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TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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1. INTRODUCTION

At its 82nd Meeting in July 2011, the Commission approved, through Resolution [C-11-11](#), the creation of a “special sustainable development fund for fisheries for highly migratory species to strengthen the institutional capacity of developing countries.”

In July 2014, the Commission at its 87th Meeting modified the Fund radically, until then financed only by voluntary contributions and now by a fixed share of the Commission's regular budget amounting to 2% of the operational budget.

Paragraph 2 of Resolution [C-14-03](#) establishes that “The resources of the Fund shall proceed from the **fixed annual contribution of 2% of the Commission’s budget intended for building and strengthening the capacity of coastal developing countries and territories.**” At its 89th meeting in June 2015, the Commission defined specifically how this 2% contribution would be distributed among the Members:

“This 2% is not to be extracted from the operational budget. Rather, once the amount of the operational budget is settled, an additional amount equal to 2% of the operational subtotal shall be added to the regular budget as a separate line item, and the final budget amount will be the sum of these two components, and each Member’s contribution to the 2% shall follow therefore the same distribution key as the regular budget.”

While the resolution does not omit to state (paragraph 6) that: “Members, national and international bodies and entities are encouraged to make voluntary contributions to the Fund”, this source of funding ceased to be important in practice, as evidenced by the fact that there were no more voluntary contributions since 2014 when only one member made a contribution to the Fund.

2. CURRENT SITUATION OF THE FUND’S FINANCIAL RESOURCES

As described above, the Fund is an integral part of the Commission's regular budget and the contributions to the Fund are included in the annual contribution to be paid by each member in the amount established in a resolution, the most recent being Resolution C-22-08 Financing for fiscal year 2023.

Consequently, without taking into account possible voluntary contributions, only two factors can affect the Fund’s financial resources situation: the total amount of the operational budget adopted for a given year and the timeliness with which members comply with their obligation to pay their annual contributions.

In this context, **Table 1** in addition to indicating the amount of the Fund in previous years and more specifically in fiscal years 2021, 2022 and 2023, also highlights, for illustrative purposes only, the situation of each member of the Commission in terms of the respective amount of its annual contribution that is automatically allocated to the Fund in accordance with the provisions of Resolution C-14-03.

TABLE 1. Contributions by Members to the Fund in previous years, 2022 and 2023 as of 30 June, in US\$								
	Previous Years		2022		2023		Total	
	Paid	Pending	Paid	Pending	Paid	Pending	Paid	Pending
Belize	5,087	-	883	-	863	-	6,833	-
Canada	15,687	-	2,683	-	2,494	-	20,864	-
China	23,399	-	4,690	-	5,346	-	33,434	-
Colombia	36,008	-	5,508	-	-	5,626	41,515	5,626
Costa Rica	12,514	-	2,663	-	2,847	-	18,024	-
Ecuador	174,023	-	33,984	-	34,607	-	242,614	-
El Salvador	9,238	-	2,137	-	2,184	-	13,559	-
European Union	47,399	-	8,814	-	6,789	-	63,002	-
France	14,637	-	2,789	-	2,925	-	20,351	-
Guatemala	5,911	-	937	-	1,316	-	8,164	-
Japan	42,146	-	5,525	-	5,134	-	52,805	-
Kiribati	4,748	-	878	-	859	-	6,485	-
Korea	26,957	-	4,763	-	4,582	-	36,302	-
Mexico	118,260	-	21,483	-	-	21,639	139,742	21,639
Nicaragua	8,559	-	1,761	-	1,739	-	12,059	-
Panama	56,869	14,229	-	15,307	-	14,979	56,869	44,515
Peru	12,249	-	2,272	-	-	3,738	14,521	3,738
Chinese Taipei	24,991	-	4,887	-	4,414	-	34,293	-
United States of America	205,027	-	32,694	-	32,697	-	270,418	-
Vanuatu	6,125	-	1,006	-	-	983	7,131	983
Venezuela	7,793	26,211	-	3,822	-	3,726	7,793	33,759
Total contributions	857,626		140,358		108,795		1,106,779	
Approved budget¹	898,066		159,487		159,487		1,217,040	
Pending contributions		40,440		19,129		50,692		110,261

¹ Amounts approved by budget year: 2016 \$131,086, 2017 \$132,109, 2018 \$156,412, 2019 - 2022 \$159,487

Table 2 summarizes the balance of the Fund as of 30 June 2023. To date, the balance to be carried forward to fiscal year 2023 is US\$ 470,204.

