cybersecurity risk assessment, and adopt a policy of rotating auditors every three years.

Guatemala highlighted the need for "separation of accounts," updating the financial statute that "was issued last century," and addressing "risk-based management." He recommended that the CAF analyze the information and "adopt the same recommendations and improve them if necessary."

4. OTHER MATTERS

The delegate from Guatemala proposed postponing the discussion on the cyberattack until the January 28 session (the following day) so that the Secretariat could prepare a written report and circulate it before the second day of the meeting. The proposal was accepted by all participating delegates. The schedule for the next meeting was adjusted to accommodate participants in different time zones.

An immediate report on the cyberattack (measures, impacts, costs, continuity, and recovery) was requested for distribution prior to the January 28 consultation and to strengthen security with risk assessment and capital costs.

On 28 January, the Secretariat presented the report, which addressed the situation of cyberattacks and the need to establish a technological action plan. In this context, it was proposed to include in the agenda a report by the Director on the incident, with a view to generating recommendations and guiding decisions by the subsidiary bodies and the Commission.

It was reported that the Secretariat faced two different cyberattacks: a ransomware attack, which involved the encryption of data and from which approximately 3.4 million files were recovered, and a wiper attack, aimed at deleting information, which was detected in a timely manner and contained before

causing major damage. This made it possible to disable services preventively, assess the impact, and proceed with the restoration of information.

As containment and strengthening measures, the local network was migrated to the Microsoft Azure cloud, including critical infrastructure in virtual mode, maintaining a hybrid scheme with local servers to ensure the continuity of specific services. The Secretariat identified the main causes of the incident as obsolete equipment and software, as well as insufficient technological controls. The operational impact was mainly reflected in the temporary interruption of the website and the slowness of some internal systems.

In financial terms, costs associated with cloud services and IT security were reported, including approximately USD 15,000 allocated to the response to the second attack. It was indicated that a comprehensive estimate of the total costs and future requirements will be available in approximately three months and will be incorporated into the budget request for 2027.

Finally, the Secretariat confirmed that no information was lost in either of the two attacks, as all data was recovered thanks to the cloud backups implemented after the first incident.

Several delegations including Guatemala, Nicaragua, and USA requested the preparation of a detailed written report describing the cyberattacks, the actions taken, the associated costs, the external consultant's report, and the security policies being implemented. They also stressed the need to establish a timely communication mechanism to inform heads of delegation, almost in real time, of relevant incidents that could affect the functioning of the Commission.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND REQUESTS

During the meeting, some requests for information submitted by members and Parties participating in the joint AIDCP WG and CAF informal consultation were reviewed and discussed in order to strengthen the transparency and efficiency of observer programs and budgetary processes. The initial debate revolved around the nature of these proposals: whether they were formal recommendations from the group or individual requests for information. Finally, it was agreed to treat them as requests and to change the title of the document from "Recommendations" to "Requests for Information" to more accurately reflect their nature, as this meeting was an informal one and not a working group capable of making formal recommendations.

Japan requested that its concern about the status of each proposed item be recorded in the minutes of the meeting and for future work by the secretariat. The interventions by country are detailed below:

Japan expressed reservations about the request to conduct a cost analysis associated with 100% observer coverage in the longline fleet, noting that such coverage is not currently in effect and that, therefore, it did not consider it appropriate to prioritize this analysis at this time. Japan recalled that 5% coverage for longliners is a decision implemented and financed individually by members, even though the benefits of the program are shared at the Commission level, and argued that before moving toward broader scenarios, it should be assessed whether the IATTC would be able to assume such costs.

Japan also highlighted that there are substantive differences between the various observer programs, emphasizing that the transshipment program, which does have 100% coverage, responds to specific compliance and control objectives, which are different from those of a general observer program. In this context, Japan considered that an analysis of 100% coverage for longliners would not add sufficient value at this stage and reiterated its preference for maintaining the analysis in a 5% scenario.

