

INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION
104th MEETING
Lisbon (Portugal)
August 31 to September 4, 2026

PROPOSAL IATTC-104 W-1

**SUBMITTED BY BELIZE, COSTA RICA, EL SALVADOR, GUATEMALA,
HONDURAS, NICARAGUA AND PANAMA**

**IATTC GUIDELINES FOR ESTABLISHING COOPERATION AND COLLABORATION
FRAMEWORKS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS, FRAMEWORKS, AND INSTRUMENTS
RELATED TO THE EXPLOITATION, TRADE, CONSERVATION, AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF
MARINE BIODIVERSITY**

Explanatory memorandum

This proposed resolution responds to the need to provide the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC) with a clear, coherent, and permanent institutional framework to guide its cooperation and collaboration with other international bodies, frameworks, and instruments whose activities are related to the exploitation, trade, conservation, and sustainable use of marine biodiversity.

During the last few decades, the international context of ocean governance has undergone a significant evolution, characterized by the consolidation of new multilateral agreements, processes, and mechanisms, as well as by the strengthening of scientific, environmental and commercial initiatives with an impact on living marine resources. This reality increases opportunities for cooperation but also demands adequate institutional coordination that preserves the clarity of mandates, avoids duplication, and ensures coherence among the different spheres of competence.

In this scenario, the IATTC has a uniquely strong position. More than seventy years of scientific research, stock assessment, methodological development, and adoption of conservation and management measures make it one of the most experienced and credible regional fisheries management organizations internationally. This scientific and institutional heritage constitutes a strategic asset that must be actively projected in international processes related to matters included within the scope of the Antigua Convention.

International cooperation is an instrument to strengthen institutional effectiveness and not a mechanism to alter the legal balance among organizations. Consequently, this proposal starts from the recognition that each international body, framework, or instrument exercises autonomous powers within the scope defined by its respective constituent instrument. The existence of complementary objectives does not create relationships of subordination, nor does it modify the powers conferred on the Commission, which continue to be exercised exclusively in accordance with the Antigua Convention.

The proposal also seeks to strengthen the institutional capacity of the IATTC to participate in a timely and technically sound manner in those international forums whose debates may affect the fisheries, species,

ecosystems, or management measures included in its mandate. The Commission's institutional presence will allow it to share its scientific expertise, promote an objective understanding of its conservation and management measures, and facilitate the development of coherent solutions through dialogue and cooperation.

To that end, the resolution establishes guidelines for the Director to promote permanent channels of institutional communication and, when appropriate, to negotiate draft memoranda of understanding or other cooperation mechanisms, which will remain subject to the knowledge, improvement, and ultimate approval of the

Commission. This ensures that all institutional relationships respond to priorities defined by the Members and are developed with full transparency and control.

Finally, the proposal incorporates an essential safeguard to preserve the intergovernmental nature of the Commission: no action developed under this resolution shall affect, condition, or prejudice the sovereign position of the Members with respect to their participation, or non-participation, in other international treaties, bodies, frameworks, or instruments. The institutional cooperation of the IATTC is conceived exclusively as a mechanism to strengthen compliance with its own mandate, expand scientific and technical exchange, and contribute, from its specialized competence to a more coordinated, effective, and respectful international governance of the oceans, respecting the competences of each institution.

The Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission (IATTC), meeting in the city of Lisbon, Portugal, on its 104th Meeting:

REMEMBERING that the Antigua Convention aims to ensure the long-term conservation and sustainable use of the fish stocks covered by the Convention, in accordance with the relevant rules of International Law, and confers on the Commission scientific, technical, regulatory, cooperative, and administrative functions to achieve that objective;

REAFFIRMING the specialized competence of the Commission in the Convention Area with respect to tuna, tuna-like species, and other species caught by vessels fishing for tuna and tuna-like species, including consideration of the effects of fishing on associated or dependent species and on ecosystems;

RECOGNIZING the experience accumulated by the IATTC over more than seventy years in scientific research, data collection and analysis, stock assessment, formulation of advice, adoption of conservation and management measures, monitoring of their application and multilateral cooperation in the Eastern Pacific Ocean;

HIGHLIGHTING that the effectiveness of the Commission is based on the integration of science and management, on the participation of its Members and Cooperating Non-Members and on its ability to adapt management decisions to dynamic objectives of sustainability, food security, development, responsible trade, and the well-being of communities linked to fishing;

OBSERVING the entry into force of the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity in Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, known as the BBNJ Agreement, as well as the development of its bodies, procedures, and implementation activities;

