

AGREEMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL DOLPHIN CONSERVATION PROGRAM

51st MEETING OF THE PARTIES

Panama City, Panama

August 30, 2025

La Jolla, California, USA (Resumed)

October 21, 2025

(hybrid format)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting 2. Adoption of the agenda 3. Progress report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Financial Strengthening of the AIDCP regarding the consultancy for the evaluation of budgetary and financial instruments, rules, tools, and practices in use in the AIDCP 4. AIDCP Budget for 2026 a) Report from the Secretariat on the results of the presentation of the adjusted budget to the Committee on Administration and Finance (CAF). b) Presentation by the Secretariat of the proposed budget for 2026 c) Discussion and approval of the budget 5. Reports from the working groups and the International Review Panel (IRP) a) Report of the 40th meeting of the Working Group to promote and publicize the AIDCP Dolphin Safe Tuna Certification System b) Report of the 75th meeting of the International Review Panel (IRP) 6. Other business 7. Date and place of next meeting 8. Adjournment	
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ANNEXES

1. List of attendees of the first part of the meeting in August.
2. List of attendees of the meeting held in October.
3. Resolution A-25-02 on vessel quotas and financing.

The 51st Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Programme (AIDCP) was held in Panama City on August 30, 2025, and it was resumed in a hybrid format (in-person

and remote participation) in La Jolla, California, on October 21, 2025.

1. Opening of the meeting

The meeting was opened by the Chair of the Meeting of the Parties to the AIDCP, Ms. Yarkelia Vergara, from Panama. Bolivia, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, United States, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Vanuatu, and Venezuela participated in person at the meeting. This provided the necessary quorum to hold the meeting. The detailed list of participants is included in the annex.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was approved with the following modifications and comments:

- Item 5, which dealt with the report of the 53rd meeting of the Standing Working Group on Tuna Tracking, was removed, as that report was submitted (as required by regulations) during the IRP meeting.
- Guatemala requested to include in “Other business” the review of Resolution A-04-07 on the list of IUU vessels, and also the extension of the mandate of the ad hoc working group on financial strengthening. The Chair clarified that the issue of extending the working group was already included in point 3 of the agenda.
- Venezuela requested that the issue of a vessel paying for the observer program be included in “Other business”.

3. Progress report of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Financial Strengthening of the AIDCP regarding the consultancy for the evaluation of budgetary and financial instruments, rules, tools, and practices in use in the AIDCP

It was noted that the Ad Hoc Working Group was established by Resolution A-23-01 during the 47th Meeting of the Parties in October 2023. Their objective was to analyze the financial instruments and practices of the agreement. In July 2024, the Group met and created the terms of reference for hiring consultancy services. The temporary mandate of the Working Group was due to be reviewed at the August 2024 meeting; however, it was not addressed at that time.

This meeting acknowledged that the Group's mandate has not yet been fully met, as the presentation of the consultancy results and a final report with recommendations to the Parties are still pending. The president noted the importance of defining the next steps for this Group.

Guatemala supported the amendment to paragraph 6 of Resolution A-23-01 to prolong the term of the mandate, but not to extend it. He emphasized the importance of this work, particularly in harmonizing the financial efforts of the IDCP and the IATTC. The Secretariat suggested that, since the mandate is not being modified, the extension could simply be recorded in the minutes, without the need for a new resolution.

Panama acknowledged the importance of the work done and the key role of the consultancy in strengthening transparency and modernizing the financial management of the IDCP. He supported the continuation of the working group until the presentation of the results of the consultancy. **Thus, the meeting of the Parties decided to prolong the operating time of the Working Group until the final results of the ongoing consultation are presented.**

Guatemala clarified that the requested audit is actually a consultancy and that the report to be presented is preliminary. He expressed concern about the lack of a permanent joint working mechanism between the IATTC and the IDCP on budgetary matters. He also noted that, in the review, the IDCP's financial statements should reflect that it pays IATTC for its services, but does not charge for these.

4. AIDCP Budget for 2026

a) Secretary's Report on the results of the presentation of the adjusted budget to the Committee on Administration and Finance (AFC).

The Secretariat presented the procedure and calculations used for the 2026 budget, including the distribution of costs under a scheme to cover the AIDCP budget of 50/50 percent allocated to the AIDCP and the IATTC.

He reported that some delegations, such as the European Union and Asian countries, criticized the way the issue was being raised and that they could not accept that a decision made at the AIDCP to distribute its budget 50/50% could be applied at the IATTC without proper discussion and analysis. The Director also reported that presentations were made at the CAF (again) to explain the documents that led the Parties to the AIDCP to issue a recommendation to the IATTC to distribute the AIDCP budget in a similar amount, given that the work of observers on board is currently greater for the benefit of the IATTC than that which they do for the AIDCP and the protection of dolphins.