TABLE 2. Fund activity, in US\$, in 2021, 2022 and 2021 through 31 May			
	2021	2022	2023
1 January carryover from previous year	100,138	280,046	425,295
Income received	203,438	172,572	110,734
Total income	303,576	452,618	536,029
Expenditures			
Data collection on sharks	23,530	-	-
Participation in annual meeting	-	27,323	-
Participation in SAC meeting			65,825
Total expenses	23,530	27,323	-
Balance of Fund carried forward	280,046	425,295	470,204

To date, the resources of the Fund have been used for Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Kiribati, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, El Salvador, and Venezuela. It should be noted that the fund has been applied to benefit developing IATTC Member countries and not Cooperating non-Members since they do not contribute resources to the fund.

As previously noted, it will become necessary to develop criteria and procedures for providing assistance to eligible Members as the Fund continues to grow. It is important to note that, at a minimum, criteria should be established regarding beneficiary Members, as well as deadlines for requests for support, for example, taking into account that travel costs increase significantly the closer they are to the date of the meeting at which the beneficiary Member will participate with support from the Fund. Pursuant to paragraph 4 of Resolution [C-14-03](#), work is currently underway to develop financial regulations for the administration of the Fund: *“The administration of the Fund shall be the responsibility of the Director and shall be subject to the auditing rules of the Commission and the **financial regulations for the administration of the Fund to be developed by the Commission.**”*

In absence of precise instructions from the Commission, it should be noted that if the Fund is exhausted, any support for activities financed by the Fund would cease.

3. ACTIVITIES THAT WERE PROGRAMMED TO BE CARRIED OUT IN 2022 AND 2023

In accordance with the activities approved by the Commission at its last meeting, the activities described in **Table 3** were to be carried out in 2022 and 2023. It is important to mention that the COVID-19 pandemic had a considerable impact on the realization of the activities that had been initially programmed to be carried out with the resources of the Fund. This was particularly the case of in-person activities or those involving international travel, such as the training seminars or internships at the IATTC headquarters, as well as support for presential meetings (with the exception of the annual meetings in 2022), for which no resources from the Fund were spent.

TABLE 3. Activities programmed to be carried out in 2022 and 2023 with resources from the Fund.	
1	Development of data collection and scientific infrastructure for fisheries management
2	Capacity-building seminar/workshop for decision makers responsible for IATTC matters from developing CPCs **
3	Capacity-building seminar/workshop for decision makers responsible for IATTC matters from developing CPCs ***
4	Annual IATTC scholarship for scientific capacity in developing CPCs****
5	Participation of representatives of developing Members in meetings of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies, including working groups and workshops *****

4. ACTIVITIES TO BE CARRIED OUT IN 2023 AND 2024

Resolution C-14-03 states in paragraph 3 that “the Director shall present to the Commission for its approval every year the strategic investment plan chargeable to the Fund, which shall be constructed on the basis of the requirements of the developing countries and territories and the analyses carried out by the Commission staff.” As indicated in the previous section, the activities in Table 3 could not be carried out, but have already been approved; therefore, for the remainder of 2023 and for 2024, some of them will continue or begin to be carried out, as appropriate.