However, in an exercise of flexibility, Japan indicated that it would be willing to accept an analysis that includes scenarios with greater coverage, provided that the scope is extended to all fleets, including not only longliners but also small-scale purse seiners (classes 1 to 5) and small longliners, in order to avoid partial or segmented treatment of fleets. Finally, Japan accepted the proposal to conduct a comparative study that included both 5% and 100% scenarios, on the express condition that the analysis be comprehensive and include all relevant vessel types.

Guatemala consistently maintained the need for a comprehensive comparative analysis that includes a 100% observer coverage scenario, particularly for large longline vessels, in order to objectively compare their costs and scope with purse seine vessels that already operate with full coverage. Guatemala emphasized that this request was not intended to precondition future decisions, but rather to generate solid technical information that would allow for an informed and transparent evaluation of the different coverage regimes.

Guatemala expressed its disappointment at the initial lack of consensus on this request for information and stated that it was concerned that an analytical exercise was being blocked, describing it as contrary to the spirit of cooperation and good faith. In this regard, it indicated that if its request for a 100% analysis was not accepted, it would be forced to withdraw its consensus on the other requests of the group, while also reserving the right to request such information individually as a member of the Commission.

In addition, Guatemala raised technical and regulatory observations, including terminological corrections in the Spanish documents, requesting that the term "vessel assessment" be replaced by "vessel contributions," as it considered this to be more accurate. It also pointed out an error in the IATTC's financial statements, indicating that vessel contributions were being incorrectly recorded as general income for the IATTC, when they should be reflected exclusively in the AIDCP budget.

Finally, Guatemala showed willingness to be flexible, indicating that it would not agree to modify its original request, but that it would support a broader additional study such as that proposed by Japan, provided that its original segmented analysis was maintained. In the final phase of the discussion, it supported proposals that would allow for the evaluation of costs for 5% and 100% coverage, applied in a disaggregated manner by fleet segment, insisting that the purpose and scope of the agreed analysis be clearly reflected in the meeting minutes.

Furthermore, he requested that the minutes reflect that the Ad Hoc Working Group for the Financial Strengthening of the AIDCP recognized that it was not possible to reach substantive recommendations due to the need for further information requested by different delegations, understanding that these are requests for information and not recommendations for action. He also requested that the minutes reflect

that the Administration and Finance Committee had already committed to carrying out the work in progress.

In addition, he requested that the text on the criteria and quantification for the distribution of staff time between the IATTC and the AIDCP could be recorded in the minutes if it was not desired to use the barrier of making recommendations, and the importance of this document for properly analyzing budgets. None of Guatemala's requests reflected objections.

The United States acknowledged the technical and political complexity of the issue and stressed the need to find a pragmatic solution that would allow the meeting to conclude with concrete results. In this context, it considered the compromise proposed by Japan to be reasonable and urged delegations to show flexibility in order to avoid deadlock.

In addition, the United States proposed an alternative methodology to overcome the conceptual differences between coverage scenarios. Instead of defining closed scenarios (5% or 100%), it suggested requesting the Secretariat to provide a breakdown by vessel type, allowing for the visualization of individual and aggregate costs for different levels of coverage, applicable to each fleet segment. In the United States' view, this approach would simultaneously address the concerns of those requesting broad scenarios and those preferring a more limited analysis, providing comparable, transparent, and useful information for future decisions.

Nicaragua strongly defended the need to include a scenario of 100% observer coverage, clarifying that such an analysis should be understood as a hypothetical and informative exercise, and not as an immediate obligation or a regulatory "straitjacket." Nicaragua argued that this analysis would allow members to objectively assess the financial and operational implications of greater coverage, especially in the case of large longliners.

Nicaragua questioned the relevance of reducing the analysis to 5%, noting that this would limit countries' ability to understand the real financial impact of different management options. He also argued that the observer program for transshipments on longliners has a predominantly commercial component, as it facilitates operations that would otherwise require higher logistical costs, which justifies a more in-depth analysis of its coverage.

As a consensus proposal, Nicaragua suggested requesting a cost assessment from the Secretariat for both scenarios (5% and 100%), with a particular focus on large longliners, so that delegations would have complete information for future decision-making. This proposal laid the groundwork for the final agreement on the request for multiple analyses.

