

AGREEMENT ON THE INTERNATIONAL DOLPHIN CONSERVATION PROGRAM

10TH MEETING OF THE PARTIES

LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA (USA)
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REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF AIDCP SUBSIDIARY MEETINGS

The 9th Meeting of the Parties in June 2003 adopted the *Plan of Action to Enhance the Success of the AIDCP*, which states, in Section 6.3:

“The Director shall evaluate and report to the Meeting of the Parties on the implications from a cost-effective perspective, and with due regard to the effective operation of the organization to attain its objectives, of aligning the number of meetings of the subsidiary bodies (Annex VII, paragraph 5 of the Agreement) with the current number of Meetings of the Parties held annually.”

Article VIII of the AIDCP requires that the Parties meet at least once a year, and Annex VII.5 requires that the International Review Panel (IRP) meet at least three times each year. Since the inception of the AIDCP in 1999, two Meetings of the Parties have been held each year, the ordinary Meeting in June and another in October. The IRP and, since 2000, the IRP's Permanent Working Group on Tuna Tracking (TTWG) have both met three times a year, in conjunction with the Meetings of the Parties in June and October and additionally around January. If the meetings of these groups are to be aligned with the Meetings of the Parties, the meetings held early in the year would no longer be routinely scheduled. Annex VII.5 would need to be amended to reduce the minimum number of IRP meetings to two, but additional meetings could be convened if necessary under Annex VII.6.

Meetings of the other subsidiary bodies (Working Groups on Per-Stock, Per-Year Dolphin Mortality Limits, Vessel Assessments and Financing, and Promotion of the AIDCP Dolphin Safe Tuna Certification System) have been held less frequently, and not always in conjunction with a Meeting of the Parties. Aligning these meetings with Meetings of the Parties in the future is unlikely to affect the operation of the Agreement adversely.

Instead of eliminating the January IRP meeting completely, it could be reduced to only one day, to review observer data for possible infractions and the initial DML allocations for the year. Such a meeting would not require large delegations, perhaps one or two representatives from each Party and the NGO representatives. It could also be done without simultaneous interpretation if the meeting is conducted in one of the two official languages, as was the normal practice for the IRP under the La Jolla Agreement.

Shifting work normally done in January to June would save two days of meeting costs and the associated travel costs; it would add some time to the June meetings, but probably not more than one day. The estimated annual savings for the Secretariat would be about US\$12,000. However, it should be noted that, in each of the last three years, an IATTC working group has met in conjunction with the January IRP meeting. As there is often an overlap in the members who attend IATTC and IRP/TTWG meetings, eliminating this IRP meeting may not reduce travel costs much for some delegations.

The implications for the operation of the AIDCP if the January meetings of the IRP and TTWG are eliminated include:

1. INFRACTIONS

- a. The possible infractions normally reviewed in January, which might include some that occurred during trips that ended the previous September, would instead be reviewed the following June. Thus, an identified possible infraction might not be referred to the pertinent Party for

investigation for as long as a year after it occurred. At each of the January meetings in 2002 and 2003, the IRP identified an average of 69 major and 50 other infractions.

- b. Possible delays in the confirmation of patterns of infractions, thus prolonging the application of sanctions to address persistent violations.
- c. Possible delays in the removal of non-complying fishing captains from the List of Qualified Captains.
- d. Delays in referring possible infractions could decrease the chance of a Party sanctioning a fishing captain or vessel because of the possibility of transferring to another flag.

2. DMLs

Due to the possible delay in referring and confirming possible infractions, a confirmed infraction that should affect a vessel's future DML allocation or reallocation may lose its effect because it did not occur within the previous two years. This could be remedied by a simple amendment to paragraphs I.9 and III.4 of Annex IV.

Initial DML assignments, including any adjusted DMLs of vessels that exceeded their DML the previous year, are currently reviewed by the IRP at its January meeting. However, this could be done by correspondence.

3. TUNA TRACKING

Reduces the frequency with which the TTWG reviews the Tuna Tracking System and makes recommendations to the IRP and/or the Parties. This might lengthen the group's meeting in June, although probably not beyond one day.

4. POLICY ISSUES

The elimination of the January meetings would delay the progress of policy matters that are discussed at TTWG and IRP meetings and often require several meetings before they are resolved.