

AGREEMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL DOLPHIN CONSERVATION PROGRAM
52nd MEETING OF THE PARTIES

La Jolla, California, USA
October 23, 2025

MEETING REPORT

AGENDA

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1. Opening of the meeting	
2. Adoption of the agenda	
3. Presentation on options for the implementation of an electronic system (partial, total, or combined) for use by AIDCP observers at sea.	
4. Secretariat Report on the IDCP	
5. Report of the 41st meeting of the Working Group to promote and publicize the AIDCP Dolphin Safe Tuna Certification System	
6. Report of the 76th meeting of the International Review Panel (IRP)	
7. Other business	
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ANNEXES

- a. List of participants.
- b. Resolution A-25-03 on Funding for the Close-kin Mark Recapture Research Project to Assess Stock Abundance of Dolphins in the EPO.
- c. Proposal of the Chair on the amendment to Annex VIII e. of the AIDCP.
- d. Venezuela's proposal on the embarkation and disembarkation of AIDCP observers

1. Opening of the meeting

The 52nd Meeting of the Parties to the Agreement on the International Dolphin Conservation Program (AIDCP) was held in hybrid format in the city of La Jolla, California, on October 23, 2025.

The session began with welcoming remarks by the Chair, confirmation of the quorum, and the introduction of the delegations from member countries and industry representatives. Participants: Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, United States, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, and Venezuela. Also participating on behalf of the industry was María Patricia Díaz from the International Fisheries Foundation (FIPESCA).

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was approved with the clarification that the report of the tuna monitoring group meeting had already been addressed during the IRP meeting and was therefore removed from the current agenda, as well as the item relating to the presentation of the consultancy work to improve the accounting and administrative processes of the AIDCP, since it was reported that the consultant will not be able to present his work on this occasion. It was also noted that the following proposals had been submitted and should be analyzed by the Parties to the AIDCP:

- Proposal by the Chairperson on an amendment to Annex VIII e. of the AIDCP.
- Mexico's proposal on financing the research, marking, and recapture project of close kin to assess dolphin stock abundance in the EPO.
- Venezuela's proposal on the embarkation and disembarkation of AIDCP observers.
- US proposal for onboard observers to testify in cases of potential violations.
- Venezuela's request regarding contributions from the vessel Guayacán to the observer program.
- Panama's request to discuss a consultation regarding the possible inclusion of a Panamanian-flagged vessel by the end of 2025.

3. Presentation on options for the implementation of an electronic system (partial, total, or combined) for use by AIDCP observers at sea.

The opportunity was given to **Mr. Carlos Andrade** to give a presentation on a technological proposal based on electronic tablets and artificial intelligence to optimize the observer program, reduce costs, and improve data quality. The system would replace manual records, allow automatic quality control, and generate real-time alerts and reports.

The Parties welcomed this presentation, however, they made some observations about the way it was presented:

- It would have been very useful to have a prior document that would allow the delegations to learn more about the topic and be prepared to make substantive comments.
- The matter should be addressed within the framework of the IATTC and the AIDCP, since observers work for the IATTC and contributions are made to the program through it.
- It would not be possible to discuss technical changes to the observer program system without first analyzing the political implications, so it was not possible to address the issue at this time.

The language barrier was also highlighted in the presentation, and there was consensus that the proposal was premature without an initial needs assessment prepared by the Secretariat.

4. Secretariat Report on the IDCP

Mr. Enrique Ureña, from the Secretariat staff, presented the working document AIDCP-52-02 - *Report on the International Dolphin Conservation Program*. He highlighted that the document presents the progress and development of the program during 2024, and that it confirms the good progress of the program in terms of the protection and conservation of dolphins since the incidental mortality of this marine mammal in tuna fishing continues to be low, registering a rate of 0.08 dolphins per set.

He also highlighted the studies currently being carried out in relation to dolphins, such as the mother-calf separation study in dolphin-related hunts, the dolphin stock abundance study, and the close-kin mark recapture (CKMR) study.

The Parties acknowledged that the work within the framework of the IDCP continues to evolve and improve its results.

5. Report of the 41st meeting of the Working Group to promote and publicize the AIDCP Dolphin Safe Tuna Certification System

The report of the Working Group to promote and publicize the AIDCP Dolphin Safe Tuna Certification System (**Annex 2**) was presented by its Chair, Mr. Raúl Cortés, who reported that the group received information about the completion of the diorama update at the American Museum of Natural History,

carried out with an investment of US\$5,000, as well as the progress in the support provided to museums and aquariums in Venezuela.

Furthermore, it reported that, with respect to the initiative to create a special fund for the promotion of the AIDCP, the definition of its terms of reference was still pending, so the group had agreed to recommend that the Parties request the Secretariat to coordinate a consultation process between the Parties during the inter-sessional period, in order to formulate a proposal on the Terms of Reference for the special fund to promote and publicize the AIDCP, to be presented at the next AIDCP meeting in 2026.