Therefore, and considering the possibilities of holding meetings by videoconference, the intention is to use this method for at least the training activities 2 and 3 in the table above, with little or no impact on the Fund's resources. Thus, the activities planned for 2023-2024 are as shown in Table 4:

TABLE 4. Activities to be carried out in 2023 and 2024 with resources from the Fund.			
		Amount	
1	Development of data collection and scientific infrastructure for fisheries management	US\$ ----- *	At the national and local level
2	Training seminar on sea turtle mitigation techniques in accordance with Resolution C-19-04	US\$50,000	In a CA city to be determined
3	Training seminars for port inspections pursuant to Resolution C-21-07	US\$50,000	At a port to be determined
4	Annual IATTC scholarship for scientific capacity in developing CPCs**	US\$30,000	Headquarters
5	Participation of representatives of developing Members in meetings of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies, including working groups and workshops ***	US\$40,000	At the venue of the meetings
<p>* Amount to be determined on the basis of the specific activities to be programmed in consultation with the interested CPCs, within the limits of available funds.</p> <p>** As explained in previous reports, the intention is to carry out an activity through which applications will be received in order to select annual scholarship recipients. This scholarship was named the Jimmy Martínez Scholarship to honor and recognize the contributions of this Ecuadorian scientist and biologist to the work of the Commission and the sustainability of the species covered by the Antigua Convention.</p> <p>*** As established in Resolution C-14-03 regarding the items on which the resources of the Special Fund should be used, support will continue to be given for the participation of representatives of developing Members at Commission meetings or its subsidiary bodies.</p>			

It is important to recall that the pending activities to be carried out in 2023 and 2024 will be conducted with the contributions received from the 2% fixed contribution, plus funds remaining from previous years. Furthermore, all the activities fall within the framework of the guidelines established in Resolution [C-14-03](#). Therefore, there is no possibility of a surplus as such, since all funds not used during a given year are added to those of the following year.

Among the activities that are programmed to be carried out in 2023 and beyond, there are a few that deserve to be mentioned, particularly:

a) Development of data collection and scientific infrastructure for fisheries management

The planned work is related to shark fisheries. As part of the second part of the ABNJ project (“Tuna II”),

the IATTC has received additional support from the [FAO-GEF Common Oceans Program](#) to improve the monitoring and assessment of shark stocks in the EPO. This funding, of an approximate amount of US\$ 800,000 for 3 years, allows for the expansion of the work initially conducted in Central America to other IATTC CPCs, including Ecuador, Mexico, and Peru (See Document [SAC-14 INF-M](#)). Funds from the CBF will be used, as needed, to supplement the planned activities under the IATTC ABNJ project. Potential activities are:

- Sampling

- Develop standardized data collection forms.
- Develop and disseminate in-port sampling designs for collection of shark and ray catch (landings), effort and composition data.
- Develop and disseminate sampling designs for catch (retained and discards) and effort data for observer programs.

- Continuation of workshops on sharks

- Support participation in shark stock assessment workshops.

Regarding other areas in which technical assistance or capacity-building activities should be programmed and carried out with resources from the Fund, those related to sea turtles and to inspections in port should also be mentioned, recalling the following decisions of the Commission as embodied in its relevant resolutions quoted below:

b) Resolution [C-19-04 on sea turtles](#) establishes in paragraph 5 that:

“Considering the particular situation of coastal developing countries, the special fund established in Resolution C-14-03 should be strengthened through the allocation of funds, from voluntary contributions of CPCs and inclusion of specific budget lines, to facilitate the implementation of this Resolution, including for training fishermen on safe handling and release, providing related equipment, or supporting trials for new mitigation techniques.”

c) Resolution [C-21-07](#) on minimum standards for **inspections in port** establishes in paragraph 34 that:

“On the basis of the outcome of the assessment (...), developing CPCs requiring assistance shall submit a plan of action for the implementation of this Resolution. CPCs shall give full recognition to the special requirements of developing CPCs in relation to a port inspection scheme consistent with this Resolution. As of 1 January 2024, and following the result of the assessment of needs, the Special Sustainable Development Fund established by Resolution C14-03, either directly or through supplementary voluntary contributions from CPCs, shall provide assistance to developing CPCs in order to, inter alia:

a) Develop their capacity including by providing technical assistance and establishing an appropriate funding mechanism to support and strengthen the development and implementation of an effective system of port inspection at national, regional or international levels and to ensure that a disproportionate burden resulting from the implementation of this Resolution is not unnecessarily transferred to them; and

b) Facilitate their participation in meetings and/or training programs of relevant regional and international organizations that promote the effective development and implementation of a system of port inspection, including monitoring, control and surveillance, enforcement and legal proceedings for infractions and dispute settlements pursuant to this Resolution.”