ALSO OBSERVING the work carried out within the framework of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, and other international mechanisms related to marine biodiversity, trade, and sustainable use;

BEARING IN MIND the results of ongoing processes within the United Nations system and in other multilateral forums on oceans, biodiversity, science, environmental assessment, climate change, pollution, food security, trade, and sustainable development, insofar as they may relate to matters covered by the Antigua Convention;

RECOGNIZING AS WELL that each international body, framework, and instrument exercises autonomous functions within its legal basis and material scope, without the partial coincidence of objectives establishing hierarchy by itself, subordination, transfer of mandate, or general precedence among mechanisms;

AFFIRMING that cooperation and coordination must be based on mutual respect for competences, technical expertise, functional complementarity, legal coherence, good faith, transparency, and the prevention of duplications, contradictions, or interferences;

UNDERLINING that the Commission must safeguard the integrity of its scientific work, its decision-making processes, its conservation and management measures, and the results obtained within the Convention Area, preventing external mechanisms from replacing, conditioning, or undermining the exercise of its powers;

CONVINCED that a properly managed fishery generates knowledge about the oceans, strengthens monitoring and control capacity, contributes to the conservation of marine biodiversity, and allows for the realization of sustainability commitments with verifiable results in the short, medium, and long term;

CONSIDERING that the technical and institutional presence of the IATTC in relevant international forums is necessary to explain its mandate, present its results, provide scientific evidence, promote the correct understanding of its measures, and participate in a timely manner in debates that may affect the fisheries and ecosystems covered by the Antigua Convention;

RECOGNIZING the desirability of establishing regular channels of dialogue and collaboration which, when there is a clearly identified added value, can be formalized through memoranda of understanding or other institutional arrangements submitted to the Commission for review and approval;

CLARIFYING that the institutional participation of the IATTC in any dialogue, activity or instrument of cooperation does not compromise or prejudice the individual position of any of its Members with respect to the signing, ratification, acceptance, approval, accession, participation, recognition, interpretation, or application of any international treaty, organization, framework, process, or instrument;

DETERMINED to establish clear, proportionate, and verifiable guidelines that allow for the development of external cooperation in a strategic, responsible, transparent manner, and in full compatibility with the Antigua Convention and the decisions of the Commission;

AGREES:

CHAPTER I. OBJECT, SCOPE, AND NATURE

1. To establish these guidelines as an institutional framework for the representation, dialogue, cooperation, and collaboration of the IATTC with other international bodies, frameworks, processes, and instruments related to the exploitation, trade, conservation, and sustainable use of marine biodiversity.
2. To apply these guidelines to actions of scientific and technical exchange, institutional coordination, participation in forums, formulation of joint initiatives, external communication, and negotiation of memoranda of understanding or other cooperation arrangements.
3. To confirm that the cooperation developed under this Resolution will be of a technical, scientific, institutional, or administrative nature and will not establish subordination, transfer of powers, or decision-making authority of third parties on matters covered by the Antigua Convention.
4. To stipulate that all actions under this Resolution shall be interpreted and implemented in a manner consistent with the Antigua Convention, the decisions of the Commission, and the availability of approved resources.

CHAPTER II. PRINCIPLES AND SAFEGUARDS

5. To ensure that all cooperation recognizes the powers conferred on each participant by its respective legal basis and is limited to matters where there is a legitimate relationship with the objectives of the Commission.
6. To apply the principles of technical specialization, functional complementarity, legal coherence, transparency, mutual benefit, good faith, efficiency, proportionality, and prevention of duplication.
7. To prevent any activity, product, recommendation, or joint communication from undermining, replacing, conditioning, or reinterpreting the powers of the IATTC, its decision-making procedures, or its conservation and management measures.
8. To recognize that there is no hierarchical relationship between the IATTC and the bodies, frameworks, or instruments with which it cooperates, without prejudice to due respect for the special competences conferred on each mechanism.
9. To preserve the scientific independence of the Commission's staff, the quality of its methodologies, the integrity of its data, and the review and advisory processes established by the Commission.
10. To ensure that cooperation does not impose on the Commission financial, operational, informational, or institutional obligations that have not been previously known and approved by the Commission.
11. To confirm that no reference to any international treaty, body, framework, or instrument shall imply that all IATTC Members are Parties, members, participants, or legally bound by it.
12. To establish that positions taken by a Member in another forum will not be attributed to the IATTC, and that the institutional actions of the Commission will not prejudice the individual position of any Member.

