

INTERNATIONAL DOLPHIN CONSERVATION PROGRAM
INTERNATIONAL REVIEW PANEL (IRP)
75TH MEETING

Panama City, Panama
30 August 2025

REPORT OF THE MEETING
AGENDA

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2. Adoption of the agenda	
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4. Review of AIDCP <i>List of Qualified Captains</i>	IRP-75-02
5. Review of cases of possible non-compliance (observer data)	IRP-75-03
6. Review of actions by Parties on possible infractions reported by the IRP:	
a) Actions taken since report at the 74 th meeting	IRP-75-04
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APPENDIX

1. List of attendees

The 75th meeting of the International Review Panel (IRP) was held on 30 August 2025 in Panama City, Panama. It began 9:51 a.m., local time.

1. Opening of the Meeting

Ms. Yarkelia Vergara, Chair of the AIDCP, gave the floor to Mr. Enrique Espinosa, Presider of this meeting.

Delegations from Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, the United States, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, (European Union)¹, Vanuatu, Venezuela, and Bolivia were present at this meeting. María Patricia Díaz from FIPESCA, Ernesto Escobar from Pesca Azteca, and Rafael Trujillo from the Ecuadorian Chamber of Fisheries also participated as observers on behalf of the industry.

2. Adoption of the agenda

¹ The European Union was present at the secondary table in an observer capacity, rather than at the main table.

During the adoption of the agenda, the Panel accepted the Chair's recommendation to include, under “Other business”, a presentation by the Secretariat on the current situation of an observer arrested alongside the crew for transporting prohibited substances. The agenda was then adopted without further changes.

3. Review of Dolphin Mortality Limits (DML) for 2024 and 2025

During the presentation of document [IRP-75-01](#) by Enrique Ureña, details were provided on the utilization of DMLs and dolphin mortality for 2024, as well as the information available for 2025 as of 13 August 2025. The main points discussed are as follows:

For 2024:

- 119 full-year limits were allocated: 94 were utilized in the first quarter, three were renounced, 16 were exempted due to *force majeure*, six were forfeited for not being used before 1 April, and four were allocated from the Director's reserve, and all were used.
- The fleet made 10,554 sets on dolphin-associated tuna, with a total annual mortality of 859 dolphins, resulting in a mortality per set of 0.08 and an average mortality per vessel of 8.5.
- Distribution of cumulative mortality: 42 vessels with no mortalities, nine vessels with 1-5 dolphins, eight vessels with 6-10 dolphins, 10 vessels with 11-15 dolphins, 20 vessels with 16-20 dolphins, nine vessels with 21-25 dolphins, 13 vessels with 26-30 dolphins. No vessel reached its limit.

For 2025 (as of 13 August):

- 107 full-year limits were allocated: 89 were utilized in the first quarter, two were renounced, 13 were exempted, three were forfeited for not being used before 1 April, two were allocated from the Director's reserve (15 dolphins each).
- As of 13 August, the fleet made 8,487 sets on dolphin-associated tuna, with 654 mortalities, a mortality per set of 0.08, and a cumulative mortality per vessel of 7.
- Distribution of cumulative mortality: 30 vessels with no mortalities, 19 vessels with 1-5 dolphins, 17 vessels with 6-10 dolphins, 19 vessels with 11-15 dolphins, eight vessels with 16-20 dolphins, and two vessels with 21-35 dolphins.

Once the presentation was complete, the Secretariat presented the average of these data for the last five years, as requested by the Panel at the previous meeting, and indicated the following:

- Average number of sets associated with dolphins: 10,231.
- Average annual mortality: 813 dolphins.
- Average mortality per set: 0.08.
- Average cumulative mortality per vessel: 8.1.
- Distribution: 35 vessels with no mortalities, 14 vessels with 1-5 dolphins, 14 vessels with 6-10 dolphins, 14 vessels with 11-15 dolphins, 12 vessels with 16-20 dolphins, 10 vessels with 21-35 dolphins.

The following data on DML requests and their usage by country were presented:

- DMLs requested in 2024: Colombia requested 12 and all were used; Ecuador requested 21 and 13 were used; Mexico requested 48 and 43 were used; Nicaragua requested three and all were used; Panama requested 15 and all were used; El Salvador requested one and it was used; the United States requested one, which was subsequently voluntarily renounced. Venezuela requested 18 and 10 were used. Total: 119 DMLs allocated, of which 97 were used.
- DMLs requested in 2025 as of 22 August: Colombia 12 DMLs, all used; Ecuador 12 DMLs, all used; Mexico 48 DMLs, 45 used; Nicaragua three DMLs, two used; Panama 15 DMLs, 12 used; and Venezuela 17 DMLs, 11 used. Total: 107 allocated, 94 used.