It should be noted that, in response to the questionnaire circulated by the Secretariat in 2022 to identify the needs of developing CPCs for the implementation of the resolution, several CPCs stressed the need for training in port inspections.

The extent of the activities that are expected to be developed and carried out in compliance with these provisions shows the importance for the Committee to discuss the allocation of additional funding to complement the resources from the Fund, as expressly called for by the resolutions themselves.

5. ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT IN 2022 AND 2023 WITH OTHER FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Resolution [C-14-03](#) states in paragraph 8 that “*the Director be asked, within his program of work, to explore and identify other options to strengthen the capacity of Members. This shall include opportunities for partnership with other organizations that work in this field and providing guidance to these organizations on the needs and priorities of the countries.*” In this regard, the Secretariat carried out some activities in 2022, which were held by videoconference and the costs were covered by the Secretariat's budget (**Table 5**).

Member or entity receiving support/date	Activity	Support given
Mexico	Seminar for AIDCP captains	AIDCP training seminar for maintenance and inclusion in the list of qualified captains, in accordance with paragraph 1.e of Annex VII of the AIDCP, on 12 January 2022
AIDCP Parties	Training seminar	Training seminar conducted by videoconference in accordance with AIDCP guidelines (Annex IV.I.3.b) on 7 February 2022.
AIDCP Parties	Training seminar	Training seminar conducted by videoconference in accordance with AIDCP guidelines (Annex IV.I.3.b) on 22 August 2022.
Ecuador	Seminar for AIDCP captains	AIDCP training seminar for maintenance and inclusion in the list of qualified captains, in accordance with paragraph 1.e of Annex VII of the AIDCP, on 29-30 September 2022
AIDCP Parties	Training seminar	Training seminar conducted by videoconference in accordance with AIDCP guidelines (Annex IV.I.3.b) on 30 November 2022.
Ecuador	Seminar for AIDCP captains	AIDCP training seminar for maintenance and inclusion in the list of qualified captains, in accordance with paragraph 1.e of Annex VII of the AIDCP, on 16 January 2022
Ecuador	Seminar for AIDCP captains	AIDCP training seminar for maintenance and inclusion in the list of qualified captains, in accordance with paragraph 1.e of Annex VII of the AIDCP, on 17 January 2022

6. POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES TO BE CARRIED OUT WITH ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

As on previous occasions, a list of potential activities—which could be carried out if resources in addition to the 2% contribution to the special Fund were available—is presented below. These activities were identified based on the wishes of several CPCs, activities included in IATTC adopted resolutions, the recommendations of the Scientific Advisory Committee, among others.

General data provisions

Following a recommendation by the staff supported by the SAC (recommendation 3.1 from SAC-12), Resolution C-03-05 is to be revised in consultation with CPCs, taking into consideration the elements presented in document SAC-12-09, through a series of workshops planned and facilitated by the staff. These workshops will be organized by main fishery, with the purpose of:

- a. discussing improvements in data collection, any required additional resources and capacity building activities;
- b. developing standard data reporting templates (draft appendixes in document [SAC-12-09](#));
- c. updating Resolution-C-03-05 to align data reporting requirements with the Antigua Convention, the WCPFC Scientific Service Provider (SSP) and harmonize them with FAO and other tuna RFMOs standards.

In addition, training in fisheries biology and stock assessment research would also be carried out, mainly in:

i. Biological parameters

Training for conducting research on fishery biology (e.g., estimation of growth, survivorship, and reproductive parameters), including training in biological sample collection and analysis methods.

ii. Stock assessment

Introductory course on quantitative methods in fisheries data analysis and stock assessment.