The Meeting of the Parties took note of this recommendation and approved it..

6. Report of the 76th meeting of the International Review Panel (IRP)

Enrique Espinosa, in his capacity as Coordinator of the IRP, presented his report of the 75th meeting. He reported that during the session, the status of the Dolphin Mortality Limits (DMLs) corresponding to 2025 was assessed, reporting that, of the 107 DMLs granted, a total of 89 had been used as of October 1. Regarding the 4 DMLs of the Director's reserve, only 1 DML was used as of October 1, 2025.

In relation to 2026, the Panel examined the DML applications submitted by the Parties. A total of 103 DMLs were requested, as follows: Colombia 12, Ecuador 9, Mexico 47, Nicaragua 2, Panama 13, and Venezuela 20. This set of applications reflects the operational continuity of the fleets involved in the International Dolphin Conservation Program.

In other matters, he reported that there were no changes to the list of qualified captains. Regarding the possible violations reported by the IRP, two cases under review stand out, and their investigation is ongoing. Furthermore, a 99% compliance rate was highlighted in the delivery of the documents required by the tuna monitoring program, which demonstrates a high level of compliance with the established procedures.

Finally, he reported that the Panel's recommendations were as follows:

- To send the extraordinary case of high mortality that was not properly reported by the observer to the appropriate party for its respective investigation.
- To approve the allocation of the 103 applications of DMLs by 2026.

The Meeting of the Parties to the AIDCP took note of these recommendations and approved them.

7. Other business.

a) Mexico's proposal on financing the research, marking, and recapture project of close kin to assess the stock abundance of EPO dolphins.

The Mexican delegation presented the above proposal and after intense debate and revisions, it was approved as resolution A-25-03 (**Annex B**). This resolution essentially stipulates that AIDCP will allocate US\$810,800 to Phase 2 of the research project to be used in the execution of the tasks of the project on the assessment of dolphin populations as presented in document SAC-16 INF-K, to the Scientific Advisory Committee during its 16th meeting held from June 2 to 6, 2025.

b) Chair's proposal on amending Annex VIII e. of the AIDCP.

The Chair reported that a proposal was being submitted to amend the following paragraph of Annex VIII

of the AIDCP (bold insertion):

- e. Have an operable long-range, high-intensity floodlight with a sodium lamp of at least 1000 watts or a multivapor lamp of at least 1500 watts, **or a reflector with a light output capacity equal to or greater than 140,000 lumens.**

Unfortunately, this proposal did not reach the consensus needed for approval and it was proposed to review it during the next meeting to allow time for internal analysis in some countries with their respective industries.

c) Venezuela's proposal on the embarkation and disembarkation of AIDCP observers.

The Venezuelan delegation presented this proposed resolution stemming from concerns about the problem in some AIDCP member countries related to the embarkation and disembarkation of observers. In some countries it is very difficult to embark and disembark observers; in others the requirements are very demanding, and it takes a long time to complete them in time to embark or disembark the observers. Therefore, in many cases, since observers cannot be embarked, it cannot be guaranteed that the sampling will be 50%-50%, as the observer must be covered by observers from the IATTC.

In that case, the proposal seeks to ensure that 1) the Parties to the Agreement shall make the necessary efforts to ensure that observers, both from the IATTC and from the National Programs, can embark or disembark at the ports of the Member Parties; 2) that the relevant internal procedures are carried out so that the respective authorities seek mechanisms to facilitate the embarkation and disembarkation of the observers; and 3) that within the framework of the IATTC, an accreditation is developed for all observers of the Program so that they can carry out their observer duties within the framework of the IATTC, and so that the national authorities can have this document when processing the embarkation or disembarkation.

This proposal did not achieve the necessary consensus for its approval; however, it was recommended to apply its point 3.

d) Proposal by the United States for onboard observers to testify in cases of possible violations.

The United States proposed that an agreement be reached whereby onboard observers should participate, if necessary, in hearings where their testimony is required in cases of possible violations. This proposal sparked a wide debate in which various arguments were presented for or against it.

In favor:

- Without the presence of observers, it is highly likely that cases will be lost despite the existence of a violation, and the necessary support is not given to the Parties to properly resolve the cases.
- For several years now, observers have been carrying out compliance activities, not just data collection or scientific activities.

Against:

- The role of observers should be maintained to a greater extent with a scientific approach, and that was the nature of their function since the creation of the program.
- They may become involved in legal problems if cases turn into issues of false statements made by the Parties' lawyers defending the potential offenders, and their salaries are too limited to have them

face these commitments.