Guatemala indicated that the cost of other services unrelated to the observer program, of \$1,066,713, is not in dispute and could be preliminarily approved. He added that the cost of an observer program would be similar for IATTC and IDCP if each undertakes it individually, so the 50/50 scheme is "*fair and equitable*"

Nicaragua, Venezuela, Panama, and Mexico supported Guatemala's position that budget approval is a fundamental issue for both organizations, and that a solution must be found to avoid ending the meeting cycle without an approved budget. The President took the responsibility for coordinating with the IATTC Chair and the CAF Chair to find a solution during the following week. In that case, it was decided to hold meetings of heads of delegation plus one to jointly analyze budgetary issues between IATTC and AIDCP.

b) Presentation of the 2026 budget by the Secretariat

Dr. Arnulfo Franco, Director of IATTC, presented document [AIDCP-51-01 on the AIDCP Budget](#). He noted that the recommended budget for 2026 is US\$2,425,327. He also noted that two critical points remain:

- The vessel quota has been frozen since 2006 (US\$14.95 m³), and
- The outstanding quotas for vessels amount to US\$449,659, of which Venezuela accounts for approximately 75% of the total.

He added that the recommended 2026 budget projects a surplus of US\$80,663, according to the decision on the distribution of observer costs (50 IATTC/50 AIDCP); however, this will be presented at the IATTC plenary meeting.

c) Discussion and approval of the budget

The discussion on this agenda item could not be concluded during the August 2025 meeting. It was resumed on October 21, 2025, and, after intense discussions, concluded with the adoption of **Resolution A-25-02 on vessel quotas and financing**, which amends the previous resolution (A-18-01). The two most important points of this new resolution are the modification of the amount of the contribution from vessels per cubic meter of hold volume (US\$16.47 contained in paragraph 2) as well as the definition regarding how to use the existing surplus to cover budgetary expenses, including a contribution to the project on *Close Kin Mark Recapture* (Paragraph 9).

5. Reports from the working groups and the International Review Panel (IRP):

a) Report of the 40th meeting of the Working Group to promote and publicize the AIDCP Dolphin Safe Tuna Certification System

The group's president, Mr. José Abilio Orellana, reported that the Secretariat and Venezuela presented an update on the actions taken to promote the AIDCP, which basically include two actions:

- The US\$5,000 that was granted to update the diorama on tuna fishing and dolphin protection at the New York Science Museum has already been used. The updated exhibition can be visited beginning June 2025. The Secretariat will present photos and videos of the museum exhibit during the October meeting.
- Venezuela reported that the first part of a permanent exhibition on tuna fishing, with emphasis on dolphin-assisted fishing, was opened at the Museo Del Mar in Boca del Río, Margarita Island. The exhibition includes videos from AIDCP and others related to this method, a replica of a tuna boat, and AIDCP brochures. In Cumaná, they are preparing a similar exhibition in October and November at the Museum of the Sea, at Universidad de Oriente, taking advantage of a Congress on Marine Sciences.

It was agreed that, at the next meeting in October 2025, the Secretariat would present the usual table to report on the follow-up to the recommendations of the previous meeting.

b) Report of the 75th meeting of the International Review Panel (IRP)

Biologist Enrique Espinosa, in his capacity as Coordinator of the IRP, presented his report of the 75th meeting. He mentioned that the review of the use of DMLs in 2024 and so far in 2025 was carried out; two cases of alleged violations that were referred to the relevant Parties for investigation were reviewed; an update on the case of the detained observer was presented to the panel for information purposes, so that concerns could be raised and possible solutions could be presented.

The discussion of these and other issues led the Panel to propose the following recommendations to the AIDCP Meeting of the Parties:

- To include, in observers' training, tools to help them express their observations more objectively so that the IRP can better evaluate their reports.
- That the secretariat prepare a report to analyze the benefits of establishing a mandatory training program for purse seine captains, including the content of the IATTC and AIDCP resolutions.
- To instruct the Secretariat, in consultation with the Parties, to convene a panel of experts designated by the Parties to issue recommendations for consideration by the 53rd Meeting on the implementation of policies, procedures, and practices related to the management of internal and external risks related to on-board observers, especially in the face of events that require the cooperation of the AIDCP (and the IATTC) with authorities conducting investigations related to events that may involve on-board observers.
- To urge CPCs to share information with the Secretariat on the employment status of observers and their obligations as applied in each country.
- That the National Observer Programs work together with the Secretariat to issue certifications to observers that allow to improve, expedite, and facilitate their migration processes.
- That the next Meeting of the Parties include an item to review and update the specifications for high-intensity reflectors.

The AIDCP Meeting of Parties heard the report and approved the recommendations.

6. Other business

The following issues were discussed:

a) Review and update of Resolution A-04-07 on the list of IUU vessels.

