INTER-AMERICAN TROPICAL TUNA COMMISSION

COMMITTEE FOR ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE

13th MEETING

Lisbon, Portugal
August 27–28, 2026

DOCUMENT CAF-13-03

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE IATTC REGIONAL OBSERVER PROGRAM FOR AT-SEA TRANSSHIPMENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

The IATTC observer program for monitoring at-sea transshipments by carrier vessels in the Eastern Pacific Ocean (EPO) authorized to receive tunas and tuna-like species and sharks from large-scale longline tuna fishing vessels (LSTLFVs) is governed by Resolution C-22-03 Transshipments .

Paragraph 21 of Resolution C-22-03 establishes that *"Each year, the Director shall submit a report on the implementation of this Resolution to the Commission's annual meeting, which shall review compliance (...)*". For the past 4 years, the report has been presented selectively to the Commission's different Committees, placing emphasis on the topics and issues specific to each Committee; in this way, the Committee for Administration and Finance (CAF) can focus its attention on administrative and financial matters; the Compliance Committee (COR) on aspects related to that topic; and the Scientific Advisory Committee on the operational aspects of the program related to catch data, transshipments, areas, etc. The report that was made available to the SAC meeting in June can be consulted here: SAC-17-INF-C Regional program of observers for transshipments at sea 2025-EN.

As in previous years, in 2025, the program was funded by five IATTC Members participating in it through their authorized large-scale longline vessels (LSTLFVs): China, Korea, Japan, Chinese Tai-pei, and Vanuatu, in accordance with the agreed formula. Panama also participates in the program; however, in that year, it participated only with carrier vessels receiving transshipments and was therefore not required to make contributions.

The three-year contract signed in 2025 with the Marine Resources Assessment Group (MRAG) con-sortium for the operation of the program covers the period 2026–2028.

2. BUDGETS FROM 2009 TO 2025

In **Table 1** the program's budget situation during 2009–2025 is detailed.

In 2024, the Commission approved a budget of US$1,000,000 for the operation of the program in 2025. However, participants were only requested to contribute US$800,000, allocated according to the agreed formula, as approved at the 102nd IATTC meeting, held in September 2024 in Panama City, Panama. The funds needed to complete the US$1,000,000 budget would be drawn from the unused balance as of December 31, 2024. At the end of 2025, invoices totaling US$1,012,950 had been paid to MRAG, resulting in a surplus of US$476,631 available for use in 2026.

TABLE 1. Program budget, 2009–2025, in US$					
	Contributions		Program costs	Surplus/ (deficit)	Cumulative surplus
	Participants	Others			
2009	741,346	-	698,801	42,545	42,545
2010	800,000	4,640[1]	792,381	12,259	54,804
2011	946,971	6,060[2]	999,731	(46,700)	8,105
2012	1,006,060	6,060[2]	674,241	331,819	339,924
2013	1,000,000	-	771,083	228,917	568,841
2014	500,000	16,635[3]	760,950	(244,315)	324,526
2015	700,000	43,905[4]	867,175	(123,270)	201,254
2016	950,000	37,723[4]	1,056,479	(68,756)	132,498
2017	1,050,000[5]	----	1,159,644	(109,644)	22,854
2018	1,390,000[6]	----	1,297,585	92,415	115,269
2019	1,300,000	----	1,043,016	256,984	372,117
2020	1,305,000	----	1,421,486	(116,486)	255,631
2021	1,440,000	----	1,341,248	98,752	354,383
2022	1,440,000	----	1,235,102	204,898	559,281
2023	1,439,973	----	933,241	506,732	1,066,013
2024	500,000	----	876,432	(376,432)	689,581
2025	800,000	----	1,012,950	(212,950)	476,631

[1]Peru; [2] Belize; [3] Includes Belize (US$6,060), Indonesia (US$1,485), and Panama (US$9,090); [4]Panama.
[5] Includes additional contributions totaling US$100,000
[6] Includes additional contributions totaling US$290,000, agreed at the 93rd IATTC meeting

3. 2026 BUDGET

Based on 2025 expenditures, during the 103rd IATTC meeting held in September 2025 in Panama, a budget of US$1,037,191 was agreed for 2026. Of that amount, participants would only be re-quested to contribute US$900,000, allocated according to the agreed formula and supplemented with funds drawn from the surplus (unused resources) accumulated by the At-Sea Transshipment Observer Program. Accordingly, an amount of approximately US$400,000 would be maintained as a contingency fund.

Table 2 shows the contributions established for each participant to finance the 2026 budget and the payments made as of July 30, 2026.

TABLE 2. Contributions for 2026, in US$					
Participant	**Total contribution**	**First installment (50%) due March 5**	**Paid**	**Second installment (50%); due June 15**	**Paid**
China	572,672	342,294	✓	342,295	✓
Chinese Taipei	109,715	36,062	✓	36,062	✓
Japan	9,500	4,297	✓	4,296	✓
Korea	88,345	54,786	✓	54,786	✓
Panama*	0	0	✓	0	NA
Vanuatu	19,768	12,561	✓	12,561	✓
TOTAL	**900,000**	**450,000**		**450,000**	

*Panama's longline vessels did not carry out transshipments in 2024, and therefore, under the agreed formula, were not required to make contributions to the program.

Table 3 shows the program's costs in 2025 and 2026 as of June 30, in US$.

TABLE 3. Program costs, 2025 and 2026 as of June 30, in US$						
	2025			**2026 (as of June 30)**		
Item	**Cost per unit**	**Units billed**	**Cost**	**Cost per unit**	**Units billed**	**Cost**
Days at sea	415	2,094	869,010	450	1,339	602,550
Travel days	371	188	69,748	390	99	38,610
Training	630	0	0	630	0	0
Equipment, materials, travel			74,176			49,976
Bank fees			14			
Total (US$)			**1,012,950**			**691,136**

Table 4 summarizes the program's financial situation as of June 30, 2026.