Ultimately, the proposal did not achieve the necessary consensus for its approval.

e) Venezuela's request regarding contributions from the vessel, Guayacán, to the observer program.

The Venezuelan delegation requested exemption of the US\$12,000 payment corresponding to a vessel that did not operate in 2020, arguing that the shipowner had complied with his quotas since 2012, and that, by replacing the vessel in 2020, a double charge was generated.

The Secretariat clarified that current regulations do not contemplate the replacement of vessels and that every ship in the active registry must pay the annual fee without exception. One delegation clarified the difference between exemption and trade-off, requesting confirmation that the Guayacán vessel was replaced; other delegations considered it viable to evaluate trade-off. It was explained to him that each vessel that enters the register is considered as a new vessel and must make contributions individually. In conclusion, the Parties did not accept Venezuela's request.

Since the applicable annex sets an annual payment without proration or consideration for operating time, several delegations suggested reviewing these rules at future meetings.

f) The question from Panama was not addressed directly, as the interventions made in the previous point allowed the doubts raised by that delegation to be clarified.

9. Date and place of next meeting.

The next meeting will be held in September 2026, in a country within the European Union yet to be determined.

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned on October 21, 2025, at 6:27 pm.

Annex a. List of participants.

ASISTENTES - ATTENDEES	
MIEMBROS - MEMBERS	
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**AGREEMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL DOLPHIN CONSERVATION
PROGRAM**

52ND MEETING OF THE PARTIES

**La Jolla, California (USA)
23 October 2025**

RESOLUTION A-25-03

**FUNDING FOR THE CLOSE-KIN MARK-RECAPTURE RESEARCH PROJECT TO
ASSESS POPULATION ABUNDANCE OF DOLPHINS IN THE EASTERN TROPICAL
PACIFIC OCEAN**

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

Recognizing that during 2024 and 2025, funds were obtained from the Pacific Alliance for Sustainable Tuna to develop a protocol for obtaining tissue samples from mortalities of spotted (*Stenella attenuata*) and spinner (*Stenella longirostris*) dolphins in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean, consisting of the collection of a skin sample and a biopsy;

Considering that Phase 1 of the dolphin population assessment project, as presented to the Scientific Advisory Committee during its 16th meeting (held on 2–6 June) in document SAC-16 INF-K, will last 8–9 months, depending on the time required for the field sampling phase carried out by observers and crew members (1–2 months);

Highlighting the progress made between January and March 2025, including:

- (i) development of a detailed manual for the sampling protocol,
- (ii) production of a step-by-step training video,
- (iii) preparation and shipment of sampling kits to the IATTC offices in Mexico,
- (iv) coordination meetings with industry representatives, and
- (v) observer training;

Recalling that, in April 2025, sampling kits were distributed to Mexican-flagged purse-seine vessels in order to begin the sample collection phase;

Recognizing that assessing the status of dolphin populations is essential for strengthening the AIDCP's objectives and commitments;

Resolve the following:

1. That the AIDCP allocate US\$ 810,800 to Phase 2 of the Close-Kin Mark-Recapture (CKMR) research project to assess population abundance of eastern tropical Pacific dolphins. These funds will be used to execute the project tasks involved in assessing dolphin populations, as presented to the Scientific Advisory Committee during its 16th meeting (held on 2–6 June) in document SAC-16 INF-K.
2. If the feasibility of using skin swab samples for CKMR is confirmed by IATTC scientific staff during Phase 1, the use of AIDCP funds is authorized to finance Phase 2 of the study, which will have the following objectives:

- (i) Conduct field test skin swabbing of live dolphins,
- (ii) Collect 50-100 biopsy samples from mortalities across the population's range,
- (iii) Develop a high-throughput genetic panel, and
- (iv) Test the genetic panels on skin swabs.

3. If skin swabbing is not feasible, the IATTC staff, in coordination with the IATTC Scientific Advisory Committee and researchers from Parties interested in the study, shall explore the possibility of using alternative sampling methods, applying the resources mentioned in paragraph 1, in order to continue the assessment of dolphin populations.

4. Throughout the implementation of the project, the IATTC staff, the project coordinator and the scientists, industry, and other parties involved in the project shall hold periodic meetings, as appropriate, to review the project's progress and sampling protocol, incorporate suggestions to facilitate compatibility with fishing operations and address questions and comments. The meetings will also help to implement a training plan for observers/crew on how to implement the sampling protocol. The Director will also provide periodic, written updates on the project to AIDCP Parties

Annex c.

**AGREEMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL DOLPHIN CONSERVATION
PROGRAMME**

52nd MEETING OF THE PARTIES

October 23-24, 2025

La Jolla, California, USA

CHAIR'S PROPOSAL

RESOLUTION A-25-XX

AMENDMENT OF ANNEX VIII OF THE AGREEMENT

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

Recognizing the need to take into account the relevant technological progresses applicable to its provisions and their implementation;

Noting the discussions, conclusions and recommendations of this issue in previous meetings of the International Review Panel (IRP);

Resolve to amend Annex VIII as follows:

“e. Have an operable long-range, high-intensity floodlight with a sodium lamp of at least 1000 watts or a multivapour lamp of at least 1500 watts, or a high-intensity floodlight capable of output 140,000 lumens or more.”

**ACUERDO SOBRE EL PROGRAMA INTERNACIONAL PARA LA
CONSERVACIÓN DE LOS DELFINES**

52ª REUNIÓN DE LAS PARTES

**La Jolla, California, EE. UU.
23-24 de octubre de 2025**

**PROPUESTA AIDCP-52 A-1
PRESENTADA POR VENEZUELA**

“EMBARQUE Y DESEMBARQUE DE LOS OBSERVADORES DEL APICD”

ANTECEDENTES Y EXPOSICIÓN DE MOTIVOS

La presente propuesta de Resolución nace de la preocupación por el problema que se esta presentando en algunos países Partes del APICD en lo relacionado con el embarque y desembarque de los observadores, hay Partes que es muy difícil poder embarcar y desembarcar observadores en ese país, en otro los requerimientos son muy exigentes y tarda mucho poder realizarlos a tiempo para embarcar o desembarcar a los observadores, por lo cual en muchos casos los observadores al no poder ser enmarcar, no se puede garantizar que el muestreo sea 50%-50%, ya que el observador deberá ser cubierto con observadores de la CIAT, la cual tiene más posibilidades de embarcar a los observadores por poder utilizar de otras nacionalidades, en cuanto al desembarco ocurre lo mismo y el observador al no poder ser desembarcado debe realizar un segundo, tercero y cuarto viaje seguido lo cual no es recomendable no solo por la salud del observador, sino por el monitoreo seguido y no alternativo que es lo más recomendado

**PROPUESTA DE RESOLUCIÓN SOBRE EL EMBARQUE Y DESEMBARQUE DE LOS
OBSERVADORES DEL APICD**

Las Partes del Acuerdo sobre el Programa Internacional para la Conservación de los Delfines (APICD):

Teniendo presente el compromiso de los Miembros Partes, expresado ARTÍCULO XIII. PROGRAMA DE OBSERVADORES A BORDO El Programa de Observadores a Bordo establecido conforme al Acuerdo de La Jolla operará de conformidad con el Anexo II PROGRAMA DE OBSERVADORES A BORDO, numeral 1. “Las Partes deberán mantener un Programa de Observadores a Bordo de conformidad con las disposiciones de este Anexo”;

Considerando que el trabajo de los observadores ha sido un factor importante en la consecución de los logros del Acuerdo;

Considerando que los observadores del APICD también recolectan información tanto científica como de cumplimiento de las Recomendaciones CIAT;

Tomando en cuenta que es importante la alternancia de los observadores entre los Programas CIAT y Nacionales, para brindar las exigencias estadísticas recomendadas por el personal científico de la Comisión;

Considerando que el acuerdo de la Organización Marítima Internacional (OMI) relacionado con la garantía de los países para embarcar y desembarcar la tripulación es el [Convenio sobre la facilitación](#)

del tráfico marítimo internacional (FAL), el cual busca simplificar y uniformar los trámites, documentos y formalidades.

Considerando que, además, la Organización Internacional del Trabajo (OIT) tiene el Convenio sobre el contrato de enrolamiento de la gente de mar, que garantiza derechos laborales y de empleo para la tripulación, incluyendo la facilidad de embarque y desembarque;

Acuerdan que los miembros Partes del Acuerdo para un Programa Internacional para la Conservación de los Delfines (APICD), lo siguiente:

- 1.- Instar la los miembros Partes del Acuerdo a realizar todos los esfuerzos necesarios para garantizar que los observadores del Programa de Observadores del APICD, tanto de la CIAT como la de los Programas Nacionales puedan embarcase o desembarcarse en los puertos de los miembros Parte.
- 2.- Instar a los miembros Partes del Acuerdo a realizar los tramites internos pertinentes para que las autoridades respectivas busquen los mecanismos para facilitar el embarque y desembarque de los observadores del Programa de Observadores del APICD, incluyendo el uso de custodios, por ejemplo.
- 3.- Que el APICD elabore una acreditación de todos los observadores del Programa APICD, en el sentido que los observadores acreditados están avalados por el APICD para realizar las labores de observadores dentro del marco del APICD, con la finalidad que las autoridades puedan tener este documento a la hora de tramitar el embarque o desembarque de los observadores.