4. Review of AIDCP *List of Qualified Captains*

The Secretariat presented document [IRP-75-02](#), reporting that requests to add 23 captains were received between 30 August 2024 and 13 August 2025. All of the captains were added after it was verified that they met all the necessary requirements. No captains were removed for violations and, on 26 November, one captain who had been suspended since 2016 was reinstated after it was verified that he met all the necessary requirements.

5. Review of cases of possible non-compliance (observer data)

Prior to presenting these cases, the Secretariat provided each delegation with documents containing data on the trips to be reviewed. The Secretariat presented document [IRP-75-03](#), which set out the cases requiring analysis by the Panel:

- **Case 20241009.** Interference with the observer's work: The observer's report was reviewed and possible interference with the observer's work was acknowledged; however, it was also noted that the observer reports are often very subjective. The Panel therefore decided that this case should be submitted to the relevant CPC for analysis and investigation.
- **Case 20250090.** Night set: Review of the observer's data indicated that the backdown procedure concluded 46 minutes after sunset. The Panel decided to submit this case to the relevant CPC for analysis and investigation.

6. Review of actions by Parties on possible infractions reported by the IRP

This item of the agenda included two items:

a) Actions taken since report at the 74th meeting: Document [IRP-75-04](#) was presented, which documents two cases of possible observer harassment on vessels from the same CPC. The report indicates that the CPC is continuing to investigate these cases. The Panel recalled that, according to Annex IV, Section 3, paragraph 4 of the AIDCP, once a case has been under investigation for two years, the responsible authority must submit a report at each Panel meeting until the case is concluded.

b) Status review of special cases: A case of possible bribery of an observer was presented. The report indicates that the CPC continues to investigate this case.

7. Report of the Permanent Working Group on Tuna Tracking

Ms. Jeiris Galicia, the Chair of the Permanent Working Group on Tuna Tracking, presented her report to the Panel. She indicated that the agenda had been adopted without changes and that there were no recommendations for the Panel or other points to highlight.

8. Other business

Under "Other business," the Secretariat presented the complex situation of an observer who is currently imprisoned while his case is under investigation. The vessel to which he was assigned was

detained for alleged possession of illegal substances. The Secretariat explained the difficulty and complexity of the situation, as well as the challenges that have arisen from it. Following its detailed report, the Secretariat requested the Panel's support and guidance in establishing procedures for this case and similar ones that may arise in the future. The Panel reaffirmed the difficulty of the situation and emphasized the importance of respecting the sovereignty of states when dealing with cases of this nature.

9. Recommendations for the Meeting of the Parties

A series of recommendations were discussed, including the following: improving the training of observers and captains; creating a panel of experts for observer risk management; sharing information on the status of observers, their certifications, and vessel embarkation and disembarkation logistics; and reviewing and updating high-intensity floodlights. The recommendations were as follows:

- Include tools in observer trainings to help them express their observations more objectively, allowing the IRP to better evaluate their reports.
- Request that the Secretariat submit a report analyzing the benefits of establishing a mandatory training program for purse-seine vessel captains that includes the content of the IATTC and AIDCP resolutions.
- Recommend that the Meeting of the Parties instruct the Secretariat, in consultation with the Parties, to convene a panel of experts designated by the Parties to recommend, for consideration by the 53rd Meeting of the Parties, the implementation of policies, procedures, and practices related to the management of internal and external risks related to on-board observers, especially in the event of incidents requiring cooperation between the AIDCP (and the IATTC) and the authorities conducting investigations involving on-board observers. Elements to be evaluated include the employment status of observers, the obligations of the AIDCP (and the IATTC), mechanisms for differentiating observers from the rest of the crew, and coordination mechanisms with the relevant authorities before and during investigations.
- Urge CPCs to share information with the Secretariat on the employment status of observers and their obligations in each country.
- That National Observer Programs work together with the Secretariat to issue certifications that improve, streamline, and facilitate observers' immigration processes.
- That the next Meeting of the Parties include an item to review and update the specifications for high-intensity floodlights.

10. Place and date of next meeting

The next meeting will take place within the framework of the 52nd Meeting of the Parties on 22-24 October 2025, in La Jolla, California, United States.

11. Adjournment

This meeting was adjourned on 30 August 2025, at 2:08 p.m. in Panama City, Panama.

APPENDIX

1. List of attendees

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