The European Union clarified that, although some of the requested information has already been presented in various budget documents, the current format does not allow for clear and comparable

reading. In this regard, it requested a more detailed breakdown of income and expenditure, structured by chapter and in a more accessible format (similar to previous presentations), in order to facilitate understanding of how the observer program is financed and implemented. The EU emphasized that this greater clarity is essential for proper budgetary oversight and to support future discussions on financial sustainability.

Panama highlighted the importance of having complete and robust information on the longline fleet. Panama supported the inclusion of 5% and 100% coverage scenarios, noting that this information is highly relevant for understanding the real implications of different coverage options.

Panama stressed that, unlike the purse seine fleet, for which there is abundant historical and operational information, the information available on longliners is more limited, making it difficult to comprehensively analyze their impact, costs, and contribution to the objectives of the observer program. In this regard, Panama considered it essential to move forward with the collection and analysis of specific data on this fleet as key input for future technical discussions and policy decisions within the IATTC and the AIDCP.

Finally, a total of 12 requests for information were submitted to the secretariat, as described in Annex 1.

During the discussion of this item, it was noted that certain proposals did not fall within the mandate or scope of the informal group. In this context, the proposal regarding the establishment of a continuous intersessional process, as well as those related to cost distribution and workload, were not considered in the document, as they exceeded the scope of the exercise. Likewise, the proposal related to the application of IFRS 9 was withdrawn by its proponent, recognizing that its analysis would require more in-depth technical treatment in a forum with the appropriate mandate.

Guatemala requested that the three proposals detailed below, which were not included in the table of "requests for information," be included in the text of the minutes, with the topics identified as possible references for future discussions in the relevant bodies:

1. That the Finance Management Committee (FMC) take up for analysis all the information analyzed at this meeting and that agreed upon here, including the recommendations of the consultancy and the comments from management received in the Ad Hoc Working Group for the Financial Strengthening of the AIDCP, and on that basis issue recommendations to the Commission, which should be shared with the AIDCP Ad Hoc Working Group through the Secretariat. The purpose of this is to ensure that the CAF has comprehensive, transparent, and in-depth information for decision-making and to ensure the continuation of joint work, taking advantage of the AIDCP's financial efforts and all relevant inputs that may have been produced.
2. Noting that there is no problem with recording distribution percentages for 2026 as a result of the transitional decision agreed upon at the 2025 meetings, that for 2027 and beyond, as long as there is no consensus on the distribution of Observer Program costs between the IATTC and the AIDCP, based on the principle of accounting disclosure, the Secretariat proposes a method to avoid halting the process of separate accounting between

the IATTC and the AIDCP, such as, following the provisions of IFRS (International Financial Reporting Standards) number 9, provisionally recording 70% of the costs to the AIDCP and 30% to the IATTC in the IATTC, in accordance with the practice that has been exercised in the IATTC and, bearing in mind the potential non-acceptance by the AIDCP of this distribution formula, under the protection of Paragraph 3 of Article XIV of the Antigua Convention, to record the amount corresponding to the disputed difference as a financial provision for the potentially uncollectible 20% of the difference, and its readjustment at the time the respective definition between IATTC and AIDCP is achieved. In order to avoid the accounting uncertainty cited by the Secretariat, for 2027, the Secretariat must respond to the fact that the Commission (IATTC) has not changed its position of a 70% distribution to the AIDCP and 30% to the IATTC for the costs of the observer program, while the AIDCP approved the 50/50 scheme for the payment of direct and indirect costs of the onboard observer program. The Secretariat has accounting discipline tools to act correctly based on accounting reality and promote adjustments when there is another definition.

3. That the CAF, as agreed by the AIDCP, recommend that the Commission instruct the Secretariat to include, each time a budget for the Observer Program is presented, an updated table of time allocated to personnel by differentiated dedication between the IATTC and the AIDCP, with the purpose of improving the transparency and traceability of personnel costs and facilitating the objective allocation of costs between programs and entities.

6. ADJOURNMENT

The Co-Chairs closed the meeting at 5:54 p.m. San Diego time on October 28, 2026.