CHAPTER III. INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE AND REPRESENTATION

13. To instruct the Director, under the authority of the Commission and within the functions conferred by the Antigua Convention, to carry out institutional representation actions aimed at ensuring the technical presence of the IATTC in relevant international forums.
14. To guide said representation to present the mandate, experience, scientific results, and conservation and management measures of the Commission, as well as to correct, in a timely manner, objectively inaccurate interpretations about its competence or performance.
15. To instruct the Director to identify international processes that may have relevant scientific, technical, legal, commercial, or operational consequences for the Commission, and to determine the appropriate level of participation based on their importance, urgency, and relationship to the mandate.
16. To authorize the Director to establish dialogue channels with secretariats, technical and scientific bodies, chairs, and other competent bodies, without such contacts constituting acceptance of obligations or approval of substantive positions.
17. To require that all institutional interventions by the IATTC clearly distinguish between scientific information, explanation of current decisions, positions adopted by the Commission, and matters that are pending consideration by the Members.
18. To stipulate that, when a matter exceeds current decisions or may substantially affect the mandate, rights, or obligations of the Members, the Director shall refer it to the Commission before expressing an institutional position.

CHAPTER IV. TECHNICAL PROTECTION OF PLANNING MEASURES

19. To recognize that the conservation and management measures adopted by the Commission constitute the expression of its specialized competence and must be fully explained and considered in international processes that may relate to them.

20. To instruct the Director to promote the correct understanding of the scientific basis, scope, application, and monitoring mechanisms of these measures, avoiding fragmented or decontextualized presentations.
21. To stipulate that the IATTC seeks to be consulted in a timely manner when external initiatives may overlap with fisheries, species, data, assessments, or measures covered by the Antigua Convention.
22. To establish that participation in external consultations will not limit the Commission's power to adopt, maintain, review, or replace its own measures under the Antigua Convention.

CHAPTER V. SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL, AND INFORMATION COOPERATION

23. To promote cooperation in research, data collection and analysis, stock assessment, ecosystem analysis, bycatch, climate change, traceability, compliance, and capacity building, when it directly contributes to the objectives of the Commission.
24. To require that all joint activities define objectives, accountability, products, deadlines, resources, attribution rules, and evaluation mechanisms, and that they avoid duplicating activities that the IATTC or its bodies already perform adequately.
25. To subject the exchange of data and information to the rules of confidentiality, access, ownership, validation, security, and publication applicable in the IATTC, as well as to the consent of those who must authorize its use.
26. To ensure that joint products accurately identify the source of information, the scope of contributions, and any differences of opinion, and that they do not present as the Commission's position anything that the Commission has not approved.
27. To promote mechanisms for mutual recognition of scientifically valid information, without replacing the Commission's own review, evaluation, and advice procedures.

CHAPTER VI. Memoranda of Understanding and Cooperation Arrangements

28. To instruct the Director to prepare or negotiate draft memoranda of understanding or other arrangements when cooperation requires formalization, subject in all cases to the knowledge, improvement and eventual approval of the Commission.
29. To require that each project clearly identifies its purpose, basis of competence, activities, responsibilities, resources, data processing, communication rules, monitoring mechanisms, duration, review, suspension, and termination.
30. To require that projects include express clauses respecting competencies, absence of subordination, no modification of the Antigua Convention, no creation of obligations for Members, and safeguarding of the conservation and management measures of the IATTC.
31. To stipulate that the Director shall not sign instruments that create substantive, financial, or regulatory commitments for the Commission without prior approval from the Commission.
32. To allow preliminary technical exchanges and limited-scope exploratory activities before the approval of a memorandum, provided they do not create obligations, unauthorized costs, or representation of unagreed positions.

CHAPTER VII. PLANNING, REPORTING AND CONTROL

33. To instruct the Director to prepare annually a prioritized list of relevant forums, processes, and cooperation opportunities, indicating their objectives, risks, necessary resources, and expected results.

34. To require the Director to submit semi-annual reports to the Members on the actions taken under this Resolution, including meetings, communications, proposals, negotiations, identified risks, and follow-up actions.
35. To require the Director to present to the Commission, at each annual meeting, a consolidated report on the activities carried out, the results obtained, the use of resources, the status of the memoranda, and the recommendations for the following period.
36. To instruct the Commission to review the application of this Resolution no later than its annual meeting in 2029, and subsequently as it deems necessary, to maintain its usefulness, proportionality, and consistency with the Antigua Convention.

FINAL PROVISION

Nothing in this Resolution shall be construed as modifying the Antigua Convention; as acknowledging obligations not individually accepted by Members; as collective accession to any other treaty, body, framework, or instrument; or as limiting the positions that any Member may hold in other international forums.