TABLE 4. Program's financial situation, in US$, 2026	
Item	**Amount US$**
January 1 – June 30	
First-half contributions received	450,000
Second-half contributions received	450,000
Surplus from previous years (*unused resources*)	476,631
Subtotal	**1,376, 631**
Program expenditures as of June 30	691,136
Balance as of June 30	685,495
Outstanding contributions 2025	0
Invoices expected for July–December*	**578,007**
Balance as of June 30 + outstanding contributions – expected invoices (remaining 6 months)	**107,488**

The amount of invoices expected from July to December 2026 was estimated based on a projection prepared by MRAG, as shown in **Table 5**. It should be noted that a training workshop to prepare new observers had been planned for 2025 but will not be held in order to reduce costs.

Table 5. Costs estimated by MRAG for July to December 2026, US$								
Month	**Days at sea**	**Cost per day**	**Cost**	**Travel Days****	**Cost per day**	**Cost**	**Travel cost***	**Est. invoice**
July	239	450	107,550	10	390	3,900	7,518	118,968
Aug.	140	450	63,000	16	390	6,240	10,359	79,599
Sept.	229	450/380	92,760	9	390	3,510	8,639	104,909
Oct.	257	380	97,660	10	390	3,900	5,056	106,616
Nov.	132	380	50,160	13	390	5,070	8,307	63,537
Dec.	228	380	86,640	19	390	7,410	10,328	104,378
TOTAL	**1,225**	**380**	**497,770**	**77**	**390**	**30,030**	**50,207**	**578,007**

*Airfare. ** Per diem for travel day

Based on the table above, which shows MRAG's projection of program costs for the second half of 2026, it is expected that the resources currently available to the program will be sufficient to cover the remainder of 2026.

As shown in **Tables 4** and **5**, the final cost of the program for 2026 is estimated at approximately US$1,269,143, compared with US$1,012,950 in 2025, representing an increase of 25%. Based on the review conducted with MRAG, the main reasons for this increase are the following:

- **Longer-duration trips**: during the spring of 2026, multiple trips of 90 or more days were recorded, including trip IATTC590 aboard the vessel PTRL2, which recently concluded with a duration of 135 days.
- **Greater carrier vessel activity during April, May, and June**: the number of observer deployments usually decreases starting in April and does not recover until August–September; in some previous seasons there were no observers deployed during most of May. In contrast, this year 7 observers were deployed as of July 1, with an eighth observer scheduled to board in July.
- **Trip IATTC582 aboard the vessel Futagami**. During this trip, the vessel received a notification from the flag State regarding alleged infractions, requiring it to halt operations and anchor at a port in China. As a result of visa-processing issues, the observer on board was unable to disembark in that country, remaining on the vessel for 81 additional days beyond those originally scheduled for the trip. This situation generated an additional cost of US$36,450, corresponding to the extra days the observer remained on board.

4. BUDGET FOR 2027

Based on the estimates presented above and on what MRAG has indicated as the anticipated expenditure for 2027, the projected funding needs for 2027 would be approximately US$1,400,000. Program costs will remain fixed from 2026 to 2028, as a three-year contract has been signed with MRAG. As can be noted, rather than requesting US$1,291,235 as projected, US$1,400,000 would be requested in order to maintain a contingency fund.

Table 6 presents a projection of costs for 2027 prepared by MRAG.

Table 6. Projected expenditures for 2027, months 1 to 12													
Cost in US$													
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**TOTAL**
Days at sea	242	212	266	231	189	199	239	140	229	257	132	228	2,564
Cost	108900	95400	119700	103950	85050	89550	107550	63000	92760	97660	50160	86640	1,100,320
Travel days	10	30	15	15	26	11	11	18	10	12	14	22	194
Cost	3900	11700	5850	5850	10140	4290	4290	7020	3900	4680	5460	8580	75660
Transfer costs	7970	11525	6610	7250	10500	6200	7500	10350	8650	5050	8300	10350	100,255
Observer training													15,000
TOTAL	**135770**	**118625**	**132160**	**117050**	**105690**	**100040**	**119340**	**80370**	**105310**	**107390**	**63920**	**105570**	**1,291,235**

Table 7 below shows the costs incurred by the Program over its three most recent operating periods.

TABLE 7. Costs of the program in different periods, in US$				
Period	**Cost per day**			
	At sea		**Travel (transfer)**	**Training**
	≤ 2,500 days	**> 2,500 days**		
2020–2022	**380**	**350**	371	630
2023–2025	415	380	371	630
	≤ 1,800 days	**> 1,800 days**		
2026–2028	450	380	390	630

5. POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

In order to ensure the continuity of the Program's operations, the following points are proposed for consideration:

- Budget for the year 2027: Adopt a budget of US$1,400,000 for 2027, subject to the projections remaining as currently estimated. If a surplus is generated at the end of 2026, the contribution required from Program participants could be lower.
- Contingency fund: Maintain a contingency fund of approximately US$108,765, with the aim of contributing to the financial stability of the Program and ensuring the continuity of its operations. The contingency fund would be intended to cover, among others, expenses such as the following:
    - Payment of invoices exceeding the amounts budgeted by MRAG, with a view to avoiding the need to request a third disbursement. For example, in 2026, due to the availability of unspent funds from the previous year and the fact that invoices submitted by MRAG exceeded the amounts initially projected, the difference can be covered using those remaining funds.
    - Coverage of unforeseen expenses, such as those arising from the case involving the vessel *Futugami* during the current year, as described in the preceding paragraphs.