The Guatemalan delegation referred to Resolution [A-04-07-Active_IUU-vessel-list.pdf](#) and stated that it should be reviewed to adapt it to the changes introduced in the IATTC IUU fishing resolution. The meeting of the Parties took note of this pending task and on the need to carry it out in the near future, with the understanding that the Secretariat could initiate this review process by preparing a document for the Parties' consideration.

b) Payment of a vessel to the observer program

Venezuela requested the exemption of the payment of US\$12,475 for a vessel called “*El Guayacán*”, arguing that it never operated in the area and that it had already been replaced by another vessel belonging to the same vessel owner, whose payment was used to cover the assessment. The Secretariat clarified that the vessel had remained included in the Registry in the list of active vessels before the aforementioned replacement, which is why the obligation to pay the corresponding contribution had been generated. They added that they lacked the necessary authority to waive the payment and that only the Parties to the Agreement could make a decision on the matter.

At the resumed meeting, the Parties carefully reviewed this case based on the information provided and concluded that the payment made by the vessel replaced by another could not be credited to cover in whole or in part the payment that the new vessel must make upon entering the Registry. Therefore, Venezuela's request did not receive the necessary support for its approval.

7. Date and place of next meeting.

The 52nd meeting of the Parties to the AIDCP will be held on October 23, 2025, in La Jolla, California.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned on October 21, 2025, at 12:25 PM, La Jolla time.

Annex 1. List of participants from the first part of the meeting in August

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Annex 2. List of participants in the meeting continued in October.

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Annex 3.

AGREEMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL DOLPHIN CONSERVATION PROGRAM

51st MEETING OF THE PARTIES

La Jolla, California, USA

(resumed)

23 October 2025

RESOLUTION A-25-02

ON VESSELS ASSESSMENTS AND FINANCING

The Parties to the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP):

Agree to implement Annex II.12 of the AIDCP as follows:

1. The assessments shall be based on the vessel's well volume as recorded on the IATTC Regional Vessel Register and posted on the website of the Commission, considering that, in accordance with Resolution C-15-02 "*as of 1 January 2017 the well volume reflected on the Regional Vessel Register will be considered confirmed for vessels currently included in the Register. In the case of new vessels, the well volume notified at the time the vessel is added to the Register will be considered confirmed*".
2. The fees for those vessels required to carry observers by the provisions of the AIDCP shall be calculated at the rate of US\$ 16.47 per cubic meter of well volume.
3. Assessments for IATTC Capacity Class 6 vessels that have sealed wells under Resolution C-12-08 shall be calculated based on their total well volume, i.e. including sealed and non-sealed wells.
4. Assessments for vessels smaller than Class 6 that are required to carry an observer on board, either because they have sealed wells (Resolution C-12-08) or because they have been identified by the IRP to have committed a possible infraction by intentionally setting on dolphins (Resolution A-02-01), shall be the equivalent of the quota of a Class 6 vessel with the minimum capacity corresponding to its class (508 m³).
5. Assessments for Class 6 vessels on the Inactive and Sunk Purse-Seine Capacity List of the Regional Register shall be calculated at a rate of US\$ 1.00 per cubic meter of well volume.
6. Assessments for any vessel fishing in the Agreement Area pursuant to paragraph 12 of IATTC Resolution C-02-03 on the capacity of the tuna fleet operating in the eastern Pacific Ocean shall be calculated on the basis of the rate established in paragraph 2 of this resolution.
7. Assessments shall be paid by December 1 of the preceding year, pursuant to paragraph 12(b) of Annex II of the AIDCP and regardless of whether the vessel has requested a DML for the following year, except in the case of vessels to which Resolution A-02-01 or Resolution C-02-03, paragraph 12, applies, for which assessments shall be paid before undertaking fishing activities in the EPO.

8. Any vessel assessment that has not been paid by the date specified in the previous paragraph shall be increased by an annual surcharge of 10% of the assessment, in addition to any sanction contemplated in Annex IV of the AIDCP.

9. a. In view of the exceptional financial situation currently faced by the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), and recognizing the importance of the Onboard Observer Program for the purposes of the Agreement, without prejudice to Article XIV Paragraph 3 of the Antigua Convention, it is hereby decided to make use of the AIDCP surplus.

b. From the existing surplus, after deducting any budget deficit recorded as of December 31, 2025, projected as of October 22, 2025 to be US\$164,015, up to US\$472,930 will be used to contribute to the budgeted expenses for 2026 of the On-Board Observer Program.

The remainder of the surplus as of the date of this Resolution, estimated as of October 22, 2025 to be US\$1,409,399, shall be used for the *Close Kin Mark Recapture* (CKMR) Project the amount of which shall be subject to review and approval by the Parties to AIDCP, following the guidelines and recommendation of the Secretariat and its scientific staff, without prejudice to possible voluntary contributions to also support said program. Any further surplus remaining as of the date of this Resolution shall be allocated to research approved by the Parties, without prejudice to extraordinary expenses that the Parties shall be informed of and approved in advance. Annual operative surpluses that may occur in the future shall be subject to subsequent provisions of the AIDCP Parties.

In 2026 the working group on financial strengthening of the AIDCP shall work in conjunction with the relevant entity within the IATTC to recommend to the Meeting of the Parties and the Commission a long-term approach for the distribution of costs of the Onboard Observer Program.

10. This Resolution replaces Resolution A-18-01.